“The Realities of Life” – Eternal Realties, Part 1 of 4 – May 19, 2013 at SBC

 2 Corinthians 4:16 - 5:10 (Turn to and read, not in notes.)

Everybody, wants to know the answer, to the question, . . . “What happens, . . . after, I die? So, for the next four weeks, . . . we’re going to do, a little mini-series. We’re calling it, . . . “Eternal Realities.” We’re going to look at the realities of life, . . . the realities of Hell, . . . and, then, we’re going to look at, . . . the realities of Heaven.

The Bible tells us, that everything you see, . . is temporary. And, what you don’t see, . . is what’s, going to last. The eternal realities, . . . are things, you don’t see. The things, you see right now, . . . are all, temporary. If they’re material, or physical, . . . they’re not, . . . going to last.

Your body, . . . is not, . . . going to last. That’s obvious. This building, . . . is not, . . . going to last. The trees, and, mountains, . . . erode. Everything, that’s material, . . . fades away.

But, the things, that are going to last, . . . are things, we can’t see. We can’t see God, . . we can’t see the angels, we can’t see God’s Holy Spirit, we can’t see heaven. The Bible says, those things, . . . are going to last, forever.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 – *“Our bodies, are gradually decaying, and becoming weaker.* *But, our spirits inside of us, are growing stronger, each day. These little troubles, that we face here on earth, . . . are getting us ready, for an eternal glory, that will make all of our troubles, seem like nothing.*  *The things, that are seen, don’t last forever, but the things, that are not seen, . . are eternal. That’s why, we keep our minds, on the things, that we cannot see.”*

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 – “*Our bodies are like tents,. . . that we live in, here on earth. But, when these tents, are destroyed, God will give us each, a new place to live, and our new bodies, and homes, . . . are in heaven, and they will last, forever. These physical tents, that we now live in, right now, are heavy burdens, and we groan, not just because, we want to leave these bodies, that are going to die, but because we want to exchange them, for bodies, that will never die. God is the One, who makes all of this possible, and He has given us His Spirit, to make certain, that He will do it. So, always, . . . be cheerful.*

*As long as, we are in these earthly bodies, we are away, from the Lord. So, we live by faith, and not by what we see.*  *We’d rather leave these bodies, and be at home, with the Lord,* *but whether we’re with the Lord, or whether we’re away from Him, we still try our best, to please Him. After all, Christ will judge each of us, for the good, or the bad, that we do, . . . while living, in these bodies.”*

The point, that Paul is making, here in 2 Corinthians, . . . is that spiritual realities, are more real, . . than physical realities. That, these are the things, that are going to last forever, and we need to focus, on those things.

1 Corinthians 13:12 – *“Right now, we are looking in a mirror, that gives only a dim reflection, of reality. But, one day, we shall see reality, . . . face to face.”*

\*\* For the next, three weeks, we’re going to look at, . . . the reality, of Hell, . . . and, the reality, of Heaven. Two of the eternal realities, . . . that, God wants us, . . . to understand.

\* But, for today, . . . what are the realities, of life? They’re all found, in this book, God’s Word. This morning, let’s just start, before we actually look at heaven, and hell, . . I want us, to look at, . . . **five spiritual realities**.

1) The first reality of life, is this: **God made you, . . . to love you**. And, He wants, your **love back**. He wants you, to learn, . . . to love Him back. That is the first, and foremost reality of life, that God exists, and He made you, to love you, . . . and, . . . He wants you, to love Him back.

You were made, by God, and you were made, . . . for God. Until, you understand that, life isn’t going, to make sense. Because, it’s all about God, . . and, it’s all, for His glory. God made you, and He made you, to love you.

You were created, as an object, of God’s love. If God hadn’t wanted to love you, He wouldn’t have made you. There has never, been a person made, . . . that, God doesn’t love. And, not only does He love you, He’s given you the capacity, to learn, to love Him back, . . . to get to, know Him back.

 (And, . . . it doesn’t matter, who you are, . . . or, what you’ve done.)

The Bible says, all the great commandments, is summarized, . . . *“Love God, with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. Love your neighbor, as yourself.”* Those are the two, first great commandments. It’s all, about love. So, God says I love you, and I want you, to learn to love Me back. That’s the first, reality of life.

God says this, in Jeremiah 31:3 - *“I have loved you, with an everlasting love. And, with unfailing love, I have drawn you, to Myself.”*  God says, “I’m trying, to draw you, to Me. I want you, . . . to get to know Me. And, I want you, to understand, how much, I love you.” Will you let Him, . . . love you?

 He wants you, to know, . . and, love Him, back.

2) The second great reality, of life, is this: **You were made, . . to last, forever**. One day, your heart’s going to stop, and, that’s going to be the end, of your body, but, it’s certainly not, going to be the end, of you. The Bible says, that you and I, as human beings, were created, in the image of God, which means, God put in us – eternity.

In fact, the Bible says this, in Ecclesiastes 3:11 – *“He has planted eternity, . . in the human heart.”* That’s why, no matter, how good things are, on this planet, there’s still a longing in you, . . . and, at some point in your life, you go, . . . “There’s got, to be more, . . . than this.”

And, the truth is, there is more. Much, much more. Heaven. You’re going to spend, far more time, . . . on the other side of death, . . . than on this side. On this side, . . you get sixty, eighty, a hundred years. On the other side of death, . . you get trillions, and trillions, and trillions, of years. This is the warm up act, the preschool, the first lap around the racetrack. But, the real life, . . . is going to go on, . . . in eternity.

The Bible says, that this side, . . . is getting ready, for that side. Life is preparation, . . . for eternity. You were made, . . . to last, forever. And, He put, eternity, . . . in your heart.

3) The third great reality, is that: **God has prepared . . two eternal places – Heaven and Hell.** Heaven is real, and, . . . hell is real. And, by the way, they’re not just, . . states of being. They’re not, some kind of floating, in the clouds. They are, literal places. There’s a real place, called Heaven, . . and there is a real place, called Hell.

The Bible tells us, first, . . . that, there’s a, real Heaven. Jesus said this, in John 14:2 – *“I’m going, to prepare a place, . . . for you.”* Notice. Heaven is not, . . . an accident. It’s a, . . . prepared place.

Notice, . . it’s a place. It’s not, a state, of being. It is an, actual place. I’m going, to prepare, a place. And, who is Heaven, . . prepared for? It says, . . . for you. God is preparing it, for us. To be a part, of His family. He says, John 14:3 – *“And, if I go and prepare a place for you, . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, you may be also.”* He says, where I’m going, . . . I want you to go, . . too.

The Bible tells us, . . . a lot, about heaven. Matthew 25:34, Jesus says this, *“Come, you who are blessed, by My Father. Take your inheritance, the kingdom, . . .* ***prepared*** *for you,* *since the creation, of the world.”*

Notice, that when God created the world, He was also, . . . creating Heaven. God has been preparing Heaven, . . since the beginning, of the world. He says, since the creation, of the world. From, the foundation, of the world.

Why? Because, this is not, your permanent, resting spot. This is not, your permanent, abode. I’m grateful, that we don’t live forever, . . . on this planet. Why? Because, this planet, . . . is broken, because of sin, and suffering, and sorrow, and sickness, and evil, . . . nothing works, on this planet. Heaven, . . . is perfect.

There’s nothing perfect, on this planet, . . . except, . . . **the Word of God**. No relationship is perfect, no job is perfect, no body works perfectly. Everything’s broken, on the planet, . . . because of sin. So, I’m glad, we don’t have to stay, on a broken planet. We’re going to go, to a place of perfection, . . . and He said, we’re going to, spend eternity, there. Heaven, . . . is a real place.

\*\*\*\* But, H**ell is also, . . . a real place**. Matthew25:41 – *“Jesus said, ‘Then He will say, to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil, and his angels.’”*

Satan’s angels, are called demons. Satan rebelled, against God. Hell was prepared for the devil, and his angels. It wasn’t originally, intended for human beings. Did you, get that? Jesus said, “I’m going, to prepare a place, for you. It’s called, Heaven. But, Hell was prepared, . . . for the devil, and his angels.”

If I choose, to rebel, against God – just like, Satan did – and, I choose, to reject God, and I choose, to say, “I’m going to be, my own god, I’m going to do, what I want to do, be what I want to be, say what I want to say,” . . . then, if I rebel, . . like Satan, . . . **I go where Satan goes**. But, it’s not originally planned, . . . for human beings.

It was planned, as a punishment, for Satan, and his angels. So, there is a real Heaven, . . and there is a real Hell.

4) Here’s the, fourth reality: **You get to choose, . . . where, . . . you’ll spend eternity.** It’s, . . . your choice. This is the same kind of choice, . . . that, God gave to Israel, in the Old Testament.

In Deuteronomy 11:26-28, God says this, to the people of Israel, *“Today, I’m giving you the choice, between a blessing, . . . and, a curse. You’ll be blessed, . . . if you obey the commands, of the Lord, your God. Or, you’ll receive a curse, . . . if you reject Me,* *and, My commands.”* True, in life, today. Life, with, . . . or, without God.

Deuteronomy 30:15 – *“See! I have set before you today, life and good, or death and evil.”* He says, “Here’s a choice. You can choose, . . between, doing good and life, . . . or, you can choose, doing evil, and death.”

Deuteronomy 30:16-17 – *“If you obey My commandments, by loving the Lord, your God.* [That’s the most important commandment. The most important commandment, . . is that you learn to love God, with your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.] *and, by walking in His ways,* [He says, if you do that], *then, you’ll live, and you’ll multiply, and I will bless you. But, if your heart, turns away from Me, . . . to worship other things, . . .”*

Why would anybody, worship other things, . . . besides God? Because, we want to. You can worship, . . . your car. You can worship, your career. You can worship, status. You can worship, your salary. You can worship, possessions, or position, or power, or prestige, or popularity. You could worship, . . . yourself.

Everybody, has a God. Even atheists, have a God. It may be, . . . themselves. But, in you, there is an in-built, wired desire, to worship. And, if you don’t worship, the true God, . . . you’re going to choose, something else.

And, a false god, . . . is called, an idol. And, God says, you don’t have anything, . . . before Me. Anything, you put before God, . . . in your life, . . . you worship. If you put your career, before God, if you put making money, before God, if you put having fun, before God, . . . anything you put before God, . . . becomes, your god, in your life, . . . and, you worship it.

He says, in verse 19, “. . . *if your heart, turns away from Me, to worship other things, and to serve them, . . then, you will perish. Therefore, choose life. Choose life, that you may live.”*

\*\* Let me give you, an example, of this. Let’s suppose, you were a drug addict, and you’re living in the gutter, . . on Skid Row. Your life, is falling apart, because you’re hopelessly, addicted to drugs. You’re laying there, on the side of the street, in the gutter, . . and, you haven’t bathed in weeks, and your life, is a mess.

Then let’s say, I come walking by, and I feel pity, I feel grace, I feel love, toward you. I say, “Let me, help you out. You don’t deserve this, but I’m going to, help you up. I’m going to, show you grace. Here’s what, I’m going to do. I’m going to pick you up, . . . and, I’m going to take you home, to my house. And, I’m going to give you a bath, and I’m going to get you cleaned up, and I’m going to give you, a new set of clothes.

But, that’s not all, I’m going to do. Here’s what, . . . I’m going to do. I’m going to, let you live with me, at my house. You can become, a part of my family. In fact, I’m going to, adopt you. You can take, my name. I’m going to pay off, all your debts, that you owe, because you spent all that money, on drugs. And, I’m actually, going to give you my credit card, and you have access, to the entire resources, of my family.

You’ve got, my name. You’ve got, my credit. You can live, . . . in my house. You’re a part, . . . of my family. I’m doing this, simply because, I love you. You don’t deserve it, you don’t earn it, you don’t work for it. I just love you, . . . and, I want to show you, . . . grace.

**However**, if you live in my house, as a part of my family, there are some house rules. You’ve got to abide, by these rules, if you’re going to live in my house, and be a part of my family. Rule number one, . . is this: we don’t do drugs, . . in this house. We don’t do drugs, at all. So, if you’re going to live here, and have access, to all these free privileges, and resources, . . . we don’t do drugs, in our house.

Let me ask you, a question, about that. Is it reasonable, . . . for me to expect, that person, to abide by the family, house rules? I’m just showing them, grace. If they’re going to live in my house, then they ought to live, by the rules, . . . that, I set up. It’s, my . . . house. (Well, Heaven, . . . is God’s house!)

\*\*\*\* The same is true, with you. Let’s say, if you say, “I’m going to be gone, for a month, and I have a house, that’s down by the ocean, and you can come live in my house, and use it, for a month.” You say, “But, . . . there a couple of, . . . house rules. First, you may not, jump up and down, on the bed.” Is that, . . . unreasonable? No. It’s your, house. Your house, . . . you get to make, the rules. If I’m going to use your house, then I should abide, . . . by the rules. That’s, reasonable.

If I offered you, if I said, “Come live, at my house,” and, you’re on drugs, and you reject it. You say, “Thank you, for your offer, but I’m going to choose, to live on Skid Row, because the truth is, I love my drugs. I’m not willing, to give them up. I’m not willing, to give them up, to be a part, of your family. I’m not willing, to give them up, for all the other benefits. Because, I love my drugs. So, I’m going to choose, to live here, on Skid Row, . . . in spite of, your gracious offer.”

If you turn me down, . . . would that be, my fault? No. It would be, . . . your fault. Could you blame me, for being, unloving? No. I have done the loving thing, to offer to help you, get out of the situation. You couldn’t blame me, . . . for being, unloving.

\*\* Let’s apply that same logic, . . . to going to Heaven. Because, we hear people, all the time, say, “How could a loving God, . . . send people, to Hell?” God doesn’t, send people, to Hell. You choose, . . to go there.

It’s like there’s, two doors, in eternity. One goes, to Heaven, . . one goes, to Hell. The one, that goes to Heaven says, “You come, to Jesus. This is, the house rules. He’s already paid for your ticket, . . . into Heaven. He’s already, forgiven you. All you’ve got to do, is accept it. You just accept, what He’s done for you. It’s a free gift of grace, . . . and, you go to Heaven.”

If you want to go to Hell, . . you just do, your own thing. You say, “I’m going to be, . . my own god. I’m going to do, what I want to do. I’m going to be, my own god. I don’t want anybody, telling me what’s right,

 . . . or, wrong. I don’t want anybody, telling me, . . . what to do. I want to run, . . . my own life.”

If we choose, to walk out this door, . . . without knowing God, . . and, accepting His free gift of salvation, . . we certainly can’t, . . blame God. He’s done everything possible, . . for you to go to Heaven. He’s already, paid for it all. He’s made it so easy, . . you just have to accept it, by faith. If we say “Thank you, but no. I’d rather, stick with what I love more,” . . . then, that’s not God’s fault. That’s our fault. It is, a choice.

Does God have a right, to make house rules, . . . for His house? Yeah. It’s, . . . His house. In Heaven, He has a right to say, . . . If you want to come to Heaven, here’s how you get here. How do you, get there? Not by, earning it. Not by, working for it. Not by, being good. But, simply by accepting, the grace, . . that, His Son did for you, . . . by dying on the cross, . . . for you.

If we reject, His condition, for entering Heaven, . . . He’s not being, . . unloving. We’re just, being dumb. He’s not, being callous. We’re just, being illogical. Can anybody blame God, if we choose to say, . . . “I’m going to go my way, out this door, . . . into eternity.” No. It’s, our choice.

5) There’s one other eternal reality, we need to cover, today. **There’s no chance, . . . no second chance, . . . after you die.**

You get to choose, where, you’re going to spend eternity. But, you have to choose, now, while you’re alive, . . . not after, you’re dead. In other words, we can’t walk out this door, our way, and then say, “I don’t like this. I want to, go back.” No. God says, “I gave you an entire lifetime, to make the right decision, and you didn’t take it. You kept putting it off, putting it off, putting it off. I gave you, . . an, entire lifetime.”

So, there is no halfway house, . . between, Heaven and Hell. There’s no, intermediate state. There’s no, limbo. There’s no purgatory.

Some people, . . . were raised Catholics. Purgatory, is not, in the Bible. The word, is not even, there. It’s not, a Bible idea. It’s not something, that Jesus, or God, taught. It’s something, that was created, . . 800 years ago, in the middle ages. Purgatory, . . . is not even, in the Bible.

In fact, Catholics don’t even, believe it, any more. Pope John Paul II stated in a very public way, that purgatory was not, a real place. Pope Benedict, the newest catechism of the Catholic church, the word “purgatory” isn’t even in there, any more. They’ve taken it out. Why? Because, it’s not, in the Bible. It’s a theory, that was created, . . . during, the middle ages.

Jesus, when He was dying on the cross, . . and, there was a guy next to Him, who had been a criminal, his entire life. The guy had done only bad, his entire life. In his last seconds, he has a deathbed conversion. He’s dying on the cross, next to Jesus, and he says to Jesus, “Lord, remember me, when You go, to paradise.”

That’s all he knew, about salvation, . . . is that Jesus, can save me. He didn’t know, . . . all the doctrines. He didn’t know, . . . all the fancy words. He just, said yes, . . . to Jesus.

And, Jesus looks at him, and says, “You’re going to have to spend, about a year, in purgatory.” No. That’s not at all, what He said. Jesus looks at the guy, next to Him, and He goes, . . . “**Today**, . . today, . . . you’ll be with me, . . . in paradise.” Boom! That’s it!

\*\*\* What does it take, to get into Heaven? You say, Yes, . . . to Jesus Christ. He says, Today. Not, next week. Not, next month. Not, in three or four years, while people pray for you, and hope you get out of limbo. No, He says, . . *today.* The moment you die, you either go straight to Heaven, or you go straight to Hell. It’s a choice, . . . here on earth. God is doing everything, to make sure, . . . you get into Heaven.

The Bible says, in 2 Corinthians 5:8 – *“To be absent from the body, . . . is to be present, . . . with the Lord.”*

The Bible says, in Matthew 25:46 – *“They will go away, into eternal punishment. But, the righteous, will go into eternal life.”* The reality is, . . . there are two places.

Friends, this is, so important. What we’re talking about, in this series, . . is **your**, eternal destiny. Maybe, some other time, when I’ve been preaching, you’ve used it, for a good naptime. This would not, be a series, . . to take a nap. Because, **your** eternal destiny, . . . depends on this one.

I want everybody, to be absolutely certain, when we finish, . . that when you leave, you know without a shadow of a doubt, you’re going to Heaven. You can settle, that issue, . . . today. These next couple of weeks,

 . . . I want you to listen, . . . as if your life, depends on it.

 (If your lost, . . . be here, next week! We’ll talk about, . . . hell.)

“The Realities of Life” – Eternal Realties, Part 1 of 4

2 Corinthians 4:16 - 5:10

*“Right now we are looking in a mirror that gives only a dim reflection of reality but one day we shall see reality face to face!”* 1 Cor. 13:12

THE REALITIES OF LIFE

**5 Spiritual Realities:**

1. God made you to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_and wants your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Jeremiah 31:3 – *“I have loved you with an everlasting love. And, with unfailing love I have drawn you to Myself.”*

2. You were made to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 – *“He has planted eternity, in the human heart.”*

3. God has prepared two \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

John 14:2-3 – *“I’m going, to prepare a place, for you.* *And, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, you may be also.”*

Matthew 25:34 – *“Come, you who are blessed, by My Father. Take your inheritance, the kingdom,* ***prepared*** *for you,* *since the creation, of the world.”*

Matthew25:41 – *“Jesus said, ‘Then He will say, to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil, and his angels.’”*

4. You choose \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_you’ll spend \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Deuteronomy 11:26-28 – *“Today, I’m giving you the choice, between a blessing, and a curse. You’ll be blessed, if you obey the commands, of the Lord, your God. Or, you’ll receive a curse, if you reject Me, and, My commands.”*

Deuteronomy 30:15-19 – *“See! I have set before you today, life and good, or death and evil. If you obey My commandments, by loving the Lord, your God, and, by walking in His ways, then, you’ll live, and you’ll multiply, and I will bless you. But, if your heart turns away from Me, to worship other things, and to serve them, then you will perish. Therefore, choose life. Choose life, that you may live.”*

5. There is no \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, after you die.

2 Corinthians 5:8 – *“To be absent from the body, is to be present, with the Lord.”*

Matthew 25:46 – *“They will go away, into eternal punishment. But, the righteous, will go into eternal life.”*