

REARDAN CHURCH 26 JULY 26

INTRO: ITS NICE TO BE WITH YOU AGAIN, ITS BEEN A WHILE.

LET ME START BY ADDRESSING THE 500# ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM UP FRONT.

AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, AND PROBABLY MANY OF YOU DON'T AS I SEE SOME NEW FACES HERE, COLEEN MY WIFE OF ALMOST 39 YEARS, DIED THIS LAST APRIL 15TH AFTER AN 18 MONTH TRAVAIL WITH TWO DIFFERENT CANCERS.

I WANTED TO TELL YOU IN-PERSON, HOW MUCH WE APPRECIATED THIS CHURCH'S PRAYERS AND THOUGHTFUL SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THAT FIGHT. THE CARDS AND UNKNOWN PRAYERS WERE DEEPLY APPRECIATED AND I WANTED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT TO ENCOURAGE YOU IN KNOWING HOW MUCH IT ENCOURAGED US.

WHAT I HOPE TO LEAVE YOU WITH TODAY.....

IS A BIBLICAL PERSEPCTIVE REGARDING LOSS, ETERNITY, LIFE AND DEATH. MORE SPECIFICALLY, "HOW CAN", OR MAYBE I SHOULD SAY, "HOW SHOULD" THE BELIEVER FACE SUCH THINGS?

IF NOTHING ELSE, I HOPE I STIR YOUR INTEREST BECAUSE I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING MORE PROFOUND.

IT'S A BROAD SUBJECT I KNOW. FAR TOO BROAD FOR THE FEW MINUTES WE HAVE TOGETHER BUT I'LL GIVE IT A GO AND SEE WHERE WE END UP.

NOW, I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THESE ARE THINGS I'VE LEARNED BECAUSE I FEEL MUCH LIKE PAUL IN PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14,

"12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal....."

TO SAY I'VE "LEARNED" THESE THINGS WOULD BE STRETCH. LETS JUST SAY THESE ARE THINGS THAT HAVE CAPTIVATED MY INTEREST FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS AND ARE A WORK IN PROGRESS.

DEATH IS INDEED FURTILE GROUND FOR BIBLICAL CONTEMPLATION AND LEARNING.

IN ANY EVENT, I TRUST YOU'LL FIND THIS HELPFUL AND IF I DON'T GET THROUGH ALL OF IT, I'LL GET BACK TO IT SOME OTHER TIME.

SYNOPSIS

FIRST, SINCE THERE HAS BEEN SOME CARING CURIOSITY, LET ME PROVIDE JUST A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF COLEEN'S ILLNESS AS A STARTING POINT.

ABOUT THIS TIME IN 2024, COLEEN STARTED NOTICING SOME DISCOMFORT WHILE SITTING, THAT LATER BROUGHT A DIAGNOSIS IN OCTOBER THAT NOBODY EVER WANTS TO HEAR – STAGE 2 RECTAL CANCER.

AFTER CHEMO THERAPY AND RADIATION TREATMENTS LAST SPRING, THE RESULTS BY JULY REVEALED THAT SHE HAD BEATEN THE RECTAL CANCER.....ALL CLEAR.

UNFORTUNATELY, HER STANDARD 3-MONTH CT SCAN CONDUCTED IN SEPTEMBER REVEALED A 6" TUMOR ON HER LIVER. THE BIOPSY REVEALED A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT CANCER HAD EMERGED. STAGE 4, HIGH GRADE, NEURO-ENDOCRINE CARCINOMA, COMMONLY KNOWN AS SMALL CELL CANCER.

IF YOU'RE UNFAMILIAR AS WE WERE, SMALL CELL CANCER IS EXTREMELY RARE, ITS VERY AGGRESSIVE AND ALWAYS TERMINAL. - LESS THAN 2% OF ALL CANCER PATIENTS ARE SMALL CELL.

IN COLEEN'S CASE, HER "HIGH-GRADE" VERSION OF THIS SMALL CELL CANCER IS EVEN MORE RARE - LESS THAN 1/10TH OF 1% OF ALL CANCERS. THAT'S .01%.

BEING TERMINAL, THAT DIAGNOSIS IN OCTOBER OF LAST YEAR STARTED HER CLOCK TO THE FINISHLINE OF HER SOJOURN ON EARTH.

SEVERAL DIFFERENT CHEMO TREATMENTS PROVED UNSUCCESSFUL IN SLOWING IT DOWN AND BY JANUARY THIS YEAR THE CANCER HAD SPREAD TO HER BRAIN AND ESSENTIALLY THROUGHOUT HER ENTIRE BONE STRUCTURE – BACK, LEGS, ARMS AND SKULL.

WHILE HOPING FOR THE ENTIRETY OF 2026, COLEEN WENT TO HER ETERNAL HOME ON APRIL 15TH, TAX DAY OF ALL THINGS, AND THAT'S WHERE WE FIND OURSELVES TODAY.

MESSAGE INTRO

BUT THAT'S NOT THE HEART OF MY MESSAGE TODAY. YOU DIDN'T COME TO HEAR A MEMORIAL SERVICE.

BUT, AFTER THE INITIAL SHOCK OF HER DEATH WORE OFF, MY QUESTION IN ALL OF THIS HAS BEEN, "JUST HOW DOES THE BELIEVER FACE SUCH THINGS, WHETHER IT *IS* HAPPENING OR *MIGHT* HAPPEN?"

THERE IS A LOT I CAN SAY ABOUT ALL OF THIS AND IF I HAD THE TALENTS TO WRITE A BOOK, I'D HAVE PLENTY OF MATERIAL TO FILL ONE. BUT TIME DICTATES THAT I TRY AND MAKE AT LEAST A FEW KEY POINTS.....

.....AND I HOPE TO ENCOURAGE YOU IF JUST A LITTLE, WITH SOME BIBLICAL TRUTHS THAT HAVE ENCOURAGED ME MOST THROUGH ALL OF THIS.

SO WITH THAT AS A STARTING POINT, I'D LIKE TO TOUCH ON JUST TWO MAJOR POINTS FOR TODAY:

1. LOSS
2. PREPARING FOR TRAGEDY BY DEVELOPING A HEAVENLY MINDSET

MESSAGE

1. FIRST, A LITTLE BIT ABOUT LOSS – SUFFERING, TRIALS ETC

AS A BASELINE, I NEED TO DEFINE THE TYPE OF LOSS I'M TALKING ABOUT. I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT A TEMPORARY LOSS WITH A LIKELIHOOD OF REVERSAL. THESE ARE TEMPORARY SET-BACKS IN LIFE, LIKE LOSING YOUR CAR TO THEFT OR LOSING A JOB ONLY TO GAIN A NEW ONE. MAYBE EVEN LOSS OF HEALTH WITH THE STRONG POSSIBILITY OF RECOVERY.

NO, I'M TALKING ABOUT DEEP, TRAUMATIC, CATASTROPHIC LOSS.....THE TYPE OF LOSS THAT TRIES THE SOUL – THAT SQUEEZES YOU TO THE BRINK.

MARGARET CLARKSON IN HER GREAT LITTLE BOOK ENTITLED, "*GRACE GROWS BEST IN WINTER*", DESCRIBES THIS TYPE OF LOSS AS A "Hedge about us" LIKE WE HEARD IN THE LAMENTATIONS PASSAGE READ EARLIER. (LAMENTATIONS 3:1-9)

IN ANOTHER BOOK ON THE SUBJECT ("*A GRIEF DISGUISED*"), WHITWORTH PROFESSOR JERRY SITTSER DESCRIBED IT THIS WAY.

"If normal, natural reversible loss is like a broken limb, then catastrophic loss is like an amputation."

WHILE DEATH IS ARGUABLY THE MOST PROFOUND TYPE OF LOSS - AND IT IS INDEED LIKE AN AMPUTATION - I'VE COME TO REALIZE THAT CATASTROPHIC LOSS COMES TO ALL OF US IN MANY DIFFERENT FORMS. EVERYONE HERE HAS EXPERIENCED, OR WILL EXPERIENCE SOME FORM OF CATASTROPHIC LOSS AND SUFFERING.

- SOME EXPERIENCE FINANCIAL LOSS - CHRONIC UNEMPLOYMENT, LOSS OF INCOME OR LOSS OF SAVINGS.
- SOME EXPERIENCE THE LOSS OF A MARRIAGE THROUGH DIVORCE WITH ALL OF THE PAIN AND TRAUMA THAT IT BRINGS TO THE ENTIRE FAMILY.
- LOSS OF RELATIONSHIPS - ESTRANGED FAMILY MEMBERS
- LOSS OF HEALTH - LONG-TERM, CHRONIC DISEASE.
- LOSS OF MOBILITY - PARALYSIS, DEBILITATING PAIN.
- RAPE, SEXUAL ABUSE, MENTAL ILLNESS.....

.....ALL ARE PERMANENT, DEBILITATING FORMS OF LOSS.

SOMETIMES LOSS COMES IN WAVES, ONE AFTER ANOTHER. SOMETIMES IT COMES IN LARGE BUNDLES OF TRAGEDY, SEVERAL FORMS ALL AT ONCE. BUT WE DO-ALL-EXPERIENCE-IT.

IF YOU HAVEN'T EXPERIENCED THAT TYPE OF LOSS YET – GOOD FOR YOU.

BUT I ALSO HATE TO TELL YOU TO BUCKLE UP.....ITS LIKELY COMING YOUR WAY.

CHRIST HIMSELF ASSURED US OF THAT IN JOHN 16:33-

³³ These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you ^[a]will have [*tribulation*]; but be of good cheer, I have [*overcome the world.*]"

SO, LOSS IS ALL AROUND US, IT TAKES MANY FORMS AND OFTEN COMES IN WAVES. AND THROUGH MY OWN LOSS I HAVE BECOME FAR MORE ATTUNED TO THE OTHER FORMS OF IT....

.....BUT DEATH IS PROBABLY THE MOST POIGNANT, SIGNIFICANT FORM OF LOSS WE'LL EVER EXPERIENCE. AND UNDERSTANDABLY SO. DEATH COMES TO ALL OF US. IT HAS A 100% SUCCESS RATE AND ALL OF US WILL EVENTUALLY FACE IT.

SO LET ME JUST FOCUS ON LOSS THROUGH DEATH THIS MORNING.

FIRST, I SUGGEST TO YOU THAT BIBLICALLY SPEAKING, IT IS A WISE MAN WHO GRAPPLES WITH MORTALITY NOW – ESSENTIALLY MAKING PEACE WITH YOUR OWN DEMISE – SO YOU CAN LIVE A FREE AND FULL LIFE WITHOUT CONCERN OF YOUR LOOMING DEATH.

ECCLESIASTES 7:1-4 MAKES MY POINT:

A good name *is* better than precious ointment,
And the day of death than the day of one's birth;

² Better to go to the house of mourning
Than to go to the house of feasting,

For that *is* the end of all men;
And the living will take *it* to heart.

³ ^[a] Sorrow *is* better than laughter,
For by a sad countenance the heart is made ^[b] better.

⁴ The heart of the wise *is* in the house of mourning,
But the heart of fools *is* in the house of mirth.

SOME COMMENTATORS SAY THIS IS JUST SOLOMON'S CYNICAL LIFE ASSESSMENT AFTER A LIFE OF DEBAUCHED ATTEMPTS TO DISCOVER MEANING HIMSELF.

BUT, WHAT I THINK SOLOMON IS ACTUALLY TELLING ALL OF US, IS THAT IT BEHOOVES US TO COME TO REALISTIC TERMS WITH THE SHORT LIFE WE HAVE HERE ON EARTH. AND OF COURSE SCRIPTURE IS FULL OF REMINDERS THAT LIFE ON EARTH IS INDEED SHORT-LIVED.

THE BIBLE IS FULL OF COUNTLESS IMAGERY OF OUR LIVES AS A *VAPOR, DRIED GRASSES, WHITHERING FLOWERS.....*

SO I THINK SOLOMON IS TELLING US THAT DEATH IS INEVITABLE AND MAKING PEACE WITH THAT FACT IS ACTUALLY WHERE THE HEART CAN BE STRENGTHENED AND REAL SPIRITUAL CHANGE CAN BEGIN.

MORE SUCCINCTLY, FOR THE BELIEVER, THE FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, WE SHOULD FIRST AND FOREMOST UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE NOT RESIDENTS HERE. WE'RE SOJOURNERS.

UNFORTUNATELY, BEING HUMAN AND IMBUED BY OUR CREATOR WITH A SURVIVOR SPIRIT, OUR SINFUL SIDE FINDS WAYS TO TRY AND ESCAPE AT LEAST THE THOUGHT OF DEATH IF NOT DEATH ITSELF.

MOST OF US DON'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT DEATH AND I THINK THAT'S NATURAL.

WE SOMEHOW THINK THE BELIEVER IS EXEMPT FROM SUFFERING, AND AS PEOPLE, BOTH BELIEVER AND UNBELIEVER, WE CAN TEND TO ONE OF TWO EXTREMES WHEN CONTEMPLATING MORTALITY.

ON ONE SIDE, WE TOO OFTEN ATTEMPT TO BURY THOSE THOUGHTS WITH THE WORLD'S ANESTHESIA OF PLEASURE, AN ILLUSION OF SECURITY, RELIANCE ON OUR WEALTH, FOCUSING ON HEALTH CONSCIOUSNESS.....

WE ENGINEER A MYRIAD OF WAYS TO FOOL OURSELVES FOR THE MOMENT, TRYING TO BEAT OUR OWN ODDS WHICH AS I SAID IS A LOSING BATTLE. DEATH IS 100% SUCCESSFUL AND WE'RE ALWAYS THE LOSERS, AT LEAST IN THIS LIFE.

THE OTHER EXTREME ARE THOSE WHO MAYBE TAKE A MORE HEDONISTIC VIEW. ONE FINDS THIS IN THE NON-RELIGIOUS CROWD, THE UNBELIEVERS AMONG US. ONE WHO BELIEVES THAT THIS IS ALL THERE IS, WE LIVE-WE DIE-AND THAT'S THAT. ESSENTIALLY, "LIVE FOR TODAY BECAUSE TOMORROW WE MIGHT DIE."

HONESTLY, I CAN'T THINK OF A MORE HOPELESS EXISTENCE BUT THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE AROUND US, IF PRESSED, HAVE THIS WORLD VIEW. THEY OF ALL PEOPLE LIVE THE GREATEST LIE IN THAT WORLD OF MENTAL "ANESTHESIA'S", HOPING TO AT LEAST PUT OFF THINKING ABOUT THE TRUTH OF THEIR OWN DEMISE FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.

BUT INEVITABLY, DEATH GETS THE ATTENTION OF ALL OF US. YOU'VE HEARD IT SAID THAT THERE ARE NO ATHEISTS IN THE FOXHOLE. I THINK THAT SENTIMENT IS TRUE.

AS A RELATED ASIDE, ITS IMPORTANT FOR ME TO SPEAK OF COLEEN'S DEATH IN STARK TERMS BECAUSE THAT IS HOW SCRIPTURE TALKS ABOUT IT. WE WILL ALL DIE PHYSICALLY.

WE OFTEN TRY TO SOFTEN THE HARSH REALITY OF DEATH BY USING TERMS LIKE "PASSING AWAY", OR "MOVING ON TO A BETTER PLACE", BUT SCRIPTURE HITS HARD WITH THE BLUNT FORCE TRAUMA OF DEATH.

AGAIN, IN THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES, CHAPTER 3:1-2

To everything *there is* a season,
A time for every purpose under heaven:
² A time ^[a]to be born,
And a time to die;

HEBREWS 9:27

²⁷ And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

SO, I THINK WE SHOULD BE FRANK WHEN WE DISCUSS *LOSS* OF ANY KIND. COLEEN DIDN'T HAVE A "CHRONIC ILLNESS". SHE HAD TERMINAL CANCER. SHE DIDN'T "PASS AWAY", SHE PHYSICALLY DIED. AT LEAST FOR ME, ADDRESSING THE REALITY IN REAL TERMS HELPS MAINTAIN A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE GROUNDED IN TRUTH. PARTICULARLY WHEN WE'RE TALKING ABOUT DEATH.

DEATH IS A FORM OF LOSS, CERTAINLY UNLIKE OTHER FORMS OF LOSS; ITS THE LOSS OF A HUMAN PRESENCE FROM OUR MIDST. BUT WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT DEATH ISN'T THE END - FOR ANYBODY.

PHYSICAL DEATH IS ONLY JUST THE BEGINNING - FOR ALL OF US - WHETHER YOU BELIEVE IN A LIFE AFTER DEATH OF NOT. AND THAT IS THE MESSAGE OF ECCLESIASTES 7.

BUT, TRAGIC, CATASTROPHIC LOSS IS ALL AROUND US. SO WHAT ARE WE TO DO ABOUT IT? HOW CAN THE BELIEVER CONFRONT THOSE CATASTROPHIC LOSSES, THAT IF WE'RE HONEST, WE WILL ALL FACE?

THAT LEADS ME TO THE NEXT POINT : PREPARING FOR LOSS

2. PREPARING FOR LOSS BY DEVELOPING A HEAVENLY MINDSET

I DEBATED STARTING THIS PORTION OF THE MESSAGE BY ADDRESSING THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL STARTING POINT AND THAT BEING, ENSURING OUR ETERNAL FUTURE IS SECURE.

- ARE WE SAVED AS DESCRIBED IN SCRIPTURE?
- HAVE WE EXAMINED OURSELVES AS PAUL SAYS, TO BE SURE WE ARE OF THE FAITH?

OF COURSE THAT IS THE BASIS FOR ANY ETERNAL PREPARATION FOR DISASTERS THAT LOOM IN OUR FUTURES.

BUT LETS ACCEPT THAT AS A GIVEN DUE TO TIME CONSTRAINTS.

SO I'M GOING TO BE SPEAKING TO THE BELIEVERS IN THE ROOM FOR A FEW MINUTES BECAUSE YOU HAVE THE GOD-GIVEN ACCESS TO WHAT I'M GOING TO TALK ABOUT.

IF YOU'RE NOT A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, OR YOU'RE UNCERTAIN IF YOU ARE TRULY SAVED, I'M PREPARED TO DISCUSS THAT WITH YOU AND I INVITE THAT DISCUSSION, BUT THOSE WHO KNOW THEY ARE HEAVEN BOUND. THIS IS FOR YOU.

I READ A NUMBER OF BOOKS DURING COLEEN'S ILLNESS AND HAVE READ SEVERAL SINCE HER DEATH. MANY ARE HELPFUL AND I CAN RECOMMEND SEVERAL ON THE SUBJECT OF LOSS, GRIEF, AND DEATH IN A BELIEVER'S LIFE.

BUT ONE THING I HAVE NOTICED IS THAT A LOT OF THE MATERIAL ADDRESSING LOSS, GRIEF AND THE GRIEVING PROCESS ARE REALLY LITTLE MORE THAN WHAT YOU COULD GET FROM ANY SECULAR PSYCHOLOGIST OR GRIEF COUNSELOR.....BUT ITS ALL WRAPPED IN A CHRISTIAN VENEER OF COURSE.

NOW I UNDERSTAND WE ALL GRIEVE DIFFERENTLY. AND I DON'T WANT TO INSULT ANYONE'S SENSIBILITIES, BUT IT SEEMS SO MANY OF THESE "CHRISTIAN" MATERIALS ON GRIEF REALLY APPEAL TO OUR MORE WORLDLY SIDE – OUR EMOTIONS, OUR ANGER, OUR BITTERNESS, OUR PASTS.....

FEW, IF ANY OF THESE MATERIALS STEER THE GRIEVING BELIEVER TO THEIR REAL HOPE IN THE MIDDLE OF LOSS – THAT HOPE, I BELIEVE IS IN HEAVEN.

1. FROM MY OBSERVATION, A TRULY MISSING COMPONENT IN THE LIVES OF MOST BELIEVERS IS HAVING A HEAVENLY MINDSET.

NOW, THERE IS NO CHAPTER OR PASSAGE IN THE BIBLE THAT EXPRESSLY OUTLINES HOW WE OUGHT TO GRIEVE OR HANDLE LOSS. BUT I DO SEE OVER AND OVER THAT DEVELOPING A HEAVENLY MINDSET IS THE BIBLICAL PRESCRIPTION FOR CONFRONTING SORROWS, TRIALS, AND PERSECUTIONS WE ALL FACE HERE IN THIS WORLD.

NOW, WHAT DO I MEAN BY DEVELOPING A HEAVENLY MINDSET?

SADLY, I THINK WE'RE ALL JUST TOO EARTHLY MINDED. WE'RE FAR TOO ENAMORED WITH THIS WORLD OR CONSUMED BY OUR CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES TO HAVE ANY THOUGHTS OF HEAVEN. WE DON'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT OUR TRUE CITIZENSHIP AS BELIEVERS, OR THE ASSOCIATED RESPONSIBILITIES OF THAT CITIZENSHIP, OR EVEN ABOUT OUR FUTURE HEAVENLY HOME.

THINK ABOUT IT. WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HEARD EVEN ONE SERMON, LET ALONE A SERIES OF SERMONS ON THE SUBJECT OF HEAVEN?

IN FACT, I BELIEVE IF WE'RE HONEST, THERE ARE TIMES THAT WE'RE NOT READY TO DIE UNTIL WE GET OUR FILL OF THIS WORLD FIRST:

- WE WANT TO GET THAT DREAM JOB, OR
- THAT DREAM HOUSE, OR
- THAT DREAM MARRIAGE, WHATEVER.
- WE WANT TO MAKE THAT FIRST \$MILLION!

I READ AN APOCALYPTIC WARNING ARTICLE THE OTHER DAY AND FOUND MYSELF THINKING - "PLEASE GOD, DON'T COME YET!! I MIGHT WANT TO GET RE-MARRIED!"

THAT IS A MINDSET THAT COMES FROM A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF OUR HEAVENLY FUTURE WHICH GETS PUSHED ASIDE BY AN UNACKNOWLEDGED LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE WORLD. **(Repeat)**

OUR CULTURE DOESN'T HELP WITH THE DEPICTIONS OF HEAVEN AS SOME BORING EXISTENCE OF FAT, NAKED ANGELS FLOATING AROUND ON A CLOUD PLAYING HARPS FOR ALL ETERNITY.

ONE FAR SIDE CARTOON – IF YOU REMEMBER THE FAR SIDE - BEST DEPICTED THIS RATHER POOR VIEW OF HEAVEN BY PICTURING A GUY SITTING ON A CLOUD, HEAD CRADLED IN HIS HANDS STATING, "I WISHED I'D BROUGHT A MAGAZINE".

BUT SCRIPTURE IS FULL OF ADMONISHMENTS TO THE BELIEVER, ACTUALLY COMMANDS, TO NOT JUST CONSIDER HEAVEN, BUT TO LOOK TO HEAVEN, **EXPECTANTLY**. OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN, WE'RE TOLD TO LOOK HEAVENWARD, TO RECALL OUR CITIZENSHIP IS NOT OF THIS WORLD. THAT WE BELONG TO AN ETERNAL KINGDOM – RIGHT NOW!

COLOSSIANS 3:1

3 If then you were raised with Christ, **SEEK [AN IMPERATIVE]** those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

LOOK AT 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-18 – I COULD DO A WHOLE MESSAGE ON THIS PASSAGE ALONE BUT I WANT TO MAKE A POINT.

IN VERSES 7-12, PAUL DESCRIBES THE TROUBLE WE HAVE IN THIS LIFE. HARD-PRESSED BUT NOT CRUSHED, PERPLEXED BUT NOT DESPAIRING, PERSECUTED BUT NOT FORESAKEN, STRUCK DOWN BUT NOT DESTROYED.....

THEN, IN VERSES 13-14; THE PROMISE OF OUR RESURRECTION GUARANTEED BY THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

AND THEN HE ENDS THAT TREATISE WITH THIS IN VERSES 16-18:

¹⁶ Therefore **we do not** lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we ***do not look at the things which are seen***, but ***at the things which are not seen***. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

WHAT HE IS SAYING IS THAT IN THE MIDDLE OF TRIBULATION, WHATEVER IT IS THAT WE'RE FACING, WE DO NOT HAVE TO LOSE HEART. EVEN KNOWING OUR OUTWARD MAN IS PERISHING IN SOME WAY.

PAUL CALLS OUR TRIALS "LIGHT AFFLICTION" AND CONTRASTS THEM TO A "*FAR MORE EXCEEDING AND ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY*".

NONE OF WHAT I'M TELLING YOU IS EASY IN THE MIDDLE OF A TRIAL I CAN ASSURE YOU. HOW IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE? PAUL TELLS US IN VERSE 18:

¹⁸don't look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

SO, YOU'RE PROBABLY THINKING: "OK PHIL. WHAT EXACTLY IS IT WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE LOOKING AT? WHAT ARE THESE UNSEEN THINGS?"

I'M GLAD YOU ASKED. I'VE ASKED THOSE SAME QUESTIONS MANY TIMES IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS.

WHAT ARE MY EARLY CONCLUSIONS?

1. I BELIEVE WE NEED TO DEVELOP A TRUE VIEW OF OUR FUTURE LIFE AND CITIZENSHIP IN HEAVEN.

WHY? BECAUSE;

- OUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS THERE,
- JESUS IS THERE,
- OUR SAVED FAMILY MEMBERS ARE THERE,
- THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT SAINTS ARE THERE,
- OUR REWARDS IS THERE,
- OUR HEAVENLY, ETERNAL HOME IS THERE,
- OUR ETERNAL INHERITANCE IS THERE.

ALL THAT HEAVEN OFFERS – PEACE, JOY, NO MORE PAIN, NO MORE TEARS, TRUE REST IN CHRIST ALL THERE ACCORDING TO REV 21.

AND NOT JUST ETERNAL LIFE. REAL LIFE WITH REAL ACTIVITY, AND WORSHIP. THE BEST OF EVERYTHING WE THINK IS SO GOOD HERE. SO WHY WOULDN'T WE WANT TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH OUR ETERNAL FUTURE?

2. I BELIEVE THAT *LOOKING AT THE UNSEEN THINGS*, AS PAUL CHIDES US TO DO, REQUIRES LEARNING ABOUT OUR HEAVENLY INHERITANCE AND ALL OF THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF BEING JOINT HEIRS WITH CHRIST, ADOPTED AS SONS, BEING A TRUE CITIZEN OF HEAVEN. THAT CITIZENSHIP INCLUDES:

- AUTHORITY TO RULE WITH CHRIST IN HIS ETERNAL KINGDOM;
- A REAL PHYSICAL RESIDENCE WITH A REAL PHYSICAL EXISTENCE IN A REAL, NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH;
- REAL WORSHIP IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD HIMSELF;
- AND REAL INTERACTIONS WITH CHRIST HIMSELF AS WELL AS THE HEAVENLY HOST OF ALL THE SAINTS AND ANGELS.

I'M SORRY I DON'T HAVE TIME TO DEVELOP THIS FURTHER. SCRIPTURE IS FULL OF PROMISES FOR THE BELIEVER THAT OUR FINITE MINDS JUST CAN'T QUITE COMPREHEND. BUT WE'RE TOLD TO DO IT – TO LOOK AT THE THINGS ABOVE, THE THINGS UNSEEN.

PAULS IS SAYING, "*GET YOUR EYES OFF OF THIS WORLD LONG ENOUGH TO SEE THE HEAVENLY THINGS.*"

I THINK THAT MEANS THAT WE NEED TO STOP LIVING LIKE WE'RE RESIDENTS AND START LIVING LIKE THE SOJOURNERS WE ARE.

BUT AS I SAID, UNFORTUNATELY WE ARE FAR TOO "RESIDENT MINDED", AND WE EITHER FORGET OR DON'T WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE'RE REALLY JUST PASSING THROUGH.

NOW, THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE'RE JUST SITTING AROUND, WAITING AT THE BUS STOP TO HEAVEN. YOU'VE HEARD THE EXPRESSION. "HE'S TOO HEAVENLY MINDED TO BE ANY....."

NO. WE HAVE THINGS TO DO HERE AND LIVES TO LIVE, ALL THAT HAVE ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES. BUT WE SHOULD LIVE WITH OUR HOPE, OUR EXPECTATION AND OUR PURPOSE DIRECTED HEAVENWARD.

LET ME SHOW YOU A GREAT EXAMPLE OF WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. THIS PASSAGE IS ONE SO FULL OF DOCTRINAL TRUTH THAT IT JUST KNOCKED MY SOCKS OFF WHEN I FIRST COMPREHENDED IT.

I INVITE YOU TO TURN TO 1 PETER 1:3-5

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance ^[a] incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

LET ME TRY TO BRIEFLY UNPACK THIS FOR YOU.

THIS IS ONE, LONG, RUN-ON SENTENCE, WRITTEN BY A MERE FISHERMAN WHO UNDERSTOOD HIS HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP AND ALL IT AFFORDED HIM. AND I THINK IT SUMMARIZES WHAT IT IS THAT WE'RE TO BE "LOOKING AT".

1. FIRST, PETER BLESSES GOD AS THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST....AFFIRMING THE DIETY OF JESUS.
2. THAT SAME GOD, IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS ABUNDANT MERCY – ITS AN ACT OF HIS WILL, ALMOST AS IF HIS OWN CHARACTER DEMANDS MERCY FROM HIMSELF DIRECTED TOWARD US.
3. HAS BEGOTTEN US – BIRTHED US – AGAIN = THAT'S REBIRTH, NEW LIFE, A NEW FUTURE.
4. TO A LIVING HOPE – OUR LIVES HAVE HOPE, AND PURPOSE AND MEANING SIMPLY BECAUSE WE HAVE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST. WE CAN LIVE IN ETERNAL HOPE AND ITS ACTIVE, ITS ALIVE AND ITS PRESENT.
5. WHY IS THIS HOPEFUL? ITS THROUGH THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD – THAT'S THE GUARANTEE OF OUR OWN FUTURE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. WE READ THAT PREVIOUSLY IN 1 CORINTHIANS 4.

BUT THAT'S NOT ALL.....

6. HE HAS ALSO BEGOTTEN US AGAIN TO AN INHERITANCE – AN INCORRUPTABLE, UNDEFILED INHERITANCE. IF YOU STUDY THE BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS OF INHERITANCES – YOU'LL SEE THE RIGHTS OF OWNERSHIP, WEALTH, PRESTIGE, HONOR – ALL COME WITH AN INHERITANCE. WE'RE CO-HEIRS OF CHRIST IN HIS ETERNAL KINGDOM! THAT'S OUR INHERITANCE!
7. AND THAT INHERITANCE IS RESERVED IN HEAVEN FOR YOU! ITS WAITING FOR YOU. IT HAS YOUR NAME ON THE TITLE DEED IN HEAVEN. NOTHING CAN TAKE THAT AWAY FROM YOU AS A CO-HIER OF CHRIST, AN ADOPTED SON OF GOD, A HEAVENLY CITIZEN.

BUT WHAT ABOUT IN THE MEANTIME?

1. YOU ARE KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD,
2. HOW? THROUGH FAITH
3. KEPT FOR WHAT? SALVATION (AND THAT INHERITANCE RESERVED FOR YOU)
4. WHEN? ITS ALREADY WAITING FOR YOU. IT ONLY NEEDS TO BE REVEALED IN GOD'S ESCHATOLOGICAL TIME LINE.

THAT'S A FANTASTIC EXAMPLE OF A HEAVENLY MINDSET THAT PETER HAD IN THE FACE OF HIS OWN PERSECUTION, THE FIERY TRIALS HE SPOKE OF, AND ULTIMATELY HIS OWN MARTYRDOM.

CONFRONTING DEATH OR CATASTROPHIC LOSS OF ANY KIND REQUIRES LOOKING TO HEAVEN.

THE **UNSEEN THINGS** ARE GENUINELY **UNSEEN** BUT THEY CAN BE KNOWN.

I'D ENCOURAGE ALL OF US TO SPEND MORE TIME STUDYING AND PRAYING FOR THAT HEAVENLY MINDSET, THAT HEAVENLY FOCUS THAT IS OUR ONE TRUE HOPE IN THE FACE OF WHATEVER LIFE THROWS AT US.

LET ME FINISH SOMETHING I WROTE IN MY JOURNAL JUST YESTERDAY THAT I HOPE WILL ENCOURAGE YOU TO LOOK UP, TO REMAIN FAITHFUL AND KNOW WE DO OVERCOME!

I WAS READING PSALM 34 YESTERDAY AND THIS JUST JUMPED OUT AT ME:

READ PSALM 34:18-22

READ JOURNAL ENTRY

LET'S PRAY