

VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

Sermon #29, Lord's Day 22

The Future of the Christian



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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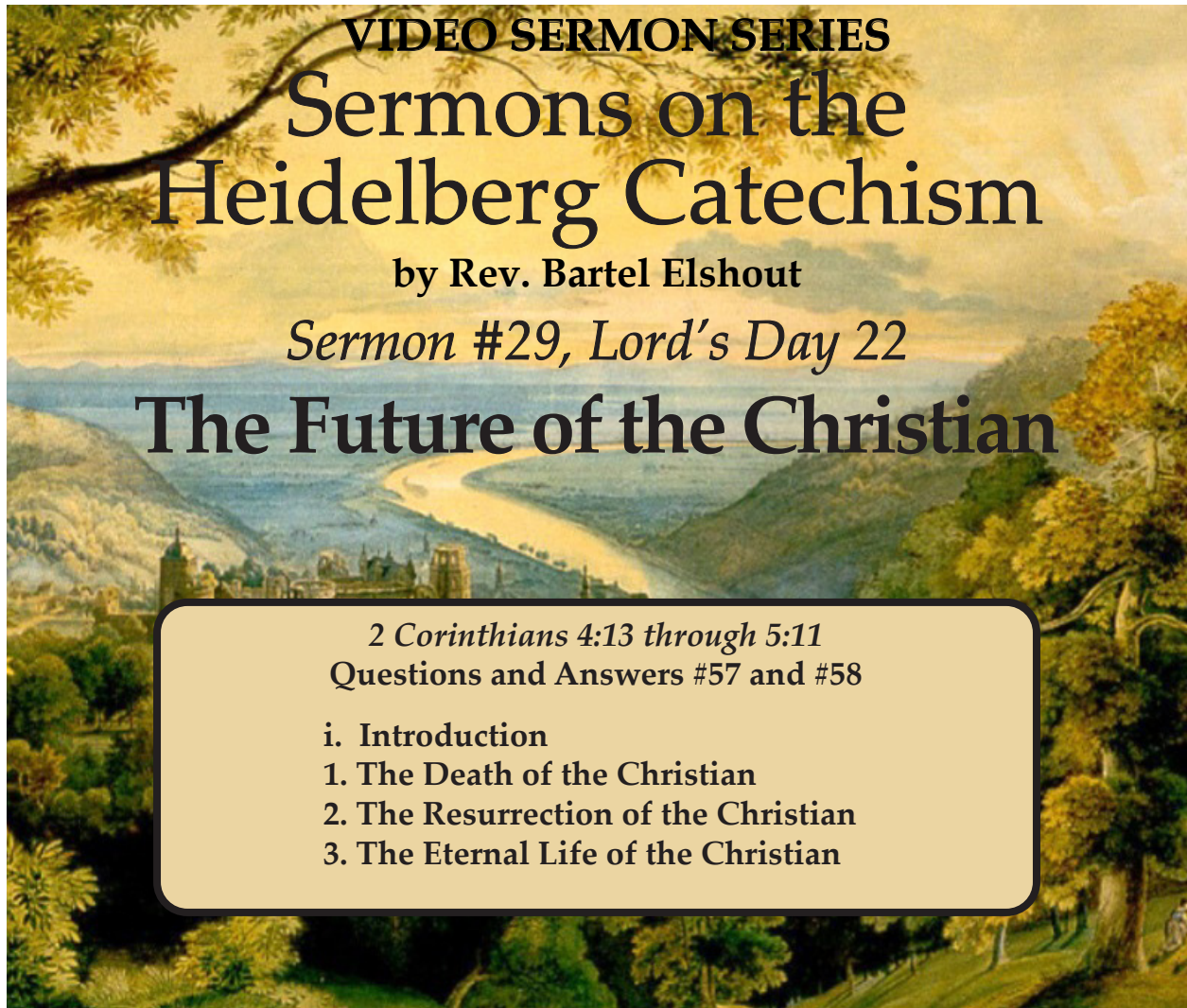
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Sermon #29, Lord's Day 22

The Future of the Christian

2 Corinthians 4:13 through 5:11
Questions and Answers #57 and #58

i. Introduction

- 1. The Death of the Christian**
- 2. The Resurrection of the Christian**
- 3. The Eternal Life of the Christian**

Introduction

Congregation, turn with me for a moment to Psalm 89, and I just want to briefly look at verses 47 and 48. And there we read God's Word: "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah." And again, that word "Selah" always means that something weighty, very weighty, has just been said; stop and pause and consider, what is the answer to these questions? And of course, verse 47—that's where I should have started: "Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?" And then follows, "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?"

Congregation, how necessary, and how profitable it is for us to be reminded of that time and again. And boys and girls, that's important for you too. You are still very young. Some of you are children. But "Remember," it says, "Remember how short my time is." And really, our time here on earth is but a very short time, especially in light of eternity. It matters not whether you die as a child, or whether you die as a ninety-year-old person, our time here is short. And boys and girls, when you ask your grandpas and grandmas, they will tell you how true this is. They will tell you how very quickly life has gone by, and how short that time as been.

Then, the question, “Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?” Is that true? Have all men then been made in vain? It would almost seem that way, especially when we go to a cemetery, as we will be called upon again this week. What a solemn experience it is, and ought to be, when you are in a cemetery, when you are surrounded by gravestones, all of which proclaim the same message—our time is short. It is appointed unto you, also, once to die and after that the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). “What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?” The answer is, there’s not a single man, not a single woman, not a single child that will escape this reality. “Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?” The grave whispers the inescapable destiny of every son and daughter of Adam.

And yet, congregation, by God’s grace, it makes a great difference how we die. The question isn’t if we will die, but how do we die? How do we close our eyes? How do we face that inescapable moment that will forever seal our eternal destiny? That’s why death is so serious. Because, congregation, we only get to die once. We only get to die once, and when that moment comes, the day of grace is past. It is during that short time that the psalmist speaks of, it’s during that short time that God gives us the opportunity to seek him, and to be reconciled with him. And what a blessing it is that by the grace of God, we may die in the Lord. We just sang together from Psalm 116, that precious in the sight of God is the death of his saints (verse 15). And tonight we will see why that is so.

And so, turn with me to Lord’s Day 22, of our Heidelberg Catechism. And there, we read, in Question #57: *What comfort doth the “resurrection of the body” afford thee?*

The Answer is: *That not only my soul after this life shall be immediately taken up to Christ its Head, but also, that this my body, being raised by the power of Christ, shall be reunited with my soul, and made like unto the glorious body of Christ.*

Question #58: *What comfort—again, the same word—takest thou from the article of “life everlasting”?*

The Answer is: *That since I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, after this life I shall inherit perfect salvation, which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man” to conceive, and that, to praise God therein for ever.*

And so, as we consider the final two articles of the Apostle’s Creed, we are focusing tonight on *The Future of the Christian*, the future of those who die in the Lord, who die in Christ. First of all, we will consider the death of the Christian—what happens when the Christian dies. Secondly, we will focus on the resurrection of the Christian, because then the Answer to Question #57 says, *But also, that this my body, being raised by the power of Christ, shall be reunited with my soul, and [be] made like unto the glorious body of Christ.* So, The resurrection of the Christian. And thirdly, the eternal life of the Christian—what does it mean that we believe in life everlasting? And the Answer so beautifully says that eternal life begins here, and will come to absolute perfection in glory, when Christ returns and will establish his kingdom forever. So, *The Future of the Christian—The Death of the Christian; The Resurrection of the Christian; and, The Eternal Life of the Christian.*

1. The Death of the Christian

Congregation, death is and remains the last enemy, also for God’s children. All of God’s children have those moments when they reflect that that moment is coming for them. And we have been reminded of that again this week, when one who is dear to all of us ended her earthly journey. And then a question arises, “How shall I fair when that moment comes for me?” And why is it that this can be so unsettling to the Christian? Because the Christian understands, when

that moment comes, it must be right. When that moment comes, I cannot be mistaken. When that moment comes, it no longer matters what others think of me. It no longer matters what eulogies are made, what testimonies are given. When that moment comes, only one judgment matters, and that's God's judgment.

And the Christian, when he thinks about himself or herself, instinctively realizes, "At that moment, I must be in Christ. Because then alone can I cross the Jordan of death. At that moment, I must be clothed with his righteousness. At that moment, I must be washed in his precious blood." And the true Christian who has some self-knowledge, when they look back at their lives, when they think of all their sins, when they think of how their life is stained with sin, not only before conversion, but even after conversion, they realize that but for the grace of God, their journey would not end well. And yet, by the grace of God, there can also be moments where there can be an intense longing and an intense desire for that moment, because the Christian realizes that ultimately death is our friend. Death, for the Christian, means the translation into glory. Death means, for the Christian, that the moment we breathe our last breath, we will open our eyes in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think of the wonderful words that Jesus spoke to the thief on the cross, because the Catechism says that *My soul after this life shall be immediately taken up to Christ its Head*. And boys and girls, you know what Jesus said to that thief on the cross, when he uttered that simple prayer of faith, "Lord, remember me." And then, the astounding answer, of a crucified Christ, the astounding answer, he says, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, today thou shalt be with me" (Luke 23:43). That's it. "Thou shalt be with me." And that's the promise that Christ makes to all those, who, like that thief, have put their trust in him. Oh, the moment we breathe our last breath, we shall be with him. We read it from 2 Corinthians 5, verse 8, where Paul says, "We are...willing," he says, "rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Paul said, That's my preference—I long to be with Him. Philippians 1:23, "Having a desire to depart," he says, "and to be with Christ; which is far [far] better."

Oh, congregation, do you know something of that longing? Do you know something of those moments, when your soul yearns for that day; yearns to be with him? Oh, congregation, no one can understand that except the Christian. The ungodly don't understand it. The nominal believer doesn't understand that. But the true believer, for whom Christ has become everything for whom Christ has become so precious, the thought of being with him forever, to behold him in his glory, is something that can so stir his soul in longing for that moment, *taken up to Christ its Head*.

So there's an implication there, and the implication is this, congregation, that I must be united to him here. Only if I am united to him here; only if I am connected to him, as the Head; if I belong to his body, only then shall I be translated into his presence. And so, the question is for us today now, are you united to Christ? And maybe you ask, "Pastor, but how do we know that? How can we know whether we are united to Christ?"

So let me explain this first. When the Holy Spirit regenerates a sinner, at that moment, he unites us to Christ. He unites us the Christ with a union that can never, ever be dissolved. And the moment that happens, the moment we become a living soul, new spiritual life flows out of him into the sinner, the renewed, the regenerated sinner. And congregation, I've said this before: the life that flows out of Christ will ultimately always be oriented toward Christ. The life that flows out of Christ is attracted to Christ. So how do we know that we have become a new creature in Christ, as Paul calls it? Well, we know this—then this Christ, this Jesus, will become altogether lovely to our soul; this Jesus will become altogether attractive to our soul. Because that's how the Spirit of

Christ, who regenerates us, and who then dwells both in him and in us, that Spirit will restlessly labor in us to bring us to Christ, to lead us to Christ. That Spirit will see to it, and he will so convict us of our sin, that that Christ becomes so precious, that that Christ becomes irresistibly attractive to our soul.

And so, I ask you tonight, boys and girls too—what does Jesus Christ mean to you? What does Christ mean to you? Is Christ precious to your soul? Do you know, do you understand this in some measure what that poet meant when he said “Give me Jesus or I die”? Do you understand in some measure of that yearning to know him, and to know more of him, that hungering and thirsting after him and his righteousness? Do you love, do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you love him in sincerity? Because that will be evident, that will be evident in the lives of those who are united to him. That’s why Paul wrote to the Philippians, “For me to live is Christ.” Christ is everything to me. Christ is the focus of my spiritual life. Christ is the hope of my spiritual life. Christ is the pattern of my spiritual life. Christ is everything to me. And then, he says, “and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). Ah, you see, those two belong inseparably together.

That not only my soul after this life shall be immediately taken up to Christ its Head. Oh, this is so beautifully what that confession means, that “I believe in the resurrection of the dead.” And of course, that article is preceded by our confession that we believe in the forgiveness of sins. Of course, those two belong inseparably together. Because, congregation, only those whose sins are forgiven are looking forward to a future of eternal life with Christ. And so, that means negatively, if your sins are not forgiven, you are facing eternal death. Eternal death—what an awful statement that is. Because, congregation, if you die in your sins, if you die without Christ, you are facing a never-ending future of radical separation from God; an everlasting future where you will ever be dying without ever being able to die—everlasting death is the future of all whose sins are not forgiven.

But oh, as I’ve pointed out to you in the past, if there’s anything God wants to assure his people of, he wants to assure them of that blessed reality. He wants his children to rejoice in the realization that, if they have put their trust in Christ, that their sins are pardoned, and that pardon is complete; that pardon is full; that pardon is so comprehensive. Oh, that means when God pardons us for Christ’s sake, he looks at you, and he will say, “I see no sin in my Jacob, and I see no transgression in Israel.” He will freely be able to admit us into his presence. That’s that wedding garment.

Boys and girls, you know that story of the parable of the wedding garment (Matthew 22:1–14). When that king came into the room, only one thing mattered to him. He wanted to see that wedding garment. And why? Because, you see, he had provided that wedding garment. All these people that came from the highways and byways, they came with rags, but it didn’t matter. When they came to the palace, the servants of the king offered them freely a wedding garment to make them acceptable to be in the presence of the king. And when he came, he looked, and he rejoiced to see so many wearing that wedding garment that he had provided, except for one man, who entered without the wedding garment. And you know what happened to him. Oh, the king says, “How did you get in here? How did you get into this company?” And he was cast out to that place where there was weeping and there was gnashing of teeth. And so, only forgiven sinners will be admitted into heaven itself.

The soul will *be immediately taken up to Christ its Head.* Again, such a simple statement, but so very, very precious. And so, we can simply say that all those who are chosen in Christ shall forever be with Christ. That translation, when that happens, is ultimately the crowning piece of God’s eternal and sovereign good pleasure. Because that’s the sequence. That’s the golden chain of

God's saving work in the life of a sinner. Those who are chosen in Christ, who have been given to Christ, who have been redeemed by Christ, who have been united to Christ, who have been drawn to Christ, who have embraced Christ, who are conformed to Christ, shall forever be with Christ. Because where the Head is, that's where the body must also be.

And so, when the believer dies, he enters into what we call, in systematic theology, the *intermediate state*. Why do we call it the intermediate state? Because it is not the final state of glory. It's an intermediate state, because the full redemption still awaits the return of Christ. And that we will see in our second point, when we talk about the resurrection. Not until that day when body and soul are reunited, will the redemption of God's people be complete. But nevertheless, even that intermediate state is a very blessed state indeed. Because in that intermediate state, when the souls of the redeemed are in the presence of Christ, they already experience perfect and complete sanctification; perfect conformity to Christ. Oh, there, they enjoy unbroken communion with Christ, and with all the redeemed saints who are gathered there.

Oh, what must that be! What must that be! We don't know. No one has ever told us. What must it be for a believer to instantly be translated into the presence of Christ; to close your eyes here, to breathe your last breath, and to be translated into his glory? Sometimes, sometimes believers, already, there have been deathbed testimony of saints, where you tell that the dying saints began to see something that was inexpressible. I'm always deeply moved by the story told of my wife's great-grandmother, a godly woman. And she was on her deathbed, and she had been suffering from some dementia as well, but her daughter was there, and heard it out of her own mouth. And suddenly, she became lively. She became lively, and she said, "There he comes! There he comes!" There he comes—that's it. She saw him. She saw him whom her soul loved. "There he comes!" Dear believer, that will be the portion of every saint who close their eyes here and open their eyes in glory. That's why, in Revelation 14, verse 13, we have this wonderful testimony: "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

But we need to go to our second point,

2. The Resurrection of the Christian

But also,—it says—that this my body, being raised by the power of Christ, shall be reunited with my soul, and made like unto the glorious body of Christ. Oh, congregation, what a dramatic moment that shall be—the day of the resurrection! That day, when the exalted Christ, to whom all power in heaven and earth has been given, when the exalted Christ will exercise his power, as the Creator of the universe, to resurrect every single human being that has ever walked along the face of the earth! What a dramatic exercise that will be of the infinite power and majesty of God. Jesus said it himself, in John 5, verses 28 and 29: "Marvel not at this," he said, "for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice"—the same voice, who said, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). And I've been told that, if Christ had not mentioned his specific name, all the graves would have opened, there is so much power in what he said, "Lazarus, come forth." But in that day, he will speak, and all the graves shall be opened.

But we do read in 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 16, something significant. We do read there: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." So, there's going to be an order in which that takes place. So first, all of those for whom he died and gave himself, all who belong to him, all who belong to his body, they will be raised first, they will be resurrected, and then will be caught up in the air to be ever with the Lord. And I believe there's credible biblical evidence that

the redeemed, who will be resurrected first, will witness the final judgment that Christ will execute upon the ungodly.

And it's so beautifully expressed here, that the resurrection of the saints is guaranteed by the resurrection of Christ himself. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 15. Let's read these remarkable verses together, 1 Corinthians 15, verses 20 to 23. There, we read this: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." That's the Bible's wonderful way of describing the death of the saints. They sleep, because they sleep ultimately, not a literal sleep, but it's a blessed sleep until they are awakened. "For since by man came death"—verses 21—"by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

Oh, what a dramatic moment the resurrection of the saints will be! This is truly the final step of his exaltation. What a dramatic moment it will be when Christ's complete and everlasting victory will be sealed. Jesus spoke of it in John 6, verse 40. He says, "This is the will of him that sent me"—listen carefully—"that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." That's why the Apostle Paul could say so triumphantly, at the end of 1 Corinthians 15: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?...But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (verses 55 and 57).

And so, what happens at the resurrection is that body and soul are reunited. They were created to function together. God created us as creatures with a spiritual aspect and with a physical aspect that worked perfectly together in Adam and Eve, until they fell. That's why death is such a very unnatural thing. That's why that final struggle can sometimes last so long. The separation of soul and body is so very unnatural. That's why the redemption of God's children is not complete until that day when body and soul will be united again together.

Turn with me to Job 19, where Job, very early in the history of this world, had a very clear understanding of what would happen in that day. Job 19, verses 25 and 26. Listen to the confession of this godly man, a confession that is so remarkable that we could almost say that he already knew the New Testament before the New Testament was ever written, because he was moved by the same Spirit. "For I know," he says, "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." That's the future for all of God's children. In your flesh, you shall see God.

What an amazing moment that will be, when we are resurrected. And so the question has been often asked me, "How can this be, because so many bodies of the saints have utterly disintegrated, and have been totally returned to the earth from which they came?" There's a mystery about that resurrection. We know today that, when you are born, and if you live to be ninety years old, it's still you, but in that period of time, your body has replaced itself many, many, many times. So, the cells of your body that you have today are not the cells with which you were born. But what happens, when that amazing—the body replaces itself, every seven years this goes on—which, by the way, only confirms that they were originally designed to live and exist forever. But how does the body replace itself?—always according to your genetic blueprint. Every human being has a unique genetic blueprint which is as unique as your fingerprints. And God knows the DNA of every human being he ever created. He knows, with infinite knowledge, the DNA of every son and daughter of man. And I believe that he will miraculously reconstitute a new body, a perfect body, according to your DNA, it will be you. It will have your genetic blueprint. In that sense, it will

be your body, just like your body today is your body as much as it was when you were an infant. And I know I need to be careful here that I don't speculate too much, but I do believe that this, in some way, explains the extraordinary miracle that will take place on that day. And there's no doubt that it will be you. It will be your DNA. It will have your genetic blueprint, just like the Monarch Butterfly completely has the same DNA as that caterpillar. You look at the caterpillar, and you look at the Monarch Butterfly, and you say, "What do they have in common?" Well, what they have in common is their DNA. That's what they have in common. So, in other words, that Monarch Butterfly, which is the beautiful unfolding of that caterpillar, that Monarch Butterfly has the exact same genetic blueprint as that caterpillar. And that's the kind of transformation that's going to happen. That's the kind of remarkable moment that is going to happen.

Turn with me again to 1 Corinthians 15, and let's read a passage that clearly points this out, the passage that will tell us of this remarkable transformation; 1 Corinthians 15, verses 42 through 44: "So also," it says here, "is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption;"—when we die—"it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." And in verse 49, it says: "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

So what does Paul mean by that "spiritual body"? He's simply saying that new body, that will be fashioned like unto the glorified body of Christ, will be so far superior to this body. The beauty of that body will be an indication that it will truly equip God's redeemed people to serve him in a capacity that is unthinkable today. It will be a body that will be so perfect that we will never live in bondage to that body. Now, we live in complete bondage to our body. So much of our lives revolve around the care for our body. Why is it that we have become so adept at creating so much creature comfort?—because of our bodies. And you can fill in the details in how many ways we live in bondage to our weak and frail bodies. And Paul is saying, that new body—that Monarch Butterfly, if you will—that new body will be a perfect body; it will be a spiritual body; it will be a body that will be wholly equipped to serve God perfectly and completely. And so, there is a mystery what that shall be. But we do have a preview, because Christ appeared to his disciples already in that glorified body, and that glorified body was so remarkable, so beautiful, that initially they didn't recognize him. There was something about him, where that glory already began to emanate from his glorified body. That's the future of God's people. Oh, what a blessed future! And that's why, congregation, that's why, your redemption will not be complete until that day. That's why God's children who are now in glory are in the intermediate state, longing for that final and permanent reality.

And then, finally,

3. The Eternal Life of the Christian

What comfort takest thou from the article of "life everlasting"? It says, That since I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, after this life I shall inherit perfect salvation, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" to conceive, and that, to praise God therein for ever. Eternal life; eternal life—what does that mean? So, boys and girls, it doesn't just mean that you will live forever. That's true, God's children will live forever. But it means more than that; it means much more than that. Because then, the question is, What is life? How do we define life? How do we define that life that will be eternal, that will never end?

Now, we have to go back to Paradise. Adam and Eve were living souls—not just because God

breathed his breath into them, but they were living souls. God's Spirit dwelt in them. And before they fell, they lived in perfect communion and fellowship with God. That's why they were alive. They were alive because of their intimate relationship with God and their life with God, united to God, and they enjoyed communion with God. Morning and evening, they would meet in that special sanctuary where God would meet with them and reveal himself to them, and that spanned their life. Their whole life revolved around their relationship with God. That's what it means to be "alive." That's what we have lost in our deep fall. That's what's restored in regeneration, when we become a new creature in Christ.

That's why it says here, *Since I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal [life]*. John 3 ends with these words, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." In other words, that life already begins to function here. When we become a new creature in Christ, when we are united to Christ, that original blessing that Adam and Eve enjoyed begins to function. That means that again I am again united to my Maker; I have a love relationship with my Maker; but I also begin to live in communion and fellowship with my Maker. That's why we call prayer the breath of spiritual life. When we become spiritually alive, we begin to breathe. Just like when a child is born, the first thing it does when it's born, it begins to breathe. And so, a living soul, regenerated by the Spirit, united to Christ, begins to live, it begins to breathe. And that's why Christ said of Saul of Tarsus, very simply, "Behold, he prayeth" (Acts 9:11). For the first time in his life he really prayed. And for the first time in his life, his heart now went out to the God whom he had so deeply and grievously offended.

And so, the essence of spiritual life today is that God's children already experience something of that joy, that unspeakable joy of experiencing communion with God in Christ. That's why Paul writes, in Romans 14, verse 17, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." There is not a single true believer on earth who has not, in some measure, tasted something of that joy. That joy, they are the most special moments in our life. The sweetness of experiencing God's favor; the sweetness of beholding his countenance in Christ; the sweetness of communion with God, that begins here. Some more and some less, but it's a reality. That's what David lost, as you know. That's what he lost. He didn't lose his salvation, but he lost the joy of his salvation. "Restore unto me," he said, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation" (Psalm 51:12). And congregation, I can assure you, once we taste something of that joy; once we taste something of that sweet communion with God in Christ, we are spoiled for the rest of our lives. If you ask a true believer today, "Tell me, what do you long for most?" They would tell you, "I long for a fresh view of Christ. I long for a fresh communication of his love to me, because that love is sweeter than honey." "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."

And so, what this means, congregation, what this means is that when God's children are translated into glory, they will meet a Christ they already know. When they are translated into glory, they will engage in an activity that already began here. Oh, they will not meet a strange Christ. But the glory that awaits us is that we will see him, we will enjoy him in a way that we cannot even fathom. That's why it says here, quoting, of course, the passage from 1 Corinthians 2, verse 9: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" to conceive what that is. One thing we can say about it, and that's this, that Christ, as our Emmanuel, will forever walk and dwell among his redeemed people. He will be in our midst as our Emmanuel. He will forever be God manifest in the flesh. We, as his redeemed people, we will forever interact with God in and through Emmanuel. In him, we will behold the glory of the Father. The glory of the Father will forever be revealed in and through him. He will forever dwell in our midst.

And God will forever delight himself in his redeemed people. Why? Because we shall then at last be fully conformed to the image of his Son. And so, when God beholds, when the Father beholds his redeemed people, he beholds in them the glory of his only begotten Son, and he will, therefore, delight in his redeemed people. And so, the Father delights himself in the Son, and we will delight ourselves in the Son. God's Son will be forever be the centerpiece of heaven. All of heaven will forever revolve around him. He will forever have the preeminence in him. Oh, that's the future, the future that awaits.

This is what the psalmist spoke of in Psalm 17, verse 15: "As for me," he says, "I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." Psalm 16, verse 11: "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Christ shall forever have the preeminence, in a way that is beyond our comprehension now. And when the believer breathes his last breath, he will know more of Christ than the greatest theologian on earth, I can assure you. He then beholds something that we cannot even imagine.

Turn with me, and we want to conclude with that too—1 Peter 1, verses 3 through 5. There, Peter writes this: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"—and now it comes—"to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." Notice, Peter tells him what it is not. So magnificent is that future that all he can do is tell us what it is not. It's not corruptible; it won't be defiled; and it will not fade away. That's the future that is laid away, "Reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Oh, dear believer, the Christ who saved you, the Christ who redeemed you, the Christ who longs for you, is keeping you. He is keeping you. By his power, he is keeping you. He's preserving you in the salvation he has merited for you, until he brings you home, until you shall be with him forever.

Oh, congregation, will that be your future? Is that something you've longed for, and desired for? Are there those moments that just the thought of this overwhelm your soul? No wonder Paul said that to be with Christ is far better. That's why, you see, there will only be room in heaven for those that love Christ. God will not admit anyone into his presence unless they love his Son. That's ultimately what matters. That's the mark of grace, of all marks. I've often said that. That's the mark of all marks. Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" I'm asking you in his name tonight, do you love him? Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity? Because that's what all of God's children have in common, the beginners in grace, as well as the fathers in grace; those whose faith is feeble, those whose faith is strong, they have this in common, that their soul is attracted to Jesus Christ. They love the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then comes that day of which Jesus spoke in John 5: "Marvel not at this," he said, "for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (verses 28, 29). We read something similar in Daniel 12, verse 2: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

Oh, congregation, boys and girls, how will it be with me, and how will it be with you? Will we arise to everlasting life, or to shame and everlasting contempt? No other options—it's one of the two. And that's why we need to be in Christ. That's why we need to come to him. That's why we need to believe in him. That's why life is so serious. That's why the call of the gospel is so

urgent. That's why we should not be able to rest until we may know on biblical grounds that we too belong to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. And dear believer, I close with the words of Romans 8, verse 18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Amen.

Let's pray.

Our great and eternal God, we have been privileged to deal with such extraordinary truths, so clearly revealed in thy Word, so beautifully articulated in the Heidelberg Catechism. Lord, the Questions were asked, "What comfort is this to you? What comfort is it to confess that we believe in the resurrection of the dead and eternal life?" O Lord, that we would take this home with us; that we would examine ourselves in light of Scripture; and that we would never rest short of putting our trust alone in Christ; that we would never rest short of him, for only those who believe in him shall be with him. And so, remember us. So we pray that none of us here would perish without having taken refuge to this Christ, lest we should rise to shame and to everlasting contempt. O, remember us. We pray that those who love Christ, O, that we may long and pray for his coming, that our prayer would be intensified, Come, O, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Go with us into this week. Bless the labor of our hands. Bless our families. We ask it in his name. Amen.