

Leaving

I believe I've had about enough of this leaving stuff for awhile. Between a son leaving for college one day and a daughter, son-in-law and grandson leaving for their home on other days in close proximity, for our family this new year thus far has been more about departures than anything else. While these separations are painful to the heart, they are reminders of some tremendous Bible principles about leaving.

The first of these principles is that there are some things we want to leave. When Jesus met Satan face to face and defeated the prince of darkness with the Sword of the Spirit, he concluded the confrontation by saying, "Get thee hence, Satan..." The next verse says, "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him." (Matthew 4:10-11). Putting Satan and his temptations behind us is always good. James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." We want him to leave, and while he's going out the door he can take his sorrows, sin, suffering and evil with him and not come back. Of course, he will continue his attacks on us (I Peter 5:8). "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (II Timothy 3:12). We know that we can overcome him though (I Corinthians 10:13).

The second principle regarding leaving is that we have One who will never leave us, namely, God our Father (Hebrews 13:5). Standing on the threshold of death's door, Moses exhorted Israel before they went into the promised land, "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." (Deuteronomy 31:6). Moments later he called Joshua to his side and repeated his encouragement. "And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed." (Deuteronomy 31:8). The Lord Himself reminded Joshua of these words after Moses' death (Joshua 1:5). The Psalmist reveled in the omnipresence of God throughout the 139th Psalm. "Thou knowest my downsitting and my uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off." (verse 2). "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (verse 7). Even those who wanted to get away from God were unsuccessful (e.g., Jonah 1). God will not leave us. Though we "walk through the valley of the shadow of death" we will be able to say, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4).

The third principle in regard to leaving is that if we are faithful Christians we are heading in the direction of the place in which the concept of leaving is unknown. Again we reference the 23rd Psalm which closes with the comforting thought, "and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Psalm 23:6). The beautiful 21st chapter of the book of Revelation reminds us that heaven is the place where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (verse 4). "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." (verse 3). Revelation 22:5 continues the thought, adding, "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

A final principle of leaving is that sometimes it is necessary in order to bring about the greater good. Sure we don't want our children to grow up and leave home, but if we really think about it we do not want to stunt the emotional, mental and spiritual growth they gain by going out on their own any more than we would want to stunt their physical growth. Sure we don't want our faithful Christian loved ones to pass from this life, but when we consider the victory they realize in eternity (I Corinthians 15:54-58), we would not want them to come back to this world of sin. Consider also the powerful and promising words of Jesus as He prepared His disciples for His departure. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." (John 14:1-4). Jesus had to leave physically so that we could have redemption of sins, but in leaving, He prepared a marvelous home for the faithful.