



PRESENCE FOREVER: What Sin Rejected, Grace Restores

Sunday's Teaching: Though men in sin rejected the will and presence of God, it is the gracious will of the Father to restore the joy of His presence for those who return in faith. Therefore, **since I've been created to flourish forever, fully alive in the presence of God, preparation for what is next is vital.**

Key Question: **Am I prepared?** (and, What steps of preparation are there for me to take?)

Let's get STARTED – Research consistently reveals that just over 7 in 10 Americans believe that people “live” after they have physically died. 80% believe a literal “heaven” awaits, while fewer believe in an actual “hell.” [Atheists and/or agnostics – less than ½ believe in neither, 36% in a future heaven, 7% in a future hell]. What about you? If someone were to ask you to describe what happens after death, **what would make up your response?**

Kick around how you would answer...

- After death, what happens for someone who does not believe in God/the gospel about Jesus?
- After death, what happens for someone who does believe in God/gospel about Jesus?
- In your view, what's the main feature of our anticipated experience in eternity?

Overall, do you think the people *around you* are prepared for eternity?

Let's EXPLORE in the WORD This week's teaching focused on 4 key questions. Let's review them by looking at the passages in which they are raised.

- #1 **Am I prepared for my present life to end?** Read **Luke 12:13-21 and 16:19-30**
* who was prepared? who wasn't? *what do you think it means to be “rich toward God”?
- #2 **Am I prepared for the return of Jesus?** Read **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**
* what do you hear Paul teaching in this passage? What truths give you “comfort”?
- #3 **Am I prepared to give an account to God?** Read **Revelation 20:11-14, and Romans 14:10-13**
* What *account* will non-Jesus-followers (or non-believers) have to give? What about believers?
- #4 **Am I prepared (and eager) to flourish in the Lord's presence?** Read **Ps 16:11, 23:6, 1 Thess 4:17, Rev. 21:1-4**
* What do you most anticipate experiencing in the eternal age? What questions right now do you have?

Let's prioritize APPLICATION - As you've made your way through these questions and passages, you may have been thinking of people who are facing the future unprepared.

- Whom do you know who is in this position?
- Is there any way in which you are unprepared for the future?
- Do you think he/she would appreciate being prepared?
- Is there any way you might pray and ask the Lord to open up a conversation with him/her about this?

Many have noted: **The future is for those who prepare for it today.** Jesus said, “I am going to prepare a place for you. If I go, I will come again to take you to myself, so that where I am, you will be also” (John 14). Our best investment is to prepare well in the few days we have here for the endless days we will have...somewhere.

PRAY together for the Spirit's prompting (1) to be personally prepared, and (2) to help someone else prepare.

Let's live the mission! (Pastor David)