

Real Heaven

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[0:00] Well, children, I want you to imagine that you are walking on the beach. And I don't know if you have a dog or not, but I want you to imagine that you are walking your dog.

So there's Ranger. We don't have a dog. We have a cat named Oliver. So there's Oliver. And there's Scout or Spot or Rocky or whatever you call your dog.

And so there you are on the beach and the waves are going back and forth. Back and forth. And as you walk on the beach, you see a fish that's just washed up on shore.

Have you ever seen one of those? Just washed up on the shore. And so you get down to look at it. And its gills are going back and forth, in and out, in and out.

And it's flopping along, desperately trying to get back to the water, trying to get back into the ocean. And it's not happy at all. You can imagine.

[1:00] It's not happy at all. Your dog, though, is doing fine. He's happy as can be. He thinks the fish is wonderful. And he thinks it's funny. And so he's good.

And so there you are. Your dog is on the beach. And he's happy. And the fish is on the beach, on the same beach. And he is not happy at all. He's as miserable as can be.

And you say, now, why is that? Are dogs always happy and fish always miserable? No, that's not it. You would say that the dog is home.

It's where it's supposed to be. And the fish isn't. The dog is living where it likes to live. It's created to breathe air. And a fish is created to breathe or somehow get oxygen through its gills from the water. And so the fish is not home. And that's a good picture of heaven and earth and the people that live or belong to both of those places.

[2:00] And so let me tell you something. If you're a Christian, a big part of your life, a big part of you is like that fish. And if you aren't a Christian, then a big part of you is like that dog right now.

So if you're a Christian, you aren't really home. And you're not really happy. Not yet. And you're doing your best you can to get home. And if you're not a Christian, well, you think this world is just great.

Things can't get any better than this. And you can't imagine wanting anything different than what you have here. And so my question to you is, which one are you? Are you a fish on the beach or are you a dog on the beach?

Well, we're thinking about heaven. And we're thinking, well, we've looked at two things together so far. One, we looked at the idea that heaven is supposed to make a real difference to you.

If you're a Christian, it's meant to comfort you. When Jesus' disciples were depressed, he took them in John and he said, Now, I want you to remember where I'm going and that you're going to come there with me and I'm preparing a place for you.

[3:09] Heaven was meant to comfort us when we were discouraged or are discouraged, to encourage us, to cheer us up. And you won't be, you can put this down as a fact, you won't be a very strong Christian if you think very little of heaven.

And the second thing we saw was that heaven is going to be on the new earth. For I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea.

And then I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God. Prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

So heaven will be on the new earth. It won't be floating around in space or in some sort of light spiritual place. It will have real dimensions. You'll be able to grab a hold of a piece of heaven. You'll be able to hit it. You'll be able to touch it. You'll be able to feel it. And there will be earth-like things there. Animals. Dogs and cats and giraffes and elephants and hippopotamuses and all the

rest.

[4:11] Lions and lambs. And you'll never have to bury your pet again while your children cry because there's no more death. Or pain or crying or mourning because the first things have passed away.

New things are here. And that sounds wonderful. That sounds wonderful. I think even the worst sinner would like to live in a new earth.

But as wonderful as that is and as wonderful as that will be, can I tell you something?

That that is not all there is to it. And that's not really heaven itself. We started to hear what heaven was this morning, didn't we? Heaven is being with God.

God. And there's more. And it's that more. The new earth is the place where heaven will be. But it's not heaven itself because it's the more that separates real believers from unbelievers.

[5:11] I think everyone would want to go to a new earth, but not everyone really wants heaven. Not everyone really wants heaven because heaven is more than just a physical place.

It's a capital S spiritual place. It's a capital S spiritual place where the Holy Spirit dwells and lives. And it's a spiritual place. It's spiritual people live there.

And God lives with us. And that's why not everyone wants to really go to heaven. They want to go to the heaven of their imagination, but they don't want to go to the real heaven that actually really is coming.

They don't want that because those people are like dogs on the beach. They're happy here. They're satisfied with what they have. While others are like fish, trying desperately to get to that place.

So, today I want to talk again about heaven. And we want to look at 2 Corinthians chapter 5. 2 Corinthians chapter 5. And I'm just going to read the first 10 verses.

[6:18] And this is not going to be really an exposition of this passage. We don't have time for all of that. But we do want to learn three lessons that if we dwell on this passage, we can see for ourselves.

So, let me read the first 10 verses. And then we'll have these three lessons. Now, we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

Meanwhile, we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed, but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Now, it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore, we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord.

We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. And so we make it our goal to please Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

[7:41] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due Him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Now, here is our first lesson, that not everyone really wants to go to heaven. That sounds strange, but that's the truth. Not everyone really wants heaven.

Some people do. And Paul says, what do those people do? We saw it in the first three verses there. He talks about people that are longing to go to heaven.

Well, what do they do now? Paul says, we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling. And verse 3 and verse 4 says, while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened.

So who groans and who is burdened? Who goes around with the sense of everything is not really right? Not as it should be. Well, it's people whose life isn't right.

[8:42] It's not all they want to be. They're longing for something better. That's who groans and who is burdened. And so that's the fish wanting to go back into the ocean.

That's the Christian wanting to go to heaven. So how do you know a fish? And here's the question. How do you know that a fish belongs in the ocean? In the water? Well, he's miserable when he's not there.

That's how you know he belongs there. But see, not everyone really actually wants to go to heaven. Not everyone really wants to go there. Not everyone really belongs there.

So are you doing fine? Are you doing fine here and now? And you have very little time for any thought of heaven. And you wonder, what's the big deal about heaven? Well, then you should know this. As you stand right now, you don't belong there. You don't go there. You won't go there. You won't get there. Not in your present case.

[9:43] You can dream about all you want, about hoping to get there someday. But you don't belong there. And more than that, you wouldn't actually be happy there.

You wouldn't actually be happy there. So let's change our picture a little bit. Instead of the fish being out of the water, let's throw the dog into the water. So we throw the dog down into the deep part of the water.

Now, would he be happy? No, he wouldn't be happy. Every minute would be suffocation. Every minute would be oppression. Every minute would be, he would be terrified.

He couldn't breathe. And every minute would be agony. Because he wasn't made for this world. That world. The fish would love it. The dog would hate it.

And if some of you were to go to heaven right now, you would be like that dog in the water. Every moment would be terrifying. Every moment would be suffocation.

[10:45] Your life would actually go from bad to worse. And I'm not even talking about going to hell. I'm talking about going to heaven.

You would suffocate and you couldn't breathe. You'd be that dog thrown into the ocean. And that's why you have to be born again. That's why no one who, without being born again, you can't even see the kingdom of heaven.

You're not fit for that world. You don't belong there. You're not made for that world. That's why you have to be born again. Heaven is only for people who have had their nature changed. Who've had their desires and their lives changed.

And if you're lost, or if you know people who are lost, you should feel sorry for them. Because this life, where they're not even that happy here, is the best that they are going to get.

Hell is a nightmare, and heaven wouldn't be much better. And so what a miserable situation to be in to be lost. Where, as is, you have no hope.

[11:51] And this is the best it can get. And so you need Christ. You need a Savior. You need someone to save you from yourself. Because, see, that dog can't turn himself into a fish.

It would take divine power to change him so that he could live in that world. And we need a Savior. And the only way sinners ever get ready to live in heaven is if God comes and totally renovates and changes them.

So you need to be saved from yourself. Heaven would be the misery of the lost. Isn't that a sad thing?

Heaven would be the misery of the lost. But that's what we're groaning for. That's what we're longing for. So not everyone would be happy in heaven.

Not everyone wants to go there. Now here's secondly. Heaven is where faith turns to sight. That's our second lesson. Heaven is where faith turns to sight. Right? So the heaven of the Bible, the heaven that, the only heaven that there is, the only heaven that anyone will ever live in, is a place where people, what people have believed, will be seen.

[13:04] So do you see what Paul said in verses 7 and 8? We live now. Now here, this is the way we live now. We live by faith, not by sight.

But we are confident, I say, I would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. And you can think of 1 Corinthians 13 where he talks about, Then we will see him face to face.

And then we will be with him forever. And so why do we prefer to be away? Because then faith will give way to sight. And what we have believed, we will see.

The one will transform into the other. And so what will we see then? What will heaven be? Well, it will be seeing the things that you believe now.

Now, this is important because this forms a connection to what is going on in your life now, what you believe now, your Christian life now. So what will we see in heaven? The answer is, we will see then what we believe now.

[14:07] So what do we believe now? Well, we believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that he is Lord. We believe that Christ loves us. And then there you will see that Christ loves you.

You believe that God is wise. Then you will see with your own eyes that God is wise. And you believe God is strong enough to save you.

Well, then you're going to see just how strong and powerful and almighty he is. It won't be something that you believe having heard about. It will be something you know without any shade of doubt because you have seen it with your own eyes.

And so you believe that God is gracious to you, a sinner. You believe that God loves sinners and that he loves you. You believe that the gospel of that Jesus Christ died for sinners.

But there you will see with your own eyes sinners that Jesus has died for. And now they're no longer sinners, but they're completely perfect in every way. And so beyond a shadow of a doubt, you will know this is God's heart toward me.

[15 : 12] Now you believe it faintly, dimly. You wish you believed it more, but then you will see it. And so think about that. God, you'll see that God loves you and has loved you.

It brings joy and comfort to your hearts now, doesn't it? It brings joy and comfort to your hearts now. When God the Spirit testifies with our spirits, you're a child of God and he loves you and you have a father in heaven.

Then it brings joy and comfort. It brings joy and comfort when you see the sovereign Lord. When you believe that the sovereign Lord is working all things together for good.

And so you're in a bad situation, but you put your hope in that promise. You put your faith in that promise and joy and comfort comes into your hearts. Well, in heaven, what you believe now about that, about the sovereignty of God and the promise of God, you will see because you will see with your own eyes how he has worked all things together for good.

And there won't be any shade of doubt that he was all along keeping his promise. And so if it brings you joy now, if it brings you comfort now, imagine what it's going to be like when you see it.

[16 : 26] When the faith gives way to sight. So that's heaven. Faith becomes sight. And then we won't be looking through a glass darkly, but we will see him face to face.

And there won't be any slips of faith. There won't be any weak faith. There won't be wondering if it's true. There won't be any fuzzy edges. There won't be any doubts. There won't be any. Oh, Lord, I believe this, but help my unbelief.

It won't be anything like that, because now we're looking through a tiny hole and a piece of paper and only very little of what we see about heaven and about what we see about God is clear to us. But then the paper is taken down and we see everything. With our own eyes. So then you will see with your own eyes how much he loves you.

How much he loves you. You've prayed, Lord, help me to grasp the height and the depth and the width and the length of his love.

[17 : 27] And you've prayed that. And yet, you know, there's more to be felt. There's more to be experienced. But there you will see it. And you will be filled to the full. You will be filled to the measure of the fullness of God.

And then you will see with your own eyes and you will be overflowing. And it's like the fire hose will be turned on. And there you are, your little pitcher. And it will just fill up and overflow and overflow and overflow.

And you will gush and gush ecstasy and joy forever and ever because of how kind and loving and gracious and majestic is this God.

So what you have begun to grasp in faith now, then you will see. So do you have any comfort from the idea of God, your father?

That he's adopted me and he cares for me. And then I can come to him and say, Abba, Father. You find comfort in that. But faith will become sight. He says, I will be his God and he will be my son.

[18 : 36] So by faith, we see Christ exalted. Doesn't that make your life all the, doesn't that make life so much better when you see Christ by faith exalted?

You say, yeah, the world is a mess and yeah, sin is everywhere. And yeah, I have sin in my heart. But you know what? Christ is resurrected and he is on the throne and he is magnified and glorified. He has won the victory and my enemies are under my feet. And so by faith, we lay a hold of that and we are filled with comfort and joy. But then what will you see with your two eyeballs that are in your head right now?

You will see him on the throne. And there'll be no more need for faith. And there'll be no more doubts. And peace will fill your soul.

Well, that's heaven. Faith becomes sight. Now that's the only heaven there is. It's the heaven where what believers have believed now, they will see then.

[19:42] Now those who believe want that heaven. They want to see Christ on his throne. They want to know God's love. They want to see his majesty.

They want to know that beyond a shadow of a doubt. They want to be past all the enemies. And those who don't want that heaven, where God is the center and faith gives way to sight.

Those who don't want that heaven, they want some other heaven of their own imagination. That just doesn't exist. The only heaven there is, is one where faith becomes sight.

Now, here's the third lesson. And this is what I want you to take away from these two things. Or take away. It's these two things. First, get used to thinking about heaven this way.

Get used to thinking about heaven this way. When we think about heaven, we have all sorts of questions about what is it going to be like? And what's going to be there? And a thousand questions with very little answers given to us.

[20:49] So how can we think about heaven in a way that the Bible teaches us to? Well, this is how. Get used to thinking about heaven this way. Train yourself to jump from what you are believing now.

Whatever that is. That God loves you. That Jesus is a savior. That Jesus is risen. That Jesus is Lord. That he has these promises for you. Whatever you are holding on to right now.

Use that. Jump from that to what heaven is going to be. Because heaven is going to be the fruition of that. It's one way that, according to Colossians 3.1, we can set our minds on things above.

Do you find it hard to move from this earth and what I'm experiencing now to what is above? What will be? What is coming? Do you have a hard time thinking about that? Well, here's a bridge that you can build to the future.

Here's a bridge that you can build to above. As you go through life and you are living by faith, Take what you are believing and take it forward to the day when it won't be faith.

[21:52] You will see it. You will see it. And say, in heaven, what I believe now, I will see then. And so don't miss the connection between now and then.

Don't miss the connection between eternal life began below, begun below, and eternal life enjoyed forever above.

So by faith, we are beginning to take part in eternal life. We are beginning to enjoy manna from heaven. We are beginning to enjoy the presence of God. By faith, we are tasting eternal life.

But more deeply will I drink above. Heaven and eternal life isn't something totally different from what you have now, Christian. It's not something totally, totally different.

But what you will have is what you have now, except amplified and perfected a million times over. It's completion. It's fullness. And so don't miss this wonderful opportunity that you have to begin to experience heaven.

[22:56] Begin to understand heaven. Begin to taste the joys of heaven. Here's the second thing that you should take away. And here's what Paul said we should take away. Look at verse 9.

So we make it our goal to please him. Whether we are at home in the body or away from it. We make it our goal to please him.

So how do you live while you wait? That's Paul's question. That's what he's telling us what to do. He says, now, how do you live while you wait? You live to please him.

The goal, the target, the aim of your life should be to please him. Because you are going to see him. That's what Paul is saying.

You should live to please him because you are going to see him. Now, if you were never going to see Jesus Christ, if you were never going to see him, there wouldn't be much of a reason to please him.

[23:56] I mean, if we're being completely honest, if you were never going to see him, you were never going to live with him, you were never going to be rewarded by him, you were never going to see him, then there would be very little reason to please him.

But you are going to see him. You are going to see him and live with him and experience him forever and ever. And so, Christian, what area of your life is the Spirit saying, this is not lining up.

This does not please me. Where are you grieving the Spirit? Where can you start pleasing him? If your whole aim and your whole goal of this life is to please him because someday you are going to see him, then how can you start pleasing him now?

How can you start pleasing him now? What do you need to keep on doing to please him? That's another way. Maybe you are doing something that pleases the Lord, and you're growing weary and

you're growing tired.

Remember that at the end of the journey, you're going to see him. You have a date, a destiny on the calendar to meet him and to be with him. So one day you will see him, so live to please him.

[25 : 01] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. What is heaven?

Well, it's seeing Jesus Christ face to face. So live to please him. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you that you have qualified us.

You've qualified us for eternal life in the kingdom of your Son. You've done it through redeeming us and forgiving us of our sins.

Thank you that you have done everything, and we get to enjoy it. Thank you that you've given us this hope, and I pray that you would fill us with faith so that we might be filled with hope now and with two eyes looking forward to that coming day.

Will you please teach us and teach us to think about heaven in the way that you want us to. Teach us to think about heaven in a way that does us good now and comforts us like Jesus wants us to be comforted by heaven.

[26 : 15] And I pray most of all that you would remind us again and again this week, this afternoon and this evening and tomorrow morning and every day after that, that we are going to see the Lord Jesus.

And we will live with him forever and ever. And everything we believe now, we will see with our own eyes then, and every doubt will be taken away, and everything will be sure, and all of your promises will come true.

So I pray, help us to live for that day. Please keep us from being caught up in this momentary life and lose track of what is eternal and forever.

Please open the eyes of the blind. Show them that at best they have 70 or 80 or 90 years, and then they are going to die, and then they are going to face judgment.

Please open their eyes and make them feel the reality of that, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.