

Christ Reformation Church

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Man Became a Living Soul

November 6, 2016

Sermon Text: 2 Peter 1:16

Scripture Reading: John 11

2Pe 1:14-16 since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. (15) And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. (16) For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

I want to take you on a bit of a detour this morning from our series in 1 Peter by giving some thought to something Peter says in his second letter, namely, 2 Peter 1:16 – *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths...*”. And he goes on to say that –

2Pe 1:20-21 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. (21) For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The wicked hate God's Word and never seem to miss an opportunity to malign the truths of Scripture, claiming that the Bible is a man-made book full of superstitious myths. Peter, when he knew full well that the end of his earthly life was approaching, announces “no way.” Peter says “the Bible is true. It is God's Word. I was there. I saw Christ on the mountain transfigured. I have seen Christ risen from the dead. I saw Christ ascend into heaven. *And I am telling you, it is all true. He is coming again.*”

Now, one of the things the Bible tells us concerns the nature of human beings. Specifically, that we have an immortal soul. Listen to the London Confession of Faith, chapter 4, “On Creation”:

After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, rendering them fit unto that life to God for which they were created; being made after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfill it, and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject to change.

One of the things that being made in the image of God means is that *man exists forever*. We have a soul and in fact the essence of who you are as a person is this immortal, reasonable, soul. So that, and here is the primary point we want to consider this morning:

Even when my body dies and returns to dust, "I" still "am." God created man to have a body and one day will resurrect our bodies from the grave, but we do not "sleep" or cease to exist when our body dies.

All that the Bible has to tell us about these things is TRUE, as Peter says. And furthermore, *men and women know that they do not cease to exist when their body dies*. Many of the wicked try to suppress that truth, but

they know it is a fact. This is one of the reasons that man is incurably "religious."

I want to encourage you then this morning by reviewing just some of the promises and truths we have in Scripture concerning the fact that *you, the real you, the person YOU are, continues to exist even when you die, and further, for the Christian, Christ promises that we live even when we die!*

How many people alive today, or who have lived before us, stubbornly embraced the notion that man is pretty much like an animal? "When you're dead, you're dead!" Yet at the same time far more people embrace some kind of false system that at least admits that the death of our body is not the end of it all. That our soul continues to exist. Christianity of course announces that not only does our soul continue, but that we will one day be given new immortal bodies –

2Co 5:1-4 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2) For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, (3) if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. (4) For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we

would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

The natural condition of man is to be body and soul. But notice that Paul's words here plainly tell us that when "the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed" (our present physical body, at death), *WE still ARE*. And in fact WE are one day going to receive our BUILDING (permanent in contrast to "tent") – our resurrection body.

You have the same thing in Jesus' words in connection with the raising of Lazarus. Listen to this promise again-

Joh 11:11-14 After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." (12) The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." (13) Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. (14) Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died,

Joh 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, (26) and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

See it? Lazarus was still Lazarus even before Christ raised him out of the

tomb. Where was he? We aren't given the details here, but obviously he still existed and was alive. His bodily resurrection was a picture for us of our resurrection yet to come, only ours will be permanent. *Lazarus had died, but Jesus said He was going to awaken him*. That does not mean Lazarus was in some unconscious, sleeping state. No, when Scripture speaks of a Christian "sleeping," it is always in reference to the BODY, not the soul –

Mat 9:23-25 And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, (24) he said, "Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. (25) But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose.

1Co 15:50-54 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (51) Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (53) For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. (54) When the perishable puts on the

imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

See it? Think carefully about the obvious – *the fact that we are going to be raised in immortal, real, resurrection bodies necessarily means that our SOUL, the person we really are, continues to BE even after our body dies.* I will still be ME when I die. And so will you.

1Th 4:13-18 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. (14) For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, **God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.** (15) For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Get a firm hold on this. "Sleep" here, "fallen asleep" does NOT refer to the soul, the person. It refers only to the body which, in the case of the Christian, is only "sleeping" in the grave and is to be awakened by Christ at the resurrection.

However, what we want to primarily notice here this morning is –

Christ is going to bring those Christians who have died before He returns WITH HIM. Plainly then, the Christian goes to be with Christ when his body dies. The Christian, the person YOU are, still IS.

2Co 5:6-8 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, (7) for we walk by faith, not by sight. (8) Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Where is my loved one who has died in Christ? He/she is "away" right now. With the Lord. Soon to return and all grief from our separation will be over once and for all.

Now, of course, please take careful notice. All of these great truths are only for those who die in Christ. The wicked, those who reject Christ, have no hope. They die and go with the rest

of the wicked to that place reserved for eternal destruction and on the Day when Christ comes to judge the world they will be raised *bodily* as well, only to spend eternity out of the presence of Christ and thus in eternal darkness – hell.

To be away from the body, in Christ then, is to be at home with the Lord. At home. Where we really belong. And once more, think carefully on this, this means that when my body dies I do not cease to exist or enter into some unconscious state, but I actually in full consciousness go to be with the Lord which, Paul says, is “very much better.”

The Christian's dying day is his best day!

Look at this Scripture and think of the implications:

Mat 17:3-5 And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. (4) And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." (5) He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

This is part of what Peter meant when he said he was an eyewitness of Christ's majesty.

But for our purposes this morning, notice once more this obvious fact.-

Moses and Elijah were long since dead. And yet, here they were. Further, they appeared in recognizable form. They weren't zombies. They had a "body" of some kind. And Peter knew who they were.

This tells us then that not only will we continue to exist, continue to be who we are, but we will have even before the resurrection, some kind of intermediate body that is recognizable as us. YOU ARE NOT GOING TO A LAND OF GHOSTS AND VAPORY SPIRITS OR UNCONSCIOUSNESS WHEN YOU DIE. You are going to a place that is “very much better” than this place.

When we die, we do not cease to exist. I will still be me, and you will still be you, and we will be better off because we will be once and for all free of all sin and we will be with the Lord, and there is much more really good stuff to come. Resurrection. The New Heavens and Earth. Reunions. No more parting. Never again.

Here is still another Scripture proof that when our body dies, WE still remain US –

Luk 16:19-31 "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. (20) And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, (21) who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. (22) The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, (23) and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. (24) And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' (25) But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. (26) And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' (27) And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— (28) for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of

torment.' (29) But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' (30) And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' (31) He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

The very nature of the gospel itself necessarily requires that we remain US when our body dies. Think about it. The Promises. Listen –

Heb 11:8-10 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. (9) By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. (10) **For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.**

Heb 11:13-16 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (14) For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. (15)

If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. (16) **But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.**

Heb 11:39-40 And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, (40) **since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.**

Understand? Faith looks forward. Faith in the Christian looks forward to the Promises made to Abraham, namely, that we have a “better country.” A heavenly one. Not of this creation, but of the New Creation. All of this whole idea of Promise is meaningless *if we cease to BE when we die.*

Jesus, in very powerful words, refuted the evil notions of the Sadducees and affirmed that when we die, we live:

Mat 22:23-32 The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, (24) saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.' (25) Now there were seven brothers among us.

The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. (26) So too the second and third, down to the seventh. (27) After them all, the woman died. (28) In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her." (29) But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. (30) For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. (31) And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: (32) **'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.'**

See it? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *are still alive. Right now. And they remain Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.* God continues to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive!

The World Denies These things

2Pe 3:1-4 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, (2) that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, (3)

knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. (4) They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

Don't you believe it for a second. God's promises to us in Christ are true. Christ is risen. Death is not the end for the Christian, but the beginning. It is a mere death of our body, but WE continue to be US and one day it will get even better when the resurrection comes. Then we are going to find ourselves in a new Eden, no need for a watch, no worries that the good times are going to end, no fears that we will be separated and not see one another again – All of that will be gone, and we will never again have to find ourselves thinking, "those were the good old days. What I would give to be able to go back there again."

Because the good old days will be the good new days, and they will never end.