

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 11TH-12TH, 2024 // 2 CORINTHIANS

## OUR HEAVENLY DWELLING (2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-5)

Paul has been contrasting things that are “seen” and “temporary” with things that are “unseen” and “eternal” (4:18).

- Now he speaks more about the contrast between earthly things and eternal things.
- “We know...” (v. 1)—when it comes to our eternal destiny and what happens after this life on earth ends, Paul speaks with great confidence.

Life in this physical body is like living in an earthly tent because it's being destroyed.

- The bodies of some Believers are being destroyed through persecution or sickness, but every human body will suffer the processes of aging and death.
- Yet, we know that we have an “eternal dwelling in the heavens”—a glorified, new, resurrection body God has waiting for us.

While we're here in this “tent” (earthly body) we groan as we desire to put on our heavenly dwelling (v. 2).

- The suffering, pain, and loss we experience in this world cause those of us with hope in the resurrection to cry out to God and groan with desire for our heavenly dwelling.

- This world as it is now is not our home—we can't get too comfortable here in a tent!

Nakedness in verse 3 is used as a metaphor for being without a body.

- Our eternal future doesn't consist of us floating around as disembodied spirits or ghosts—we will be clothed in a glorified body and inherit the new creation (Rev. 21:1-7).
- But while we're in this earthly tent, we groan as if we're under a burden because we long to be clothed in eternal life (v. 4).

God is the one who prepared us for this purpose. God didn't design human beings to die but to be clothed in immortal bodies (v. 5).

- Sin is the reason death has come (Rom. 6:23), but Christ has paid the penalty for our sin and freed us from its effect.
- We've been given eternal life, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit is the down payment of the fullness of salvation we'll experience.

Aging, sickness, and the eventual decay of this earthly body are inevitable. Without the hope of Christ and the resurrection, this is a very depressing and bleak reality.

- Because we know what happens to us as Christians when we die, we can accept this reality knowing that a far better existence is yet to come (1 Cor. 2:9).
- Don't get too comfortable in your tent!

## BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT (2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-10)

We can have a confidence when it comes to life after death that the world simply doesn't have (v. 6).

- We can be confident that while we're on the earth in our earthly body, we're away from the Lord; but Believers who have died and are absent from their earthly body are present with the Lord.
- This leaves no category for ghosts/spirit beings visiting or haunting loved ones.

It's not that God isn't present with us while we're here on the earth (John 14:16-18) but the Spirit's presence now is a tiny taste of what lies ahead in the presence of the Lord.

- Living with this hope and working in light of eternity requires walking by faith, not by sight (v. 7).
- There's coming a day when our faith will be made sight, but for now, we live according to our faith in what God has promised in the age to come.

When we walk by faith and have confidence in all that God has promised us in the age to come, we see heaven as being better than what we're experiencing here on earth (v. 8).

- Life can become so weighed down by the responsibilities, burdens, and idols of this life that we sometimes fail to acknowledge just how temporary it all is.
- Heaven is our home!

Because heaven is our home and we're walking by faith in light of eternity, we make our life's ambition simply to please the Lord (v. 9).

- This is Paul's aim—what he's striving and living for in everything he does.
- What's your life's aim and ambition? To make money, pursue comfort, gain popularity, or have cool experiences?
- As Believers, we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (v. 10).

All Believers will stand before the “bema seat” of Christ (v. 10) to give an account and receive rewards for what we've done in faithful service to Christ (not the “White Throne Judgment”).

- This will be a time of reward, revelation, examination, and accountability.
- His disciples will present before Jesus the works they've done in service to Him, and they will be tested “with fire” (1 Cor. 3:13).

Jesus will reward the disciples who have sacrificed to follow Him and their works will be revealed on that day to be “gold, silver, and costly stones”—these were the things of eternal value in which they invested (1 Cor. 3:12).

- But some of the other things that are tested on that day will be revealed as “wood, hay, and straw,” temporal, shallow, pointless, wasteful, self-centered, self-glorifying pursuits, and they'll be burned up.

There will be some who enter heaven without many rewards (1 Cor. 3:15).

- If we know and have confidence that day is coming, and we're walking by faith, not sight...how does it make sense to live a life of self-centered, shallow, worldly pursuits?
- If we live by faith and know that day is coming, our life's aim and ambition is simply to please and honor the Lord.

## NO LONGER FOR OURSELVES (2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-15)

Paul had many motivations for his ministry, but the coming judgment of Christ was a big one.

- “Since we know the fear of the Lord...”—if we truly believe that someday we will stand before Jesus and give an account of our lives, that will show up in how we live.
- Paul sought to be persuasive and winsome in how he presented Christ to others so they'd come to know Him personally (v. 11).

Regardless of what others were saying about Paul's motivations for ministry, Paul knows that his intentions were plain to God.

- His desire is that his true intentions would also be plain to the Corinthians.
- It wasn't that Paul was just bragging or trying to glorify himself before the Corinthian Christians, it's that he was trying to give them an opportunity to understand the nature of his life and ministry so they could take pride in him (v. 12).

This wasn't an arrogant, sinful pride that Paul wanted them to feel, but rather a delight and joy in sharing a success with a loved one.

- The problem with the Corinthians is that they were magnetized towards and took pride in outward appearances of success and spirituality, and seemed to care less about the heart.
- When we focus on the heart and simply aim to please God, we will often be misunderstood.

Paul's enemies said he was out of his mind as he spoke the truth of what God had shown him and put his life at risk to travel across the world (v. 13).

- If Paul seemed out of his mind to some, it was for the sake of the Lord and His work.
- If he seemed more sober-minded and level-headed, it was for their sake so that he could effectively and lovingly minister to them.

Either way, the motivation Paul had for his ministry was the same—love.

- The love of Christ compelled Paul to speak, act, travel, risk his life, and live radically (v. 14).

## BECAUSE CHRIST DIED FOR ALL, “THEREFORE ALL DIED...”

What does that mean?

- If Christ has died for you, then His call on your life is for you to die to yourself in order to live for Him!

## “...NO LONGER LIVE FOR [OURSELVES]...” (V. 15)

Research has shown that overall selfishness may offer short-term benefits such as material gain or personal advancement.

- Researchers are discovering that chronic selfishness damages interpersonal relationships, creates isolation and mental health problems, and contributes to cardiovascular issues and weakened immune function.
- The invitation of Christ's Kingdom is for you to die to self (Rom. 6:6), stop making you the center of the universe, and live for the glory of Jesus and the good of other people.
- The only thing that can truly motivate or compel us to live sacrificially, give generously, and live for God and others is the love of Christ and the faith that someday we'll stand before Him.

## THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION (2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21)

If we live compelled by the love of Christ with eternity in mind, we will have a completely new view of reality (v. 16).

- We will understand that life is about so much more than the physical—there is a real heaven, a real hell, a real spiritual war for the souls of humanity with angels and demons, and a real glorified Savior ruling on a throne that we will someday stand before.

With that new view of reality comes a new view of humanity—regardless of whatever label the world has placed on them, we see them as precious souls for whom Christ died.

- If anyone puts their faith in Christ, they are remade into a new creation, and all the labels of the world pass away as they become a new creation (v. 17).
- Judgmentalism is incompatible with the gospel.

Reconciliation: a change of personal relationship in which a state of estrangement is replaced by one of peace and fellowship.

- To be reconciled with someone is to move from being their enemy to being their friend.
- Reconciliation is the restoration of a relationship to a harmonious state after a dispute.
- Through Christ, this is what God is doing—restoring sinners to relationship with Himself.

God reconciles sinners by not counting their trespasses against them—we deserve hell, but God has offered us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life because of Jesus (v. 19).

- The work God has given us as His people on earth is to proclaim this good news that sinners and enemies of God can be forgiven and made righteous through Christ.
- Our message is one of reconciliation.

As we live out and proclaim this message of reconciliation, we are ambassadors and representatives of Christ (v. 20).

- The message that Paul and anyone else who truly represents Christ brings is simply a message that pleads with people to embrace and receive what's been done for them—“be reconciled to God.”

## HOW DID GOD MAKE RECONCILIATION POSSIBLE?

- Christ, in His perfection and holiness, took our sin upon Himself.
- As Jesus died on the cross, He was paying the full penalty for our sin.
- Jesus took our sin but gave us His righteousness: all of our sin was placed upon Him, and His perfection and righteousness were credited to our account.

## WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT (V. 7)

- This world (and even our earthly bodies) are temporary and passing away. Be encouraged to know the best is yet to come, and don't get too attached to things down here.
- Know that we're all going to stand before Jesus someday. Let's make sure our aim in life is to simply please Him so we can stand before Him unashamed on that day.
- God's Word should define for us what success and meaning look like in life. Our calling is to die to self in order to live for Christ and other people.
- God's Word should define for us how we are to view other people. Our message to humanity is one of God's peace and love extended to others through Jesus Christ.