

27 June 2009

Death for the Christian is not a worst case scenario

"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

Read the entire chapter: 1 Corinthians 15

(flashback methodology: movies, literature...verse 58 we can act according to the doctrinal basis laid out in the first fifty-seven verses)

Introduction:

For the Christian, what is next is so vastly different because we will be different. We think small now because of our capacity, but God holds out the truth to us to encourage us as to what we will be like.

Text:

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption (*phthartos*) inherit incorruption (*aphthrsia*).

51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment (*atomos*), in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible (*aphthrsia*), and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible (*phthartos*) must put on incorruption (*aphthrsia*), and this mortal (*thnetos*) must put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible (*phthartos*) shall have put on incorruption (*aphthrsia*), and this mortal (*thnetos*) shall have put on immortality (*athanasia*), then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Isaiah 25:8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken [it].

Hosea 13:14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.
 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord
 Jesus Christ.
 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always
 abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour
 is not in vain in the Lord.
 (KJV)

Premise:

Paul is here writing to the Corinthians about a faith that is not in vain (vs.1-3), and though all particulars seem to be concomitant to this faith, as would any thesis statement, there is a wealth of information for us to glory in forever. Not the least of which is what comes of death for the Christian? What consequences are we to see from this passage? In practical terms, why, if we know what lies in store for us when we die physically, why are we, like the world living as though this life is all there is, or why do we not consider it more seriously?

What if our faith was as Paul is here describing? Wouldn't it be true if we had a greater understanding of two very crucial words and their opposites that are found in the text, we'd think and live differently?

Corruption (phthartos: decayed, i.e. by implication perishable)

Incorruption (aphthrsia: unending existence)

And

Mortality (thnetos: liable to die)

Immortality (athanasia: deathlessness)

Our more modern word that comes from this same root:

Euthanasia (from the Greek *ευθανασία* meaning "well death": *eu-*, eu- (well or good) + *θάνατος*, thanatos (death))

We know nothing today of incorruption or immortality. Everything is falling apart, decaying, wearing down or wearing out. The moment we purchase an item, it is on its way to a garage sale. The very car we think we cannot live without is on its way back to Yokohama to be made into another Toyota. We rejoice at the birth of a baby, but can hardly bring ourselves to think that death will come eventually to that precious being we hold in our arms. Simply stated, we have a very definite finiteness. But God gives us "incorruption" and "immortality" as He brings us into a right relationship with Himself.

Conclusions:

1. Christians die well for their hope is in Christ
 - a. hope laid up for us **Colossians 1:3-8**
 - b. hope in Christ Jesus **1 Thessalonians 1:3-5**

- c. full assurance of hope **Hebrews 6:9-20**
2. Christians die daily
 - a. Paul dies daily and therefore we are to do likewise **1 Corinthians 15:31**
 - b. Our death, as our life's desire is that we should die in our integrity **Job 27:5**
3. Christians can die no more
 - a. the thorns and stings are gone **Hosea 13:14**
 - b. He will swallow up death for all time **Isaiah 25:8**
 - c. the concluding summary is that death will come to an end **Revelation 21:4**
4. Christians have victory through Him who rendered the devil powerless because of His substitutionary sacrifice. Therefore, the victory belongs not to the devil, but to Him whose substitution satisfied the demands of God **Hebrews 2:14-15**

So what is the importance as we sit here tonight?

- I literally held my Mom three weeks ago as she took her final breath and departed this life. But was that the final even for this woman? Nolan asked as we walked down the hallway, "Daddy, would Momo be in Heaven yet?" My reply rested upon a cardinal truth: "Nolan, the Bible says and now Momo confirms that she is well pleased to be "absent from the body and at home with the Lord".
- Who has not found comfort, and I don't mean wishful thinking, but confidence that the Scriptures authoritatively attest to your loved one being Home with the Lord?
- Having witnessed much death in my lifetime, having been on the battlefield and for twenty years in health care, you see carnage and the gasping emptiness of life in human beings. There is little comfort in hearing, "Well, they're in a better place" or "At least they're not suffering anymore." Neither may be true, but there is, for the Christian, the reality that neither of the former approach the grand scale to which we will be.

There is so much to our eternal life that to touch upon it here, is to do just that, just touching on great truths. However, Jesus Himself gave us the most encouragement concerning eternal life. He didn't articulate the stuff of Heaven, or the immensity of the Place, but He said:

[John 17:3](#)

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.
(KJV)