

2 Corinthians 5:1-8 – “Our Heavenly Habitation”

As we ended our study last week, we finished with 2 Corinthians 4:18: “*while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*”

Today we look at something Paul would have had in mind as one of the *unseen things* we get to look forward to.

And it’s meant to excite us, encourage us, and give us an expectancy of eternity. There are a lot of people that don’t like to talk about eternity because there’s an uncertainty of it for them. To many, there’s a real fear of dying.

- “In the 2007 film *The Bucket List*, two terminally ill men—played by Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman—take a road trip to do the things they always said they would do before they “kicked the bucket.” Before the film’s release, Nicholson was interviewed by *Parade* magazine. Reflecting on his personal life, Nicholson said, “I used to live so freely. The mantra for my generation was ‘Be your own man!’ I always said, ‘Hey, you can have whatever rules you want—I’m going to have mine. I’ll accept the guilt. I’ll pay the check. I’ll do the time.’ I chose my own way. That was my philosophical position well into my fifties. As I’ve gotten older, I’ve had to adjust.” But reality has a way of getting the attention of even Jack Nicholson. Later in the interview, he adds, “We all want to go on forever, don’t we? We fear the unknown. Everybody goes to that wall, yet nobody knows what’s on the other side. That’s why we fear death.”
—Dotson Rader, “I Want to Go On Forever,” *Parade* magazine (December 9, 2007) ¹

Today, I trust we’re all going to leave here after the sermon ready to die 😊.

Actually, the hope is that we leave here excited for what comes after we die.

1. Our Destination – 5:1

5:1 - *For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

Paul is really continuing this thought and building from what we’ve been seeing in Chapter 4. That we do not need to lose heart (4:16) and that there’s a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory coming our way (4:17).

¹ Larson, C. B., & Ten Elshof, P. (2008). *1001 illustrations that connect* (p. 249). Zondervan Publishing House.

Thus the use of the word **For**, this is a continuation of the same thought and theme.

I like what Paul says here, **for we know**... This is not Paul wishing for things to unfold in a positive way. This is Paul confidently letting us know that when these bodies are put down, we have a new body that we will be inheriting.

Paul's not just confident because he's been *told* these things, he's confident because he has *seen* these things. Later in this letter he will tell of one that was taken up to the third heavens (12:1-7). He's referring to himself, *'how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter'* (12:4).

So, everything we've been discussing, that this light affliction is working out a far greater weight of glory, is something Paul can attest to and say confidently, Amen! He knows that God is working out all things to where everything we may experience in this life will indeed be worth it all. We don't need to fear death!

Paul uses some very interesting pictures or analogies to speak of our current earthly, physical bodies. He calls it an **earthly house**. And that's perfect, because this body is not our true self. It's a shell. We're made up of body soul and spirit. Our body is what connects with this material world. Our soul connects with one another, and our spirit connects with God. So, we're a lot more than just our body.

- You've all met people that spend a lot of time on the body. Their body is a finely tuned buff machine with muscles coming out of muscles. Yet you can have a more meaningful conversation with a brick sometimes.
- Our body is just the earthly house that we abide in while here on this material plane we call earth.

One day we're going to move into a new dwelling: **John 14:1-3**, *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² 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. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."*

- The word mansions means 'abode, abiding, or dwelling'. I know I'm going to be bursting a few bubbles here, but Jesus isn't talking about everybody getting a new mansion to live in when they arrive in Heaven.

- What Jesus is ultimately saying here, is that in heaven there are going to be many people who are part of the family of God and will be dwelling and abiding with Him (and each other) for all eternity.
- Some have interpreted the word mansions to speak of our new bodies as the dwellings. There are many dwellings in His Father's house.

So, our earthly house are these earthly bodies. And Paul likens them also to a **tent**. That's a very interesting and fitting picture as well.

- Remember when Paul came to Corinth he worked as a tent maker with Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1-3).
- Tents were familiar to Paul, but it's a perfect picture of this earthly house. Tents are not permanent dwellings. Some of you love camping and staying in tents, and some of you who are wiser love RV'ing. There's a big difference.
- Now, I gotta say, tenting has come a long way. Tents today are a step up from what I grew up with. I remember camping with those old canvas tents. You would roll it out and it smelled like it had been around since Paul's tentmaking days. It would start to show some wear and tear pretty good. When it rained, good luck! I remember waking up sometimes to a small lake not outside the tent but inside my tent. That's not my idea of fun.
- Many times I just wanted to pull out of the campsite and leave the tent there.

That's the idea, our earthly house is not meant to last. It's not to be a permanent structure for us. There's something greater coming. We're earthen vessels – frail, broken – but don't lose heart, this tent will one day be laid aside to take up a more glorious dwelling.

Paul says that when this tent is **destroyed**... Now I would have wished for him to use a more gentler term for our demise. That sounds a little harsh. He could have said when this tent is put down or packed up, but no, he has to go with **destroyed**, as though some barbaric catastrophe happens to you. And it's not to say that this is going to be the outcome for everybody. Maybe like 78% of you, but not everybody 😊.

All Paul is meaning here is that this body is going to stop living. This body is going to be laid to rest and will be put in the grave, but that's not the end of us!

Notice, ***we have a building from God***... This greatly contrasts with that of a tent. A building is solid, more permanent. This is ***a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens***. This is speaking of our new, glorified, resurrected body!

- **1 Corinthians 15:42–44**, *"So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."*

As believers in the Lord Jesus, we've been promised eternal life with Him. These present bodies are our earthly house, they're made for this earth. But one day we're going to have ***a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!*** This will be our new house that is fit for eternity. This new house speaks of our resurrected body.

A common question that is posed when talking about eternity, is not so much what is heaven going to be like, but what are we going to be like? Will we have bodies? Will we just be spirits floating around? This passage lets us know that we will have new bodies that are made for eternity. I believe they will be fashioned like Jesus' resurrected body. And we have many descriptions of that through the gospels.

- He wasn't limited by physical dimension anymore (Luke 24:31 – *He vanished from their sight*. John 20:26 – He suddenly appeared before His disciples who were in a closed, locked room).
- Jesus still had the nail prints in His hands and feet (Luke 24:39; John 20:27). His new body was similar to His old body.
- He was not just a spirit, He told His disciples to handle Him and see the flesh and bone reality of Him (Luke 24:39).
- He ate (Luke 24:41-43)! These new bodies may not need to eat, but we get to enjoy food for all eternity (Revelation 22:2 speaks of a tree of life in the New Jerusalem which yields its fruit every month).

Now it would seem that this implies we get our resurrected body the moment we die. But that is not the case. We receive our resurrected, glorified body when Christ raptures up His church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

So, what's happening between our death and this bodily resurrection? Are we floating around in some disembodied state?

This is something Bible teachers are not agreed on. We know that when we die, we are in the presence of the Lord. We are experiencing the glories of heaven in

a very conscious and alive state. And we know that one day we will be clothed in an eternal made for heaven resurrected body.

- So some have suggested we are in an intermediate state after death where our spirit goes to heaven and we are in the presence of the Lord.
- Some have suggested we're give an interim heavenly body until our resurrection.
- Since eternity is outside of our current framework of time, perhaps we do receive our resurrected bodies immediately.
- Regardless of what happens immediately following death, we know that we're going to receive ***a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens***. It's going to be outside of this created order (Hebrews 9:11). We will have perfect bodies fitted for the realities of eternity.

2. Our Desire – 5:2-4

5:2-3 - *For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, ³ if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.*

Paul comes back now to the realities of this present life and these physical bodies. And guess what they cause us to do a lot of: **groan!** We groan over the joys of getting older and the daily reminders of these bodies breaking down. We start contemplating a lot more before sitting down in a chair if we're going to need help getting back out of that chair. You start buying shoes without laces because it's just far too much work.

- There are three signs that you're entering into old age: the first is you start noticing increased memory loss.
- Interestingly, statistics show that at the age of 70 there are 5 women to every man. Which is such an unfortunate time for a guy to have those odds. But I digress 😊.

Paul is showing that we're not just groaning **over** these earthly decaying bodies, we're groaning **for** our new bodies. We're ***earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven***.

Paul switches up metaphors here and begins to speak of our clothing. We're not just looking to put away or put off the old, we're awaiting something new! We're looking forward to our new heavenly wardrobe!

- Our desire should be more and more for the things of heaven and not the things of this earth.

- **Colossians 3:1–3**, *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."*
- We don't need to be overly concerned with investing in this tent, we want the real deal – our heavenly habitat. Invest in that! That should be our desire.
- We're groaning because this body is only holding us back: **Romans 8:23**, *"Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."*

Since we're in Christ, and we have this promise, we won't be **found naked**. "The body was what made contact and communication with others possible. To them the death of the body deprived them of everything which meant being a person; it was being unclothed or naked. It was this fear that made them want to go directly from this life to the Resurrection life without experiencing death. But the promise of God was, whether we are alive when He comes or have died, that *"we shall not be found naked"* (v. 3).

We don't know whether Paul was saying that at the moment of death God gives us a new body, or that the hope was so very real that they shouldn't worry about the time in between. Some feel that the reference is to the fact that physical death does not make us lose our relationship within the body of Christ. Bible scholars and theologians will continue to discuss those possibilities for years to come. But there is general agreement on the idea that death, rather than lessening the person or the relationship, actually creates a greater potential for growth and service." ²

Not be found naked could also speak of how we'll be clothed in Christ's righteousness!

Paul emphasizes this same thought in the following verse...

5:4 - *For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.*

² Chafin, K. L., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1985). *1, 2 Corinthians* (Vol. 30, p. 232). Thomas Nelson Inc.

Living in this world and in this decaying body is a bit of a burden. It's not always fun. We do spend a lot of time groaning. But our groaning and burden is not to end this life. We as believers need to be very careful that we don't let the struggles of this world get the better of us. Our solution to the difficulties in life are not to unclasp ourselves from this life, but to look forward to being further clothed. To put on our complete wardrobe – our resurrected bodies. That is when we will see that these light afflictions are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (4:17).

This is what Paul wrote of in **1 Corinthians 15:53–54**, *"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory.""*

- This is what we groan for. Who doesn't want this? This is when death and mortality will be taken over by everlasting life!

3. Our Dependence – 5:5-8

5:5 - Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

God is preparing us for life with Him. This is His desire for all people, that they may enter into the glories of eternity with God. He's shaping us, refining us. Every trial and affliction is causing us to press into Him more and develop the character of Jesus. He's preparing us for something greater, and preparing something great for us!

- **John 14:1–3**, *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² 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. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."*

Now how can we be confident of this? He's given us His ***Spirit as a guarantee***.

- This word guarantee is the Greek word *arrhabon*, and it means earnest, or down payment. It's like if you were to make an offer on a house, you would need to come up quickly with a down payment to say, *'I want this house and I'm going to come back and finish the deal.'*

- God has begun this work in us, and to show that there's more to come, He's given us His Spirit that marks us, claims us as His, and will one day complete this work of redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14).

The hope of heaven is not some pie in the sky wishful thinking. It is a certainty. Just as we've seen lives transformed presently from darkness to light by the power of the Holy Spirit, so too our lives will one day be transformed from death to life! It's a guarantee for those who have put their faith in Jesus!

5:6-7 - *So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. ⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

As long as we are clothed in this body we cannot be fully with the Lord. We can enjoy fellowship with the Lord presently, we can experience His presence, but we're not with Him face to face as we will one day see Him (1 John 3:2-3).

For now ***we walk by faith, not by sight.*** We're not relying on what we see, but on what is not seen.

- **2 Corinthians 4:18**, *"while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

Paul once more shows where his confidence lies...

5:8 - *We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

For Paul there were two positions a believer could be in – at home in our earthly body and absent from the Lord, or absent from our earthly body and at home with the Lord. There was no additional alternative. There's no soul sleep for the believer. There's no purgatory. There's nothing else. We go straight to the Lord's presence when this tent is folded down. This is our confidence!

And we will not be fixated on finding our loved ones, wondering if little sparkles the cat is there. We will know one another, but we will be fixated on Jesus!

“THE GREAT QUESTION? Do the souls of believers at death find themselves immediately in the presence of the Lord? Absolutely! Read Matthew 22:31-32; Luke 16:22; 23:43 (cf. II Cor. 12:2, 4); Philippians 1:21-24; Hebrews 12:22-23 – They are conscious, able to communicate, filled with joy (Psalm 16:11), comforted (Luke 16:25), singing (Rev. 5:9), worshipping (Rev. 5:14; 7:11) and praising God (Rev. 19:5-6).”

(Hocking)