



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 Corinthians 5: 1-5

Spring 2025

"Better Things Ahead"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. We are continuing our studies in 2 Corinthians. We're in chapter 5, and we're going to look at the first five verses. We've had a Sunday in between our last lesson, and you'll remember that we ended with verse 18, of chapter 4, and Paul is speaking of, "...the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

I take him to mean there, 'The promises that God has given us', we haven't seen them, but they're promises that He has given, and they're glorious promises. And now he comes to one in particular—that of *the resurrection*.

He begins chapter 5 with, "For we know..." (he speaks of these "things that are not seen").

5 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. **2** For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, **3** inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. **4** For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. **5** Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

2 Corinthians 5: 1-5

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of study together in it. Let's pray.

Father, it is a great privilege always, to be with Your people and to do this very thing—to come to the text of Scripture, read it together, and then spend time considering its meaning, its application, and the encouragement that it gives us; and so we look to You to bless us to that end.

We pray that You would strengthen us through the study of this Word and that we might have clarity on it from the instruction, the enlightenment that come from the Holy Spirit. May He open our eyes to this text; and may He make the applications that the preacher can't make, neglects to make...doesn't understand all of the issues that everyone is dealing with—but the Spirit of God does, and He can do that; and we pray for that. We pray this will be a time of instruction, learning, and worship.

Father we thank You that we are the recipients of Your grace and the work of Your Son. Thank You for sending Him into this world to die for His people at such a cost—to suffer in our place the penalty for all of our sins and yet to have done it and be able to cry out with victory, "It is finished!" And having put our faith in Him, that's true for us... 'It's finished!' You accept us as righteous in Your sight only for the righteousness imputed to us and received by faith alone.

Thank You for what Your Son has done that enables us in this hour to spend time thinking with eyes that see, and ears that hear, and minds that understand and can be enlightened by the Spirit of God. So we pray for that LORD; we pray that this would be a time, (as I've said), of instruction and learning.

But we also thank You for this great privilege we have for doing what we're doing...and that is coming to the throne of grace and praying for our needs—our spiritual needs, but also LORD, our material needs. And You know all of them. You know the difficulties that some of our members are going through, and the protracted problems, and health issues that they have, and You care very much about them. We pray that You would bring healing, and encouragement, and strength. And give all of us

thankful hearts for the blessings You've given us...health being one of them. May we use our health and may we use the days You've given us to Your glory; and may we be encouraged to do that from our time of study together this morning.

We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) In a letter to a dying woman in America, C. S. Lewis wrote, "There are better things ahead than any we leave behind." That's an encouraging word, and a statement of our hope. —But how did he know that?

Well, he knew it for the same reason any of us know it; it's revealed in the Bible... in fact all through the Bible. The Old Testament speaks of the believer's hope after this life:

Psalm 23 ends, "And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Psalm 16, verse 10, gives the promise of resurrection.

Jesus promised eternal life to every believer in Him, in John 3:16;

and a place in His Father's house, in John 14, verse 2.

Jesus was raised from the dead and promised to raise up His people in John chapter 6, verse 40.

So, when Paul begins 2 Corinthians 5 with the statement, "For we know", and then speaks of our future and what can be expected after death—he is referring to this 'special knowledge' that we have...this 'revelation' that he gave a lot of it himself on this very subject in 1 Corinthians 15, (it's all about the resurrection of the body). So, there are better things ahead than any we leave behind.

What we leave behind is the difficult experience of a physical body: "...our outer man is decaying..."; we are, 'afflicted in this world.' (Paul recounts that in the previous verses in chapter 4, verses 16 through 18.)

But those afflictions suffered as a faithful Christian and in the service of Christ, are doing a wonderful thing for all of us. They are producing in us “an eternal weight of glory”, (ibid.), that will be realized in the resurrection and the glorification of our bodies. There is nothing we suffer in this all too brief life, that can be compared with the glory that it is producing in us—and that we will have for all eternity.

But, the resurrection is still future, and God's people have been dying for ages; they've been dying for millennia. What is the mode or the manner of existence between death and resurrection? What is heaven like?

Well that is the question that Paul takes up in the first five verses of 2 Corinthians, chapter 5. And his lesson is, ‘Whether we die and our body is buried, or we're alive when Christ returns, our future is glorious. So, be of good courage! Do not lose heart; in fact, we have every reason to be encouraged, and to be longing for that. Whatever the LORD has for us, it will be glorious!’

Well he begins in verse 1 by comparing our earthly body, (which he calls a “tent”), with our resurrection body, (which he calls “a building”—something temporary changed into something permanent). Verse 1; "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The only reason that Paul, or we, can consider our death and the disillusion of our bodies calmly, and look to the future hopefully, is because of the resurrection. This present body is doomed...it is a “tent”, Paul says. That was a familiar image to Paul since he, as you know, was a tent maker by profession. And I think that must have reminded him, [as he made these tents, day after day, worked on them and knew the purpose of them and the end of them], it reminded him of the impermanence of this life and the impermanence of this present body.

It was also a common image to the Jewish people because of the Feast of Tabernacles, when the nation re-enacted the wilderness experience: They lived in

'tents', or they lived in 'booths' until they arrived in Canaan; and that was re-enacted every year, and they would think about that. So Paul saw the *tent* as a very good picture of life in this world: It is an insecure structure, (it can be blown over with a sudden gust of wind), and it is intended as a *temporary* shelter. People, or armies, would travel from one place to another, 'pitching their tents' as they went—but only until they arrived at their destination; and when they entered the city, then they would discard the tent.

So, that is true of us. As we depart this world and enter into heaven, 'the tent' of this body is torn down, and we enter the city of God...and ultimately receive the permanent 'house' of the resurrection body at a later date.

Now Paul leaves open the possibility that, '*death and resurrection*' is not something that's inevitable. He wrote, "...if the earthly tent...is torn down..." (vs1), (and it won't be if Christ returns before we die), then death won't be experienced; and then there will be an immediate transformation of the body from this present weakness to glory. And that's really our hope.

That's Paul's hope. He didn't know when the Lord would return, but he knew it could be in his lifetime...and he knew that it might not be. We read today these 'New Testament scholars' who often say, 'Paul was thinking it was going to be in his lifetime; and that he was expecting that.'—but Paul didn't know that it would be in his lifetime... but he knew that was a possibility.

It is a possibility for every generation. 'No man knows the hour', as Jesus said, (Mar 13:30), but we know that it will happen. So every generation has the hope of being that last generation who will, "not die", but be *raptured*—"caught up" to meet Christ in the air; that's what Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4 verse 17; and he states the same in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 52.

But if we are not, if we die, we don't lose anything because we know that, "...we have a building from God, a house..." (vs1), meaning, 'We will have a resurrection body.' That is a *certainty* for all of the children of God, all of His people. They have that...it's coming.

Now, there are different explanations for this verse; (and I think this is not an easy passage to understand, so probably not an easy one to preach, but I'm going to give my effort at it)...but there are different explanations for this verse—and I'm not going to spend much time on them but give you a couple.

First, the meaning of “building”—‘tent’ vs. ‘building’. Princeton theologian Charles Hodge wrote an excellent commentary on 1st and 2nd Corinthians, (and on Romans as well...everything he wrote was excellent), but in his commentary, Hodge interprets the expression, “building from God”, as a reference to *heaven*; and you can understand why he might do that. ‘In the Father's house...’, Jesus said in John 14, (vs1), ‘...there are many dwelling places’; and He spoke of going there, ‘to prepare a place for us.’ (vs2). So when we die, our soul, apart from the body, *enters heaven...enters* the house of God.’

Well that's true. But that really doesn't fit the contrast that Paul is making here which is ‘our tent’, our fragile body, will be replaced by a strong, permanent body, a ‘sturdy building made by God’. So while what Hodge is teaching is true, I don't think it fits the analogy that Paul is making here.

Others have interpreted ‘the building’, as ‘a body’, but an ‘intermediate body’ that the saints will have while they are in heaven—one between our present physical body and our future resurrection body. And that's an attractive idea...the Book of Revelation does describe saints in heaven as dressed in white robes in chapter 7...and that suggests bodies. But we need to be careful with that because the Book of Revelation has a lot of figurative language, a lot of *anthropomorphic* language. Other texts, like Hebrews chapter 12, verse 23, speak of the saints in heaven as “spirits”.

What prohibits the idea of an ‘intermediate body’ is verses 3 and 4, where Paul states that death involves being “unclothed” and “naked”—meaning a, ‘disembodied spirit’, (a soul without a body)—he speaks of that as being “unclothed”.

So this, as I said, is not an easy text. There are good interpretations on all sides, and good interpreters on all of that.

But I think the idea is, 'We have the hope of heaven at death and ultimately, the certain hope of the resurrection to come.' When we die, our soul and our conscious self, enters directly into God's presence. As Paul puts it in verse 8, "...absent from the body...at home with the Lord." The glory of God will clothe us there; we'll be clothed in His light. It will be a place of light, and fellowship, and joy where we will await the day of the resurrection, the day of the Lord's return.

So death is not something that we are to fear; and Paul develops that particularly in the next passage we'll look at next week; 'absent from the body, present with the Lord.' So we don't fear death. Paul didn't fear death at all.

But there is something even better. What we long for is what Paul suggests in verse 1...the Lord's return when we will be changed immediately; we will escape death altogether. That's what Paul speaks of in verse 2, where he describes the transformation that will occur when we receive our glorified body, and "put it on", as it were...or it is 'put on us', like a coat, over this present fragile body; "For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven..." (vs2).

"We groan" Paul says, (vs2). We are weak in these mortal bodies, and these mortal bodies are "decaying", as Paul said back in chapter 4. That might account for it—for this groaning that he speaks of; it certainly contributes to it.

But it's not just that; it's also that we are new creatures in Christ. We have the Holy Spirit within us, and we want the completion of our salvation with our resurrection bodies. Paul wrote in Romans chapter 8, verse 23, that, "...having the first fruits of the Spirit, we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." We long for the consummation of our salvation that will happen in the resurrection; and "the first fruits of the Spirit", (ibid.) Paul says are producing that in us...producing that "longing". (vs2).

Now Paul indicates here in verse 5, that the Holy Spirit produces that *longing*. He gives us a taste of the life to come, the first fruits of all of that. We have a 'taste' of

what's to come, and so we long for the fullness of it, we long for the glorification of this body.

That will happen at the Lord's return. That is when we will receive the resurrection body, which here in verse 2, Paul describes as being like a coat that, 'we put on over our body', or is, 'put on over our body'. Literally, the Greek word translated, "to be clothed", is, "to clothe upon". So it has the idea of putting something on over our present body, like putting an overcoat over our clothes.

Those who are alive at Christ's return will not die. They will, as it were, 'put on' the spiritual, heavenly body that will transform this earthly body into something immortal—something glorious. That's how Paul describes the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 53; "For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality." And it will be glorious beyond all comprehension.

He indicates that in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 37, where he compares the dying and rising body to the seed and its plant, or its tree. Now, I think that image that he gives us in 1 Corinthians 15:37 of the seed and the tree gives us an indication of the resurrection body, at least what it will be like. Now he doesn't describe it, but he gives you a sense of how great it is compared to what we are now, and how great this promise is that Paul so much longed for. And following that analogy, I think we are given a sense of just how glorious it's going to be. Again, a sense of it, but not a description of it.

Imagine for a moment that you've never seen a tree, and you don't know what one is. But you've seen acorns, you know what a seed of a tree is; and you know that acorn will someday be 'glorified'. Well, what would it be like? You think about that...you take that acorn in your hand, and you turn it and look at it, and you think, 'It's going to be glorious someday. It's going to be perfect. It's going to be ... what? Big? Maybe symmetrical? Maybe it'll be of gold or silver?!'...

No! It will become something you can't imagine that it will become—a tree, a mighty oak! The tree is in the acorn, but no one could imagine an oak tree by looking at an acorn. The two are dissimilar; they're completely different in appearance. The tree is there in the acorn—which I say it's not particularly attractive, (except it may be beautiful

to a botanist, or a dendrologist, a person who studies trees), but the acorn cannot be compared to the oak tree.

And it's the same with this present body, and what it will become in the resurrection. We think it's going to be bigger, this resurrection body will be bigger and fitter and stronger. —And yes, it will be—but much more than that. The fittest and the most beautiful of people that we can imagine are just mere '*acorns*' compared to what we will be. We're going to be like oak trees—and we're going to be fit for the kingdom to come; we're going to be fit for what is to follow that.

Jesus describes the kingdom to come in Matthew 19, verse 28, as, "the regeneration", (the *regeneration* of this earth). It's going to be a glorious age—but much more than that. We will be fit for "the new heavens and new earth", (2Pe 3:13), a whole other dimension, an existence beyond our best ability to imagine. God is presently preparing us for that. He is, "...producing for us an eternal weight of glory...", far beyond all comprehension, "...far beyond all comparison." (2Cor 4:18).

So no wonder Paul longed for that. His sighing signified not how hard his life was, (though for Paul it was very hard; and that, no doubt, contributed to his sighing), but his groaning was due to the greatness of the life to come, anticipating it, looking forward to it. That's what Paul preferred to death and the intermediate state in heaven...the Lord's return and instant transformation. And we all want that; that's what we all desire.

And he explained 'why' in verse 3. It's because by being transformed at Christ's return, we will avoid being without a body, "...in as much as we, having put it on, will not be found naked." (vs10).

That was a specifically Christian longing to have a body, (and not be in this disembodied state); particularly Christians in that particular age because the Greeks of Paul's day, the philosophers, those who followed the teachings of Plato and Pythagoras, wanted to be free of the body: "Naked", as Paul put it. (vs3). They considered the body to be bad. They considered the material world to be evil. The spiritual is perfect. They

described this body as, “prison house of the soul”; it restricted us. They wanted to be liberated from it so that they could soar to the heavens.

But that's completely unnatural. God made us to be body and soul, material and immaterial—body, soul, and spirit. And we are not complete, we are not whole without a body. The resurrection body will not be an impediment to soaring—it will not be an impediment to anything. It will be material and spiritual. In 1 Corinthians 15, verse 44, Paul calls it, “a spiritual body”; physical and spiritual with limitless possibilities. That's what Paul desired; because again, as he states in verse 4, he did not want to be “unclothed” to be in an incorporeal, disembodied state. That too, is a reason we groan in this tent, this body. We don't want to experience what death is, the unnatural separation of the body and the soul—being “unclothed”.

Now Paul was not expressing in all of this, a fear of death. Death is not something that the Christian should fear. It is, “The last enemy,” as Paul describes it elsewhere, (1Cor 15:26), and it is not a pleasant experience. No one desires that; but we don't fear it, (or we shouldn't fear it), the sting of death for us has been removed.

Nor did Paul prefer this life to the next life; he's not saying that. It's not that he thought earth was much better than heaven...that he didn't want to leave this realm, this world.

Heaven will be glorious. It will be full of peace and bliss. It will be incomparably better to anything we know here. It will be a place, according to Revelation 7, verse 17, (and you read through the Book of Revelation, you learn a great deal about heaven in that book), but there, we are told that God, “...will wipe away every tear from our eyes.” I think that's metaphorical, we're not to have literal eyes, but what his point is, the point of that statement is that all of the problems of this life, all of the difficulties we've undergone in this life, the sufferings, the sorrow, all of that, will be explained, all of that will be put in perfect relation to God's plan—and we'll see how it all was for a good

purpose...and we'll rejoice in it. There will be no sorrow there, no sadness—only joy unspeakable. That's heaven; it's something to long for.

But Paul is saying here that, 'We long for something even better, and prefer to bypass the intermediate state and directly experience ultimate glorification.' That is something far better, far richer than an incorporeal bodily existence in heaven, as rich and as good as it will be.

Even the saints in heaven are represented as longing for the consummation. In Revelation chapter 6, verse 9, you read of these souls under the altar crying out, "how long?" They're crying out for justice, but they're crying out for the consummation of it all and the glory to come. So Paul wanted to be alive at the Lord's return and have this present mortal existence, "...swallowed up by life." (vs4c), as he puts it; ('swallowed up in the resurrection life.')

One of the commentators depicted that as a large fish swallowing a small fish, and the same language that's used here, is used of the great fish swallowing Jonah in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. And so maybe Paul had that very image in mind when he wrote this—that the life of the age to come, 'resurrection life', 'eternal life' will 'swallow up' mortality. And the good news is, 'Some will never experience that—they have that hope of the Lord's return.'

That's 'best'. That's Paul's point—and it's our hope. But either way, we will have a new and glorious body. God promises it, and He has given us a down payment as proof and assurance...it's the down payment of the Holy Spirit. Verse 5, "Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge."

Paul wants to make it clear that this hope we have of ultimately being clothed with the glorified body is all of God; it's His work; it's His promise; He will do it. In the Greek text the word 'God' is in a position of emphasis; it's His work from start to finish, and based completely on His sovereign grace.

Paul outlines it briefly in Romans chapter 8, verses 29 through 30; **"For those whom He foreknew ..."**. (Now, that doesn't mean, 'Those that He looked down through time and saw who would believe and who wouldn't believe'.) **"Those whom He**

foreknew", means, 'Those whom He *foreloved*.' It doesn't mean He 'foreknew' *something* about them...rather it's, 'He foreknew them'. And that word, 'know' is a euphemism for *love* in the Bible. He foreloved them; He 'elected' them. So, those whom He 'elected', **"...He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, ..."** (Paul wasn't a Calvinist. Calvin was a 'Paulinist'), **"...these whom He predestined..."**, (Paul had no qualms about speaking about predestination and election—no qualms at all about preaching the sovereignty of God; and that's what we see here), **"...and these whom He predestined He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified He also glorified."** (Rom 8: 29-30).

It's all of God. Paul makes that very clear that it is not our work. So we, by our own effort, don't guarantee its success. He will accomplish it, He will accomplish all of His purposes for us. That's indicated by the grammar: Paul ends, "...He also glorified." (ibid.) He "glorified" us...but that's the future, and yet he puts it, 'in the past', (and you've heard me preach on this more than once, and probably heard Dr. Johnson preach on it as well), it's a way of saying, 'It is so certain to occur, this glorification, that it is as though it's already happened...He's already glorified us.' It's already certain; it's going to happen...we have that confidence: Those whom He *foreloved* from all eternity, He will glorify in the future!

This is why we all should rejoice!...not be troubled by, but *rejoice* in sovereign grace; it guarantees that God's plan will succeed. If it were left to us and our abilities, (and our *best* abilities), we'd fail. We'd fail immediately, we'd fail miserably.

But it doesn't depend upon us. God is in control. He has His plan, and He's working it out, and it will be accomplished. Which means He will get all the glory—but we get the blessing.

Now there are two assurances of this hope that we have. The *first* is an external assurance, the word of the apostles, the Word of God, the Bible, the New Testament...all

of the Word of God. We know this is true because it's been revealed to us; and here it's been revealed by the apostle Paul.

But *secondly*, we have the internal assurance of the Holy Spirit. Paul said that God gave Him to us as a "pledge", (vs5). A 'down payment'—that's the idea of the word. And of course, in business, a down payment is, (and I'm probably the worst person in the world to speak about business but...), in business, a down payment is the first deposit showing good faith. It's a pledge given as proof that the rest will come, the rest will be paid.

But the Holy Spirit is not a static deposit—He's not like a sack of coins in a safe. He's alive, and He is active, and He's presently imparting to us spiritual life—life of the age to come in this present life, 'resurrection life', as Paul speaks of it in the Book of Philippians. He is changing us. He is sanctifying us, increasingly giving us the mind of Christ and expanding that mind so that we think about these very things—about our glorious destiny; and long for it; and live for it...and it gives us the assurance that it is a real hope, a certain hope.

The world mocks such ideas like 'heaven' and the 'resurrection' just like the philosophers did in Athens when Paul was on Mars' Hill preaching the resurrection. They wanted to hear about this; they didn't know what the resurrection was... 'anastasis', (*resurrection*), 'What is that?...Some God?' And he begins to explain what it was, and they thought, 'That's absurd!' They laughed at him. (Acts 17.) That was the mentality of the Greeks.

Well, we have that in the world around us; people don't believe in these things. Today we live in a secular, materialistic age: 'This is it...this is what you have. And what's to come?...Who knows?— Probably nothing.'

We, however, have an internal witness that assures us that everything we read in the Word of God is true—and that witness overcomes the doubts. It's not subjective; it's not, 'We have a feeling'. It's a real, objective witness from the third Person of the Trinity

who dwells within us. In Romans chapter 8, verse 16, Paul wrote, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God..."

And He impresses on us the truth of God's promises so that we know they are true. There's an internal witness of the Word of God itself; it carries its own evidence and it proves itself. It's "self-authenticating", as Calvin put it; but it is that to the people who have 'eyes to see and ears to hear' and the Spirit of God to enlighten them.

For Paul, this was an unshakable promise, this promise of the resurrection. It was his certain hope, and he longed for that glorious transformation. He longed for the completion, the consummation of it all in the resurrection body.

He longed for heaven, too. He got a glimpse of it; he tells us about that later in chapter 12. Some years before he wrote this letter, he had been, "...caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words." (2Cor 12:4). It was paradise, a wonderland where he heard and saw things that were real and beyond description. It was a place he longed to be.

He told the Philippians, in Philippians chapter 1, verse 23, that he longed, "...to depart and be with Christ; that...", (he said), "...is very much better...", than being here. For us, at every stage, there are "better" things ahead. And in this life, presently, we are, (as we live obediently, as we follow the instruction of the apostles and the Lord, as we live obediently to the Word of God), we are being transformed—presently, inwardly, "from glory to glory". (2Cor 3:18). And at this very moment that's taking place.

And when we depart this life we enter heaven and God's house, where Jesus said, "there are many dwelling places." (Jn 14:2). We are there with Christ, and with all the saints. Primarily though we're there with Christ; we see Him; and we fellowship directly with Him...it will be a great reunion.

Then comes the Lord's return, the resurrection, the glorification of our body, the kingdom on this earth, (on a *glorified* earth), followed ultimately by "a new heavens and a new earth." (2Pe 3:13). And there, for all eternity, we will go, "from glory to glory...", forever', and always having before us the hope that the best is yet to come. Always

before us something better and glorious...more glorious. That's our hope; it's unending and unlimited—and we should long for that.

Now that's not some morbid death wish—Paul didn't have that. In fact, his great privilege in life was to serve Christ here, in this world. He told the Philippians, (Phl 1:23), that he, 'was torn between wanting to leave and to be with Christ, and wanting to stay and be with them and continue ministering to them.' (And he knew that was much better because that's what they needed.)

No. A longing for heaven and the resurrection is not morbid; it's the opposite:

It is invigorating to service and to true living—true *life* in this world.

It's what gives us victory over the world,

And gets us living well by,

Knowing what's to come,

Knowing the victory is ours,

Knowing the glory that's coming that,

Impels us to live a life to the Lord's glory

And thankfulness for what He's done for us.

And as we grow in Christ, we increasingly grow less impressed with this world and long for what is to come.

I like the way John Bunyan ended *Pilgrim's Progress*, where he tells of Christian and Faithful entering the Celestial City. They traveled a long way, and it had been a hard journey. He said, when the gates were opened to let in the men, he looked in after them, and he saw the glory of that city, that, (as he writes), "shone like the sun, and the multitudes that were there with crowns on their heads." He concluded, "After that they shut up the gates, which when I had seen, I wished myself among them."

And we would too, were we to see a the glimpse of that city.

Of course, we haven't seen that city. We haven't seen heaven. We live 'by faith, not by sight.' Our faith is in God's Word; it's in His revelation. It is what we '*know*', as Paul said. The promises that have been given, what has been revealed in the Word of God, what has been revealed by the prophets, and the glorious things to come...that's what is revealed...that's what we *know*.

Do we know it? Do we believe it? We must, because it is God's inerrant Word. And the more we read of it, the more we will believe it, and the stronger we will become—and the more hopeful we will be and the more joyful and confident we will be...and the more we will wish ourselves among them, and long for it.

The American lady, C. S. Lewis wrote to, was not looking forward to being among them. She was fearful of death; she wanted, rather, to stay in this world. So Lewis asked her, "Has the world been so kind to you that you should leave it with regret?" Well, that's a rhetorical question...obviously, 'No!' Then he assured her, "There are better things ahead than any we leave behind." That's true. That's our hope; and our hope is not a wish, it is certain.

But that glorious future is only for believers. So, have you believed in Christ? He is God's Son and our Savior. He became a man in order to die in our place—and bear the penalty of our sin. And those who believe in Him are saved; they are forgiven; their sins are paid for by Christ.

The believer receives, at the moment of faith, forgiveness and His righteousness. So believe in Him: Be clean, be forgiven, be justified, be righteous—and have,

The hope of heaven,
Paradise,
The resurrection and,
The eternal glory to come!

May God help you to do that, help all of us to rejoice in this future that God has promised us—and that it's coming. Let's pray,

(Closing prayer) What a great thing, Father, to be able to sing, 'of the love of our Redeemer.' Thank You for the love of the Godhead, of the Triune God, for lost sinners and for Your choice of us and Your redemption of us.

And what a privilege! Help us to reflect on that; help us in the hour to come to reflect deeply on what Your Son has done for us in His obedience to You—and the Spirit's work in bringing us to that saving knowledge of Him and bringing us to faith in Him.

Thank You for Your grace. Thank You for the hope that we have—hope that the world does not have but we have it because of the death of Your Son. Hope...

For heaven,
And the resurrection,
And the glories of the world to come;
Thank You Father.

We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen

(End of Audio)