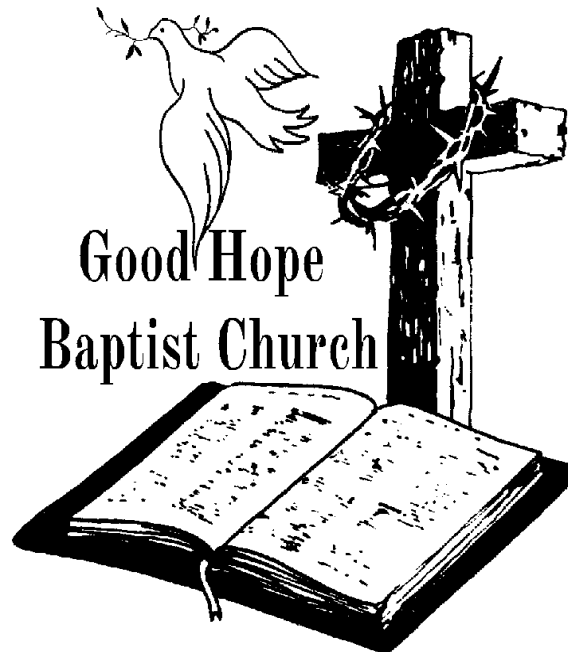


Final Destination

Philippians 1:21-24

Ecclesiastes 7:1



Good Hope
Baptist Church

Living Together In The Love Of God

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FOCAL Read Responsively Ecclesiastes 7:1 the day of death {is better} than the day of one's birth.

FOCAL Philippians 1:21-24 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (22) But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not. (23) For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: (24) Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

In my lifetime I've taken several long and tedious trips. Right after Sherry and I were married the Air Force sent me on temporary duty to Egypt. Though the trip only took about 8 hours, I rode on a transport plane and was being separated from the love of my life. That was a miserable trip, but it only lasted about 45 days before I was able to return home. The most miserable trip I ever took was when the Air Force sent me to Kunsan, Korea. Not only was the trip long - 18 hours by plane - but I was separated from my wife for a year while being stationed in a foreign land. What makes a trip most miserable is not the accommodations - though I've been on some awful cramped aircraft in my lifetime.

What makes a trip miserable or bearable is the *final destination*.

I wouldn't mind riding on an aircraft for 18 hours if I knew my wife could come with me, and that at the end of the trip we would both be in four star hotels located on white, sandy beaches.

Do you remember when you were younger and took your children on long trips? They would ask "Are we there yet?" over and over, irritating you to death. I would always tell my kids, "No, we're not there yet, but when we get there it's going to be so great!" Then I'd tell them about the beach, the places we were going, and that would bless them and give them patience to endure the journey.

The thought of a good Final Destination is the best comfort while you're on your journey. One of the longest journeys any of us will ever take is this journey we call "life".

We have everything backwards in our thinking. We think possessions will bring happiness, whereas possessions often bring misery. We get so comfortable in this life, for many of us have begun to think that this is our final destination. It's not, though. The life you are living now is *a road leading to your final destination*. We tend to forget that because of the length of this journey we call life. We sing:

**This world is not my home
I'm just passing through
my treasures are laid up
somewhere beyond the blue
the angels beckon me
from Heaven's open door
and I can't feel at home
in this world anymore**

This world is *not* our home. We are born into this world,

but we are heading toward another. Some people fear death as an animal fears fire. Many will not even think about death, and put death completely out of their minds. They feel that if they forget about it, that they will never come to it. But death is certain. The Bible tells us that:

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

We are all on a trip, moving down the river of time toward an appointment with eternity. Death is not the end of life - just the end of this life. Your final destination will be in Heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ Who has saved you, or in Hell with the fallen angel Lucifer who damned you.

1. How Do I Get Ready For My Final Destination?

Each and every one of you will live forever in *somewhere* - Heaven or Hell - after you leave this life - the Bible is very clear on that point. Some dread death, and immerse themselves in the things of this life. One of the wisest men who ever lived - King Solomon - said:

FOCAL Ecclesiastes 7:1 the day of death {is better} than the day of one's birth.

ILLUSTRATE Now how could he say this? Solomon was the wisest and richest man the world has ever known. **Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines.** **2 Chronicles 9:13** states that Solomon had a **basic yearly income of 666 talents or 22,000 kilograms of gold, roughly equivalent to \$559,440,000.00 per year.** He

was rich. He was powerful. He had many women. And yet, how did Solomon regard all that he had? He said:

CONTEXT Ecclesiastes 1:2 **Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.**

What blesses us in this journey of life is not what we have, but it is to know the Lord. Things will never make you or I happy. Power will not make us happy, for power is relative. Sexual prowess will not make us happy. What makes us happy and gives us deep joy is to know the One Who controls our final destination. The richest man who ever lived said:

CONTEXT Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. (14) For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.**

There is coming a Judgment Day where each and every one of us will stand before the One Who created us and Who created time. He shall **bring every work into judgment, whether it be good or evil.** We need to be prepared for that. We will stand before an infinitely Holy God and be examined by His searchlight gaze. He will not ask us how many things we possessed in this life. He will not ask us our opinions, our desires, or our help. This infinite and holy God has said:

Romans 14:11-12 ... As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess

to God. (12) So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Believer as well as unbeliever shall give an account to God. We shall bow before Him and answer to Him. How then, can I be ready to meet my Maker?

I must give my life to the Lord Jesus. I must have a saving relationship with Him! God has provided salvation to each and every person who believes through the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not about how good I am or about how much I have, but it's about how good Jesus is and whether I have given myself to Him or not. The Scripture says:

Romans 5:6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Jesus Christ died for the ungodly, the weak, the sinner. The glorious Gospel states that:

Romans 5:8-10 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

ILLUSTRATE We who believe in Jesus will be able to stand before a holy and infinite God *justified*, without sin, **because of His shed Blood.** The Scripture says "**to live is Christ, to die is gain**". The Lord gave Himself

for us all so that we can stand before the Father as Sons - forever!

I remember one episode of the Brady Bunch (if you remember that show) when little 7 year old Cindy came to her parents crying. "What's wrong, sweetheart?" They asked. Little Cindy had been watching fairy tales on television, and said **"I've kissed and kissed this little frog, but he just won't turn into a prince!"** Oh friends, we were all frogs, but the Prince of Glory has kissed us with the Blood of Calvary, and we are frogs no more. We are Kings and Priests unto our God because of Jesus.

Get ready for your final destination by giving yourselves to the Lord Jesus.

2. I Will Walk Life's Journey Actively Obeying The Lord Jesus

How can I make sure that **the day of my death is better than the day of my birth**? As a Christian I must continue to give as much of myself as I can to as much of the Lord Jesus as I know.

We started out talking about Solomon, but now let's turn to the New Testament. The greatest man, I believe, in the New Testament outside of the Lord Jesus Christ is Paul the Apostle. Paul is a man who loved the Lord. While in Roman bondage, knowing that he was soon to be beheaded before the King of Rome Paul told the Philippians:

FOCAL Philippians 1:21 **For to me to live is Christ,**

and to die is gain.

Death to Paul was not something he dreaded. He looked at his final destination and said **"to die is gain"**.

Word Study The word translated **"gain"** is the Greek **KERDOS** (κερδος pronounced *ker'-dos*), which means **"riches"**. Paul saw the day of his death as **"riches"**, a great time, a time to be looked forward to. How can death be like winning the Lottery, or getting the Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes?

How can death be *three cherries on the slot machine of life*? Only if you can say **"for me, to LIVE is CHRIST"**. Paul lived for his Lord. He set his life according to what the Master told him to do. **Keep your eyes on Jesus, for He keeps His eyes on you!**

So often humans make plans, deciding what they are going to do, regardless as to what the Lord has said. They say **"today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a city, stay there a year, buy and sell and get gain"**. But the Lord says to all those who live their lives in this way:

James 4:14-15 ... Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. (15) For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

The lives of each and every one of us is **just a vapor, a**

small thing, of little consequence. We need to invest our lives in the Lord just as Paul did. **"If the Lord will, we shall do this, or do that"**. If you want to be ready for your final destination, all of your dreams, goals, and desires should be lined up with God's Will. **For me, to live is Christ.**

You were created by God to be what He wants you to be. **We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which He has before ordained we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).** The Lord made you for a purpose, designed you for a reason. Ask God what He wants of you, and then be what He wants you to be.

You cannot be anything YOU want to be, but you can be anything the LORD wants you to be. No two of you are the same, but each of you are designed by God to live through, for, in, and by Christ. **For the me to LIVE is CHRIST. Be that which Jesus wants you to be. Live for Him! Be the person God made you to be!**

I am told that the Apostle Paul was not a very desired public speaker. Though Paul was called of God to be an Apostle, he was short of stature and spoke with a squeaky and hesitant voice. The Bible says:

Acts 18:24 Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures ...

Apollos preached in many of the places where Paul preached. As a matter of fact, the Church of Corinth

began to divide over who the greater preacher was, Apollos or Paul. The Apostle told Corinth:

1 Corinthians 1:12-13 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. (13) Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

Paul was telling the Corinthians "Look, it's not about me. I didn't save you. It's all about JESUS. And Jesus is not divided. He is not double minded, He is not at war with anyone.

Use the gifts that God has given you for Christ. **Use your time, your talent, and your tithe for the Lord. Be a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1) unto God.**

You may not always understand life or the things that happen to you, but if you are a Christian - saved by faith in Christ - then *everything that happens to you* is for your good (**Romans 8:28**). I have no right to rebel against my Lord, even when I don't understand what's going on around me. **For me, to live is Christ.** The Lord saved me. The Lord made me. The Lord uses me. The Lord will never forsake me.

ILLUSTRATE Henrietta Mears, the founder of *Gospel Light Publishing*, once said **"A bird is free in the air. Place a bird in water, and he has lost his liberty. A fish is free in the water, but leave him on the sand and he perishes. He is out of his realm. So, young people, the Christian is free when he does the**

will of God and is obedient to God's command. This is as natural a realm for Gods' child as the water is for the fish, or the air for the bird."

You can only be free - and succeed in this life - while you walk in the will of God. God sees the big picture: we can only see fragments. Trust Him, and obey Him.

3. I Will Walk Life's Journey Actively Loving For The Lord Jesus

ILLUSTRATE A young man was shopping in a supermarket when he noticed a little old lady following him around. When he moved, she moved. When he stopped, she stopped. Finally the young man went to the lady and asked why she was following him. She said "You remind me so much of my late son. I know it's silly, but when I leave the store would you call out "goodbye mom"? It would make me so happy! The young man said he'd be glad to do that. He saw the little old lady go through the checkout counter, and as she moved to the door she turned around and waved. He cried out, "Goodbye mom!". Pleased that he had blessed someone, he moved to the register to pay for his groceries. "That will be \$210.85". "210.85? Are you kidding me? I only bought five items." The clerk said, "Yeah, but your mom said that you'd be paying for her groceries also".

When it comes time to meet my Maker, I will have no reward in Heaven if my love has been no better than that little old lady's love. God calls His people to love - to actively love - to uplift all we come into contact with.
Love is the Christian's brand!

Look what Paul says to the Philippians:

FOCAL Philippians 1:23 For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better...

Word Study Paul said "I am in a strait between two". The word "strait" is the Greek SUNECHO (συνεχω pronounced *soon-ekh'-o*), which means "to be pressed between two things". Paul said, in essence, "two things are pressing in on me - I'm between a rock and a hard place". What are the two things? "Having a desire to depart, and BE WITH CHRIST".

Paul wasn't worried about death because *he was saved, he walked with the Lord* Who saved him, and *he loved the people* whom the Lord died for.

ILLUSTRATE A dear friend of mine gave me a poster - a precious poster - showing a little girl pointing to Jesus' hands. As she points she looks at the Savior, and with childlike concern says "What happened to Your hand?" A child who leaves this life while young might, in all sincerity, ask Jesus "What happened to Your hand?" But when you or I get to Heaven and see our Lord and Savior face to face, see His thorn scarred brow and His nail scarred hands and feet, we will not ask "What happened to Your hand/" No, we shall kneel, and kiss His feet, and ask "Why did You do this for me?"

Paul couldn't wait to get to Heaven. But there was one

thing that held Him. You see, the desire for Heaven and the personal presence of Jesus Christ **pressed in on him**, but another thing pressed him. Paul said

FOCAL **Philippians 1:24 ... Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.**

To abide in the flesh is more NEEDFUL for YOU!

Paul actively loved other Christians. Love of your brothers and sisters in the Lord is so very important. The Bible says:

Romans 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

We who are Christians are under obligation to *love one another*. Not just in deed, but in word, and in intent. If you will not **love your brother whom you have seen, how can you say that you love God Whom you have not seen?**

How shall you go to your final destination with cursing on your lips for your brothers and sisters in the Lord, and yet expect to meet **the God Who is love?**

1 John 4:20-21 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (21) And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

If you love God, you are to love your brother also. God loves him, and so should you. God loves us, warts and all, so we are to love one another warts and all.

1 Thessalonians 3:12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

The love that the Christian has should be *increasing and abounding*, not *irritating and hounding*. Love builds up, it does not tear down. Love is the Divine trademark for the Christian.

When lovelessness or hatred comes into the heart, you are **walking in darkness**. You are not walking with the Lord, nor can you say **for me, to live is Christ, to die is gain**. The only way that I know that I am saved is that I have *demonstrable love toward my brothers and sisters in Christ*. We are told:

1 John 3:14-16 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. (15) Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. (16) Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

If you are **born again by faith in Christ** then **Jesus laid down His life for you**. He did that whether you deserved it or not. You, as a Christian, are commanded to do likewise. **Lay down your life for your brethren**. Let

love be that which governs you.

Dr. Adam Dooley said **"A Church without love is like a sermon without a Bible, a song without words, like Christmas without a manger, like Easter without a Cross. You cannot have Church and not have love among the people of God!"**

Jesus tells His Church:

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. (35) By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

We must not care more about winning arguments rather than loving one another. Surrender. Lay your lives down. **We will not, as a Church, attract a love starved world if our love is selfish, self centered, and self serving. No Church that extends the "right fist of fellowship" will ever grow - or even be a Church!**

Listen Beloved, we love others because Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. The Bible says:

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Jesus gave Himself for us **while we were yet sinners.** We are to love others - period. May God touch your hearts with His Word!



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Hebrews 9:27 _____

1. How Do I Get Ready For My Final Destination?

Ecclesiastes 7:1; Ecclesiastes 1:2; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Romans 14:11-12; Romans 5:6; Romans 5:8-10

2. I Will Walk Life's Journey Actively Obeying The Lord Jesus

How can I make sure that **the day of my death is better than the day of my birth**? As a Christian I must continue to give as much of myself as I can to as much of the Lord Jesus as I know.

Philippians 1:21; James 4:14-15; Ephesians 2:10; Acts 18:24; 1 Corinthians 1:12-13; Romans 12:1; Romans 8:28

Word Study The word translated "gain" is the Greek **KERDOS** (κερδος pronounced *ker'-dos*) _____

3. I Will Walk Life's Journey Actively Loving For The Lord Jesus

Philippians 1:23; Philippians 1:24; Romans 13:8; 1 John 4:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 John 3:14-16; John 13:34-35; Romans 5:8

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