

## 20260614 - 2 Corinthians 5 – What Happens When We Die? Walking by Faith and Not by Sight.

*\*\*\*All Scripture references are NKJV unless notated otherwise.*

Last Sunday we looked at 2 Corinthians chapters 3 and 4. Paul relates that when Moses came down from Sinai, he had the *shekinah* glory upon Him. This was the magnificent presence of God on Moses' face. He had to wear a veil lest the brilliance of that glory overwhelm the Israelites. Paul then says we are like "jars of clay" that carry that glory of God within us. The Holy Spirit of God resides in the heart of each and every believer. Paul also reminded us that although we might be persecuted, we will never be abandoned. And although we are crushed at times, we are not destroyed. Our afflictions here on earth are temporary and minimal compared to the eternal weight of glory that awaits us.

Paul continues this dialogue concerning our mortality in Chapter 5. He likens our bodies to tents. I remember camping once with my sons, and we were in a small tent at Big Bend National Park. Before settling down for the night, we went down to listen to a lecture by the Park Ranger who told us, "don't leave food out because we have mountain lions and bears, and you don't want to inadvertently attract them." Well, needless to say, I didn't get much sleep that night as I lay there with a .45 pistol under my pillow while the wind and the cold howled against that flimsy tent for most of the night. A flimsy tent is no match for a mountain lion or a bear. Hear the words of Paul.

### ***Assurance of the Resurrection***

***5 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. <sup>2</sup> For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, <sup>3</sup> if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (2 Corinthians 5:1-5).***

Paul calls our bodies mere tents. If you've ever done any tent camping, you are well aware of how temporary they are. They go up, and then they come down. If it rains or storms while you're in a tent, you're very likely to get wet. The seams separate and need to be resealed. Our bodies are similar. They are temporary, and they get sick. They grow feeble, and we find ourselves in pain. Our limbs don't work just right, and it becomes easy to fall. This tent will be destroyed (meaning it will eventually die), but we have a building from God that is not made with hands that will last for eternity in the heavens.

Going through the frailties and difficulties of this life, sometimes we find that we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed in something different; something that doesn't hurt, and something that isn't prone to be hurt, sick, or damaged. I am now going to say what I THINK these next few verses mean (not necessarily what I KNOW is being said). Paul says that when

we get this “heavenly body,” we will no longer be found naked. This hints that there is a time period when we will not be clothed. I think Paul is talking about a temporary time in which we will not have a heavenly body. This is between the time that we die and when we get our new glorified bodies. When we die, we will be desirous that our earthly body be replaced, or maybe I should say superseded by, our new heavenly body. Paul says that we have a guarantee of this process by the fact that we are now indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

When you and I die, our physical bodies will die, but our spirits and our souls will live on. They do not age. So what happens to you when you die? Do you immediately have a resurrection body? NO. You won’t get your new resurrection body until Jesus comes back to get us. Hence, there will be a time span between when we die and when Jesus comes. We will receive our immortal resurrection body in the “twinkling of an eye.” The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is our guarantee of this promised new body. Paul had previously told the church in Thessalonika that this transformation would occur when Jesus returns to take us up with Him. At that time, those whose bodies are already in the grave will be resurrected in a new body, and those of us who haven’t died will be instantaneously transformed into our new bodies. We read.

**1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 (ESV)**

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. 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. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord

***<sup>6</sup> So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. <sup>7</sup> For we walk by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup> We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:6-7).***

Hence, while we are in these earthly jars of clay, these earthly vessels, we are absent from the Lord. So, living here on earth we are in these tents, but if we have had faith and no longer walk by sight, when we are absent from these bodies, we will indeed be present with the Lord. That’s a promise. That’s something that each of us who walk by faith can look forward to. There is no such thing as “soul sleep.” When we die, we don’t lie there in some kind of suspended animation. We are instantaneously in the presence of God. However, for some period, we will be in His presence as Paul describes as “naked,” meaning we won’t yet have our glorified bodies. You’ll be there, but you will be “naked.” Meaning you won’t have a body. Paul also calls this being “unclothed.” I do think that even in that state, we will be recognizable to God and to one another in heaven. Again, I am saying what I think and not what I necessarily know for certain. Paul continues.

## The Judgment Seat of Christ

***<sup>9</sup> Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. <sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. <sup>11</sup> Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences. (2 Corinthians 5:9-11).***

Knowing of our mortality, whether we're present or absent from the body, we should be desirous to be "well pleasing" to Him. Pastor Larry says that holiness is living in a way that is separate and holy. It is doing things and having a heart attitude that makes God smile. We don't do these things to be saved, because we were already saved when we put our faith and trust in Jesus' work on the cross on our behalf. This leads to examining what further happens when we die.

Each and every believer will be judged, not as to our righteousness, but according to what we've done or not done while in these bodies. Yes, there will be an accounting and a reckoning of how we used our time on earth. Let me be very clear that this is not a judgment as to whether we did enough or were righteous enough to get to heaven. That is not what Paul is talking about. I think the measure of what we did and did not do, will be whether or not we were walking in the Spirit. Let's review again what it means to "walk in the Spirit." The very best definition I've ever heard was given by Pastor Darrell in one of his Wednesday night teachings. Darrell said that "walking in the Spirit" is letting God have His way with you. That means you lean on Him in faith as He directs you to the next task He has for you here on earth.

I want to talk for a minute about the different "Judgments" that are mentioned in the Bible. We know there were judgments in the past. Adam and Eve were judged when they were cast out of Eden. The world was judged when the wickedness of man grew so horrible that God destroyed the world in the flood. Babel was judged when the nations were scattered. Sodom and Gomorrah were judged when their sinfulness reached the heavens. Pharaoh was judged when he wouldn't let God's people go.

1        *The judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10) is what I've just covered. Resurrected (and raptured) believers in heaven will be judged for their works. Sin is not in view at this judgment, as that was paid for by Christ, but only faithfulness in Christian service. Selfish works or those done with wrong motives will be burned up (the "wood, hay, and stubble" of 1 Corinthians 3:12). Works of lasting value to the Lord will survive (the "gold, silver, and precious stones"). Rewards, which the Bible calls "crowns" (Revelation 3:11) will be given by the One who is "not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him" (Hebrews 6:10).*

THIS IS NOT JUDGMENT FOR SALVATION – IT IS FOR THE RIGHTEOUS WORKS WE HAVE DONE AND FAITHFULNESS WILL BE REWARDED WITH "CROWNS."

2        *The judgments of the tribulation period (Revelation 6—16). These terrible judgments are pictured as seven seals opened, seven trumpets blown, and seven bowls*

poured out. God's judgment against the wicked will leave no doubt as to His wrath against sin. Besides punishing sin, these judgments will have the effect of bringing the nation of Israel to repentance.

3      *The judgment of the nations* (Matthew 25:31–46). After the tribulation, the Lord Jesus will sit in judgment over the Gentile nations. They will be judged according to their treatment of Israel during the tribulation. This judgment is also called the judgment of the sheep and the goats because of the imagery Jesus uses in the Olivet Discourse. Those who showed faith in God by treating Israel favorably (giving them aid and comfort during the tribulation) are the “sheep” who will enter into the Millennial Kingdom. Those who followed the Antichrist's lead and persecuted Israel are the “goats” who will be consigned to hell.

4      *The judgment of angels* (1 Corinthians 6:2–3). Paul says that Christians will judge angels. We aren't exactly sure what this means, but the angels facing judgment would have to be the fallen angels. It seems that Satan's hordes of demons will be judged by the redeemed ones of the Lamb. Some of these demons are already imprisoned in darkness and awaiting judgment, according to Jude 1:6, due to their leaving their proper dwelling place.

5      *The Great White Throne Judgment* (Revelation 20:11–15). This final judgment of unbelievers for their sins occurs at the end of the Millennium, before the creation of the new heaven and earth. At this judgment, unbelievers from all the ages are judged for their sins and consigned to the lake of fire.<sup>1</sup>

## Be Reconciled to God

***<sup>12</sup> For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. <sup>13</sup> For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; <sup>15</sup> and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. (2 Corinthians 5:12-15).***

Paul once again says that if he has anything to boast about, he'll boast in the fruit of this congregation, and if he ever seems “beside himself”, out of his mind, it is because he is just so compelled by the love of Christ and grateful for his salvation and new life in Christ.

***<sup>16</sup> Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. <sup>18</sup> Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup> that is, that God was in Christ***

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<sup>1</sup> This dialogue on judgments is verbatim from <https://www.gotquestions.org/all-the-judgments.html>

***reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:16-19).***

He says that knowing Christ has given him a new perspective. It has affected how he looks at people and the world around him. This is because if anyone is in Christ, they are a new being. Old things have passed away and all is made new. This encourages us to think in a whole new way that results in living in a whole new way. In saving us and changing us, we are now reconciled (brought back into communion with God) and that's the message that we share with others.

***<sup>20</sup> Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).***

Like ambassadors that are sent into far away lands, we give God's message to the world around us. We are no longer condemned because Jesus took on our sins so that we might stand righteous before God. We are positionally righteous. When we are in Christ, when God looks on us He sees the precious saving blood of Jesus.

So, in summary of the Scripture today, as we come to Christ, we are made righteous in Him. That doesn't mean that we always practice righteous living, but we are able to live out that righteousness when we walk in the Spirit. Part of that new perspective, we no longer need to fear death. We are in corruptible bodies that are like tents.

I would like to think of some positive principles to take with us from this Scripture today concerning Paul's "Tent" metaphor:

- 1 Let's each maintain hope in the midst of our earthly struggles. Our bodies are temporary and they are not our final home. Our soul and spirit will have a permanent incorruptible dwelling some day. Realizing this can help us to not be too invested in this earthly body. It frees us from the angst and worry of our physical decline, and the pain and loss that goes with that. We really do have a superior eternal reality that awaits us. Heaven is real, and our future there can be secure.
- 2 We won't just disappear into oblivion. We will continue to be who we are and we will be transformed into something glorious. We will be perpetually strong and youthful. We won't be "naked" spirits, but we will be ourselves - fully bodied and fully perfected in every way.
- 3 God will be faithful to bring this all to pass. He tells us this in this body of Scripture that we've read today. He designed us for this temporary setup, and He has given us a consideration (like in a contract), who is the Holy Spirit of God who resides in each

and every one of us who has trusted in Him. We do groan in the challenges of this life but it is temporary and it does us well to keep an eye towards our final destination with Him.

- 4 We don't need to be depressed about what happens after we die. On the contrary, we must choose daily to believe and know that God is a promise keeper. We can face our mortality with confidence and hope instead of fear and dread. Our daily feebleness and physical "dismantling" will lead to presence with our Creator and Lord. We have a glorious future awaiting us. It is easy to become depressed about this when we take our eyes off of Jesus.

None of this makes sense unless we gain a heavenly perspective. I would like to direct you back to the truth that Paul proclaims in verses 6-8.

***<sup>6</sup> So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. <sup>7</sup> For we walk by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup> We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:6-8).***

Peace can come to us when we remind ourselves that we are to "walk by faith and not by sight." The fact that someday we will be "absent from the body" will come with the glorious event of being "present with the Lord."

**Let us pray.**

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.