

Text: Romans 8:18

Theme: There's No Comparison

July 23, 2017

We are people who like to make comparisons. We compare yesterday's weather to today's weather, our garden to someone else's garden, and on our list goes. In some situations, we even find ourselves saying, "There's really no comparison." In today's text, Paul makes it clear and certain that there's no comparison between the present and eternity. Today, we dedicate a few moments of our time to considering why there is no comparison.

i. Between heaven and the present, there is no comparison. A. First, we look at the present. 1. In the present we face the unknown. How many of you enjoy the unknown, having no clue regarding what will happen next? Most of us want to know. If our job is going to be phased out in five years, we'd like to know. If our retirement dreams will never materialize, we'd like to know that now. If we're going to face a major crisis, we'd like to know before it happens. Why? Because we want to be prepared; we want to be in control. We want to do whatever we can to stop that event from occurring. In this world, we face the unknown and we don't like the unknown.

2. In the present, we face stress and fatigue. Imagine for a moment that all your reasons for stress and fatigue vanished for twenty-four hours. Would you recognize yourself in a mirror? Would you notice that your body suddenly felt very different? In a truth, stress and fatigue are killing us. They are running us ragging, wearing our body down at a rapid pace. If we don't learn how to get off the stress train that's rolling down the tracks out of control, we will give up quality of life and shorten our lives for no good reason. In this present world, stress, weariness, and fatigue send more people to the hospital than any other health issue.

3. In the present, we face random health challenges. Notice that I said they are "random" health issues. In this world, we face health issues, but what's more disturbing is that we don't know what or when something will occur in our lives. It's true that we can avoid some health issues with lifestyle changes and the like, but it's those other health issues that bother us most because we don't know what or when they will strike. Why does one person face cancer and another person faces heart issues? Why do some encounter a rare blood disease and others face arthritis? In many cases, the cause is unknown. It's random and we don't like random suffering.

B. Having looked at the present, let's look at the future. 1. In the future, aging will not exist. What's the cause of aging? The root cause is sin. When the Fall occurred, aging came into existence. Yet when we arrive in heaven, every sign of aging will be gone! Think about how you would look if all signs of aging were removed. Any comparison to your former appearance? This glory that will be revealed includes a life where aging doesn't exist. What we will look like, I don't know and frankly, it doesn't matter. The great thing is that whatever aging causes now, won't exist in heaven. It's difficult to imagine, but when we experience it, it will be perfectly normal.

2. In the future, we will have unlimited energy. What would you do next week if you suddenly had unlimited energy? What could and would you do in this congregation if you could go all day long and never get tired? We so often look at

our grandchildren or great grandchildren and think, "If only I could have their energy." In heaven, you will have that energy and more, energy to serve your Lord day and night and never get tired, energy to stand in the presence of God and absorb hours and hours of information, yet never face mental overload. Here we face limitations, but there, we can't begin to imagine how different life will be.

3. In eternity, there will be perfect harmony. What does perfect harmony look like? Can we even define it with any sense of accuracy? What noticeable changes would you see in Taylor County if every grudge, every desire for revenge disappeared, if everyone enjoyed perfect harmony with everyone else? Based on what we can imagine, it would be so wonderful. Yet, when that does occur, it will be far more amazing than we ever imagined. Forgiven and forgotten - that's what will exist every day for everyone. We can dream of it here and do our part to move closer toward it. But nothing here will ever compare to perfect harmony in heaven.

4. In heaven, we will see God. Suppose you could see God in person every Sunday as you gathered in this place for worship. Once word got out, how many empty pews would you find here next Sunday? Through His Word and the Sacraments, God meets us in person. We may not see Him, but, by faith, we believe He is present. Even so, that won't begin to compare to seeing God in person, to talking with God, to listening to Him speak, to having all our unanswered questions answered. Twenty-four, seven, three sixty-five - I can't imagine how grand and glorious those moments will be. It's simply beyond comparison at this moment.

C. Based on our limited comparison, what's our response? 1. We endure the present. We may not like some things in the present. Certain events will cause us great pain; some will nearly tear our heart out. But whatever we face, we endure it. We get through it. We pick up the pieces that may be scattered like a thousand piece puzzle and we get back to living, back on the path that promises to lead us to that place of no comparison. As we do so, we remember and remind ourselves as often as necessary that the best is yet to come, that this is only for a moment. With the power of God, we can arrive at the finish line where eternity will last forever.

2. We respond by fervently praying for Christ's return. Would anything be more fantastic than Christ taking us all home to heaven in one grand sweep? We can ask God for better health, for peace, for guidance, for strength, and on our list could go. Each of those things are surely appropriate requests, but as we are making our requests, we pray fervently, intensely for His return. Nothing could be more glorious, more wonderful, more beneficial for us as fellow believers in Christ. As we pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, come," we acknowledge that nothing here could ever compare to the glories waiting for us there.

3. We like comparisons and we use them for a variety of reasons. Yet, in the comparison of things present and things to come, we have only one response, one accurate reaction, and that reaction is that there's no comparison. Amen.