

VII. Home Is Where the LORD Is

December 2/3/4, 2014

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Aim: To live lives that please God, knowing that our eternal inheritance and glorious bodily transformation is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 is in driving continuity with 4:13-18, where we saw that Paul's confidence in future resurrection and transformation was what enabled him to minister with such resiliency and steadfastness (cp. 4:7-12). He gladly suffered in this world for a far greater reward in the world to come.

The process of dying, just described, now reaches its end in death. Far from being romantic and glamorizing death, as believers sometimes do, Paul is realistic and sober. Just as the process of wasting away is a harsh reality of our existence, so too is the end of the process, the destruction of the 'earthly tent.' The effect of Paul's dark realism about dying and death, however, is to show up the contrasting brightness of the all-surpassing power of God. For just as the power of God is at work within dying man, so too the power of God is present in its fullness at his death.

Paul was grappling with different problems in 1 Corinthians 15. In that passage, Paul wrote within the framework of the present and the coming ages, the changeover point being the 'last trumpet' heralding Christ's coming and the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:52-53, 42). In response to Corinthian questions and objections Paul gave examples from nature to show the reasonableness of a human existence which continued from this age to the next but which is different in outward form and appearance. In the second letter, he writes representatively of all believers who face the prospect of death before the intervention of the new age. If, in his former letter, the emphasis was 'we shall all be changed' (1 Cor. 15:51), in the second letter it is 'If the earthly tent ... is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven' (5:1). In this letter, therefore, Paul is affirming that death in no way deprives the believer of the glory of the coming age.

For all, death comes like an utterly unsympathetic landlord waving an eviction notice. But that eviction merely releases believers from a wretched earthly neighborhood to an infinitely grand and glorious dwelling in a heavenly neighborhood. Death releases believers from the relatively dilapidated slum in which they now live and ushers them into a room in the house of the eternal Father in the heavenly city. Knowing that, Christians should not fear death. That does not mean, of course, that they are to be foolishly reckless or careless with their lives; their bodies belong to God (1 Cor. 6:19-20). But an obsessive concern for one's physical well-being or a morbid fear of death is inconsistent with a Christian perspective. Believers should long for heaven like a prisoner longs for freedom, like a sick man longs for health, like a hungry man longs for food, like a thirsty man longs for a drink, like a poor man longs for a payday, and like a soldier longs for peace. Hope and courage in facing death is the last opportunity for Christians to exhibit their faith in God, to prove their hope of heaven is genuine, and to adorn their confidence in the promises of God.

A. The Christian's Hope in Death (2 Corinthians 5:1-5)

Paul is operating here with two metaphors, the tent replaced by the house, and unclipping and clothing. Just as Paul employed antitheses at the close of the previous chapter, so here he uses

2 Corinthians – Lesson 7

the antithesis of mortality and life. The main issue of difficulty is whether he is thinking of the fact that we have an abode in heaven or whether he has in view a heavenly body.

1. We Will Be Rebuilt (5:1)

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

The tent/house antithesis certainly suggests the former, perhaps with the kind of teaching given in John 14:1-2 in view. Here our Lord told His disciples that He was going to prepare an abode for them. We now live in temporary quarters, with no enduring city (Heb. 13:14), a kind of nomadic existence although we are longing for a more permanent abode and God will one day give us this. The metaphor of tent-dwelling, the lifestyle of the nomad, is well fitted to picture this. It was of course familiar to readers of the Old Testament, for the patriarchs, anticipating a permanent residence (even apparently a city!) in the Promised Land, meanwhile dwelt in tents (Heb. 11:9-10). The booths in which the people dwelt during the Feast of Tabernacles would also recall to them the nomadic life of their ancestors. So, for the Jewish Christians among the Corinthians, tent-dwelling would be an apt illustration of a way of life which was temporary.

In addition, we notice that this house is said to be ‘not built by human hands’ (v. 1). The false witnesses at the trial of Jesus said that He had threatened to destroy the temple made by human hands, which is the literal meaning of their words in Mark 14:58. He claimed, they said, that he would then build another, not made by human hands. Perhaps then Paul is alluding to this, to an abode in heaven. This last argument for the ‘abode in heaven’ understanding of the passage is, however, double-edged, for in fact the words of the false witnesses were a misinterpretation of a saying of our Lord which, John makes clear, was intended as a reference to His body (Jn. 2:19-21). So we have a precedent in the teaching of Jesus for an analogy between a building (in His case, a temple) and a body. This means then that the house not made with human hands could be the resurrection body, for this would fit exactly what our Lord said in John 2. All in all, it seems most likely that it is the resurrection of the body Paul has in mind throughout this passage, and that he has taken the building analogy from our Lord’s own words as recorded in John 2.

a) From a Tent (5:1a)

Paul’s confident assertion ‘for we know’ indicates that believers’ glorified bodies are not a remote possibility or a vague wish. They are a fixed reality, a settled fact based on the promise of God (Rom. 8:18, 23); 1 Cor. 15:35-49; Phil. 3:21), not philosophical speculation or mystical fantasy.

Paul begins this section of his argument with a confident assertion of the future resurrection of the body. It was natural for Paul to liken his present body to a tent because tent-making was his missionary avocation. A tent, he well knew, was both vulnerable and temporary, and therefore a fitting metaphor for the body.

The emphasis of this verse is to contrast the inferior, impermanent, present mode of existence (literally ‘our earthly tent-house’) with the superior, permanent mode of our coming existence. The likening of death to the dismantling of a tent is understandable, given that the apostle was an itinerant leatherworker who, among other things, made and repaired tents (Acts 18:3; cp. 2 Pe. 1:13). Human life is indeed like a ‘tent,’ being both temporary and vulnerable.

The phrase ‘if the earthly tent which is our hose is torn down’ refers metaphorically to death (cp. Is. 38:12). As a tentmaker himself (Acts 18:3), Paul chose to use the analogy of an ‘earthly tent’

2 Corinthians – Lesson 7

(the physical body) to describe the soul's temporary home in this world (cp. 2 Pe. 1:13-14). Speaking of the incarnation of Christ, the apostle John used the verb *skēnoō* (lit., 'to live in a tent') to depict the eternal God coming into the world and taking a human body (Jn. 1:14). A tent is an apt metaphor for the human body, which is a temporary home for the eternal souls of those whose real home is in heaven (Phil. 3:20) and who are aliens and strangers in this world (Heb. 11:13). Just as a tabernacle of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness was replaced with a permanent building when Israel entered the Promised Land, so the temporary tent in which believers now dwell will be replaced one day in heaven with an eternal, imperishable body (1 Cor. 15:42, 53-54).

Excellent though tents may be when we first obtain them and put them up they are always of limited durability, especially when in constant use. They are subject to wear and tear in the storms from which they protect us. From the point of view of durability and fragility, our physical bodies are like tents. If the Lord Jesus does not return during our lifetime, our body, like a fragile tent, has a destiny to be destroyed, whether through natural decay or physical accident or danger.

b) Into a Temple (5:1b)

His switch of metaphors for the body from 'tent' to 'a building from God' was meant to emphasize the coming change from a temporary body to a permanent resurrection body. In fact, the image that Paul appears to have had in mind was the tabernacle tent that was superseded by the temple building. Just as the tabernacle was the temporary dwelling of God until the building of a permanent temple in Jerusalem, so also Paul's mortal body is merely temporary and will be replaced by an imperishable resurrection body. And more, just as there was continuity between the tabernacle and the temple, there is continuity between the mortal body and the imperishable body of the resurrection (cp. Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:51-53). Just as Christ's glorified resurrection body was in continuity with His incarnate body, so also will be ours.

A 'building' suggests something on a solid foundation that is fixed, secure, and permanent. Since it replaced his earthly tent (his physical body), the 'building from God' Paul referred to must be his glorified body. Paul longed for his glorified body not primarily because it would be free of physical weakness, blemishes, and defects, but because it would be free from sin.

That the heavenly home is 'not built by human hands' suggests that we are to think of it as a temple. Jesus used these words to describe the temple of His risen body (Jn. 2:21; Mk. 14:58). Significantly, when one 'house' is pulled down we have another, though different 'house;' death does not mean homelessness. The tent-house will be succeeded by the heavenly house. There will be continuity between this mode of life and the next. The loss of the one is followed directly by the ownership of the other, superior, dwelling.

Paul further described the glorified, resurrection body as a 'house not made with hands' (cp. Mk. 14:58; Jn. 2:21; Col. 2:11). It is not a procreated physical body. The most definitive use of the phrase 'not made with hands' is in Hebrews 9:11. That verse equates 'not made with hands' with 'not of this creation.' It therefore refers to what is spiritual, transcendent, and eternal, not to what is earthly, physical, and temporal.

2 Corinthians – Lesson 7

2. We Will Be Reclothed (5:2-5)

a) Groaning (5:2-4)

²For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. ⁴For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Paul now changes his imagery from buildings to clothes. He retains for a moment a reference to a ‘dwelling’ with which we shall be ‘clothed,’ thus briefly mixing his metaphors before employing the consistent and sustained imagery of a person changing his clothes.

Paul’s mixed metaphor (putting on a building as if it were clothing) refers to his resurrection body and the perfections of eternal life, which would replace forever the debilitating, sin-caused corruptions of life in this world and set him free from his fallen humanness.

(1) Groanings (5:2a, 4a)

We all want to go to Heaven, but later as opposed to sooner. However, as we have come to expect, this isn’t the way Paul thought. Paul hoped to get there sooner rather than later. Paul’s initial expression is intrinsically positive—a groaning of anticipation. His longing is like the groaning for future glory that he expressed in the three complementary groans of Romans 8. The first groan is that of *creation* (Rom. 8:19-22). Creation’s ‘eager longing’ is based on the idea of craning the neck forward in anticipation. There are anticipatory groans for glory all around us.

While creation groans, *Christians* groan too (Rom. 8:23). We groan for our adoption as sons, which will be completed at the redemption of our bodies. We groan because of the experience of living in mortal, sinful flesh. But we groan positively as we have ‘the firstfruits of the Spirit’—the initial down payment of the eternal. We are on tiptoe along with creation, waiting for our deliverance.

Our longings for the glory promised us, coupled with present discouragements in our service of the gospel, often cause us to ‘groan.’ We are painfully aware that so much of what is true of us now is so different from what is in glorious prospect. Being burdened is characteristic of us while we are in this body. While in our present human body, we discover many grounds for frustration, as we long to be clothed with our resurrection bodies in heaven.

Creation groans, we groan, and even the *Holy Spirit* groans (Rom. 8:26). The Holy Spirit expresses the longings we feel but cannot articulate. So we see that because of the greatness of the coming glory and because of our weakness, we groan. But we are not alone, for we are surrounded by the sympathetic groanings of creation and even of the Holy Spirit. And one day our groanings will be transmuted into praises in glory! Paul’s groanings were like those of a child waiting for Christmas. He groaned in his earthly tent as he dreamed pleasant dreams of the gift of his new heavenly dwelling.

(2) Clothing (5:2b, 3, 4b)

The unclothing/clothing figure is much more suggestive of the body, for Paul uses this metaphor in other places for our commitment as Christians to a new lifestyle, the lifestyle of Christ (e.g., Rom. 13:12-14; Eph. 4:22-24). The use of an analogy based on something visible—the changing of clothing—also shows, of course, that although Paul was concerned about inward change in

2 Corinthians – Lesson 7

character, he was also concerned that such a change should show itself in the actual conduct of Christians.

This illustration, drawn from daily life, is marked by an unusual feature. Normal practice is to remove the clothes we are wearing before we put on the new ones. In Paul's imagery, however, he writes of putting the second set of clothes *over* the first without removing them. What he wishes to avoid, if possible, is that period between the two sets of clothes when we would be 'unclothed.'

The apostle's longing was not for death as such, but to be clothed with his heavenly dwelling because by being clothed in his new resurrection body, he would 'not be found naked'—that is, exposed to the shame of judgment for sins he might commit. So he further groans to be fully clothed with his resurrection body and thus to be vindicated beyond judgment.

The two sets of clothing represent, respectively, our existence in the present and in the coming age. In the present age 'we groan and are burdened' (literally 'we sigh, deeply burdened,' v. 4). This is not an expression of dissatisfaction with our present existence, a yearning for death to bring to an end this present life ('we do not wish to be unclothed,' v. 4). Rather, it is the profound longing to be 'over-coated' with all the blessings God has for us in the new age.

Nevertheless, he makes the point, in passing, that even if we are 'unclothed,' that is, if our death precedes Christ's return, 'we will not be found naked' (v. 3). His understanding that on becoming a Christian believer he had 'been clothed with Christ' (Gal. 3:27) delivered him from the fear of being 'naked' before the all-seeing eye of God.

The phrase 'inasmuch as we' (v. 3) carries the same thought along from verse 2 and means that since verse 2 is true, and he will put on the new body, he will 'not be found naked.' To be 'naked,' then, is to be only a soul without a resurrection body. The apostle's hope of a future glorified body was in sharp contrast to the philosophical dualism that permeated Greek culture. That philosophy taught that matter is evil and spirit is good. Therefore, the ultimate goal for its adherents was to be freed from their bodies and to become disembodied spirits. The pagan Greeks may have felt that their souls needed to be freed from their bodies before they could enter the highest state of bliss, but not Paul. Therefore he reminded the Corinthians that when his earthly tent was dismantled by death he would not exist forever as a naked disembodied spirit. He was not looking for release from his body but for the perfections of his resurrection body. The saints in heaven are awaiting their resurrection bodies, which is why the writer of Hebrews refers to them as 'the spirits of the righteous made perfect' (Heb. 12:23).

(3) Swallowing (5:4c)

Paul introduces, briefly, a further image to reinforce his point. He desires that his 'mortal' existence will not merely stop, but, before it ends, 'may be swallowed up by life' (v. 4). Paul depicts the new age (life) as, let us say, a larger fish overtaking and swallowing whole a smaller fish (his mortality in this present age).

'Swallowed up by life' is his allusion to the completion of redemption described in Isaiah 25:8, and also in 1 Corinthians 15:54. The expression 'swallowed up' points to the dramatic nature of the change. Paul has in prospect our glorification, something for which spiritually healthy Christians increasingly long.

2 Corinthians – Lesson 7

b) Guarantee (5:5)

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

The reason Paul groaned longingly for his resurrection body is God Himself and God's gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul's groaning was a gift from God. So we understand that the Holy Spirit's wondrous work of transformation in Paul's life (cp. 3:18; 4:16) served as a guarantee of the ultimate transformation that would take place at the resurrection of the body.

The guarantee of this wonderful prospect is the Holy Spirit given to every believer. That He lives in us is the proof and promises of what God is yet going to give us. Having begun a good work in us, He guarantees its completion (Phil. 1:6), and His Holy Spirit is the divine workman. The Spirit prepares us for glory. Even as the Spirit raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, so He will raise our bodies.

The phrase 'for this very purpose' emphatically states that believers obtain their glorified bodies in fulfillment of God's sovereign plan from all eternity, bound up in His elective decree (cp. Rom. 8:28-30). God's ultimate purpose in salvation is not justification but glorification, when believers 'become conformed to the image of His Son.' And being transformed into Christ's image includes receiving a glorified body like His (1 Cor. 15:49). So God's glorious purpose for believers stretches from eternity to eternity. It was planned in eternity past and will be fulfilled in eternity future; time is but a fleeting moment in the middle.

It is God who has graciously prepared us for all that His great future holds. By 'the Spirit,' who belongs to the new age, but whom God has 'given us' now, we are being prepared for our new dwelling, our new apparel. The presence of the Spirit within us is signified by the deep longing believers experience for their future with God. What we have now is the Spirit as a 'deposit, guaranteeing' an expected future payment in full. A 'guarantee' (cp. 1:22) was used in Paul's time in commercial transactions; today the same Greek word (*arrhabōn*) is used for an engagement ring, pledging and guaranteeing the marriage day.

The Spirit is more appropriate as an earnest of our resurrection than as a guarantee of a home in God's presence, for the work that He is now doing relates to our inward life, and this work is a pledge of the fuller life of the resurrection that is to come.

The indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5; 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19-20) is God's promise that His ultimate purpose for believers will be fulfilled (cp. Phil. 1:6; Rom. 8:35-39). The indwelling Holy Spirit is God's guarantee that believers are His possession and that He will redeem them to the praise of His glory. For that reason it is ludicrous to believe that Christians can lose their salvation. Nothing can interrupt the plan God set in motion in eternity past (election) and has pledged Himself to carry through until eternity future (glorification). To argue otherwise is to assume that God is incapable of achieving His purposes and thus to diminish His glory.

B. The Christian's Aim in Life (2 Corinthians 5:6-10)

1. To Be Courageous (5:6-8)

⁶*So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord,* ⁷*for we walk by faith, not by sight.* ⁸*Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*

2 Corinthians – Lesson 7

a) *Courage (5:6a, 8a)*

‘Therefore’ points back to the foundation truths Paul expressed in verses 1-5. On the basis of those truths, Paul was ‘always of good courage’ in the face of death. His courage was not a temporary feeling or a passing emotion; it was a constant state of mind. He faced death cheerfully, with complete confidence. It was not that he did not love the people in his life, but he loved the Lord more. Life for Paul was a race to finish, a battle to win, a stewardship to discharge. Once the race was over, the battle won, and the stewardship discharged, Paul saw no reason to cling to this life. The only reason for him to remain on earth was to serve God.

Because Paul was confident about the future regardless of the trials of the present, he was ‘always of good courage,’ or more accurately, ‘courageous.’ Certainty about the future enables believers to be courageous in the present in the face of conflict and pain. Paul is saying that the ground of our confidence lies in the fact that one day we will be at home with the Lord. Hope for the future, therefore, should not encourage dream impracticality in the present, but courage and purpose.

b) *Home (5:6b, 5:8b)*

Paul’s third main image for the two modes of existence in the present and coming age related to home life. It is based on the simple truth that a person can be in only one place at a time. He is either ‘at home in the body’ (v. 6) or ‘at home with the Lord (v.8). His preference is to be ‘away from the body’ because this will mean being ‘at home with the Lord.’

The New Testament assumes that death means conscious entry at once into the Lord’s presence – to be at home with Him (cp. Phil. 1:21-24). ‘At home with the Lord’ is a delightful expression. When we are away from home, we long just to be there! Home for the Christian is where Jesus is.

Paul knew that Christ was always with him and that He was in perpetual communion with him. Nevertheless, Paul’s residence in his present body meant that in one sense he was away from the Lord and the ultimate fellowship of intimacy. His abiding preference—indeed, his longing—was to be with Christ. Paul desired ultimate fellowship with the Lord. Certainly in his earthly body he *knew* the Lord, as does every believer. But to be ‘at home with the Lord’ encompasses warmth of fellowship that is wholly active and reciprocal with live face-to-face exchange. Paul sees this in his future and thus longs assuredly for his resurrection body in which he will be at home with the Lord. We must not fail to miss a telling implication—which is that Paul does *not* desire a prolonged life on earth (cp. Phil. 1:23).

Believers communicate with the Lord through prayer and study of the Word and have communion with Him through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Yet there is still a sense in which they are separated from God and long for that separation to end (cp. Ps. 42:1-2; 73:25).

Our approach to the expression, ‘away from the Lord,’ shows the great importance of interpreting Scripture in terms of its context, for it is a phrase not found elsewhere in Paul’s writing or in other parts of the New Testament and seems in strong contrast with Paul’s constant emphasis that Christians are ‘in Christ.’ The context here shows us clearly, of course, that he means ‘away from Christ’s physical presence,’ and one of the qualities of that presence is visibility, so that we must live by faith, not by sight. Paul does not give in detail here information about the intermediate state between death and resurrection, for his main thought is not about the person’s state but about the wonder of being with Christ.

2 Corinthians – Lesson 7

c) Faith (5:7)

Paul lived by faith in the promises of God's Word. He set his sight on the unseen. He focused on the coming 'weight of glory' (4:17) rather than on his afflictions. He was not concerned that his outer man was wasting away because he saw the unseen—his inner nature was undergoing daily renewal. Paul's faith in the unseen beyond controlled his entire existence.

Our life in the present is to be marked 'by faith not by sight' (v. 7). In the new age we shall 'see' and 'be with the Lord,' but in the present age we relate to Him 'by faith' exercised in response to the gospel. This is a sober corrective to enthusiastic Christians like the Corinthians who, in desiring spectacularly and miraculous signs (see 1 Cor. 14:12), were demanding from God in the present time what really belongs to the future.

The parenthetical statement in verse 7 that 'we walk by faith, not by sight' explains how believers can have fellowship with and serve the invisible God in this life. Such faith is not a wishful fantasy or a vague superstition but a strong confidence grounded in the truth of Scripture (cp. Heb. 11:1).

2. To Be Obedient (5:9)

⁹*So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.*

Despite the word's normally negative connotation, Paul wrote, 'also we have as our *ambition*.' There is a type of ambition that is legitimate; the Bible forbids selfish ambition, not ambition to please the Lord. Paul did not use the term in a negative sense but in the positive sense of loving what is noble or honorable. In fact, *philotimeomai* ('have as our ambition'; cp. Rom. 15:20; 1 Th. 4:11) is a compound word from *philos* ('love') and *timē* ('honor'). It was that type of noble ambition that characterized Paul. There is a central place in the Christian life for noble ambition, for a passion for what is excellent and honorable. The noblest and highest ambition to which anyone can aspire is 'to be pleasing' to God. Paul used the adjective *euarestos* ('pleasing') frequently in his writings (cp. Rom. 12:1-2; 14:18; Eph. 5:10; Phil. 4:18; Col. 1:10; 3:20; Titus 2:9).

The hope of imminent person-to-person contact with Christ naturally evokes an ongoing resolve to please Him. Paul's devotion to his noble ambition knew no limits as the all-encompassing phrase 'whether at home or absent' indicates. That phrase connects Paul thought with the previous passage (5:6, 8). Paul's ambition to please God, imperfectly on earth or perfectly in heaven, remained unchanged.

3. To Be Found Faithful (5:10)

¹⁰*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

a) Judgment Seat (5:10a)

The strong terms 'must' and 'all' stress the inevitability and comprehensiveness of this event. That knowledge produced in Paul strong motivation to please God in this life. *Phaneroō* ('appear') means, 'to make manifest,' 'to make clear,' 'to make visible,' 'to appear.' To be made manifest means not just to appear, but to be laid bare, stripped of every outward façade of respectability, and openly revealed in the full and true reality of one's character.

2 Corinthians – Lesson 7

In Roman cities the governor sat on the judgment seat to hear court cases. Indeed, Paul had earlier stood before the judgment seat of Gallio in Corinth (Acts 18:12) just as the Lord stood before the judgment seat of Pilate (Mt. 27:19). The time is coming, however, when Paul and everyone, Pilate and Gallio included, must ‘appear’ or be ‘made manifest’ ‘before the judgment seat of Christ,’ where every secret will be brought to light (cp. 1 Cor. 4:5).

Upon command, Christ had stood before the judgment seat (*bēma*) of Pilate (Mt. 27:19), and likewise Paul had stood before the judgment seat of Gallio (Acts 18:12). Beyond history, at the great resurrection, there will be compulsory attendance at the cosmic *bēma* of Christ.

‘Judgment seat’ translates *bēma* (cp. Rom. 14:10), which, in its simplest definition, defines a place reached by steps, or a platform. In Greek culture *bēma* referred to the elevated platform on which victorious athletes received their crowns, much like the medal stand in the modern Olympic Games. In the New Testament, it was used of the judgment seats of Pilate (Mt. 27:19; Jn. 19:13), Herod (Acts 12:21), and Festus (Acts 25:6, 10, 17). There was also a *bēma* at Corinth, where unbelieving Jews unsuccessfully accused Paul before the Roman proconsul Gallio (Acts 18:12, 16-17). A person was brought before a *bēma* to have his or her deeds examined, in a judicial sense for indictment or exoneration, or for the purpose of recognizing and rewarding some achievement.

b) Judgment Day (5:10b)

The phrase ‘each one’ stresses the personal nature of believers’ judgment; it is an individual, not a collective, judgment. Its purpose is not judicial; it is that every believer ‘may be recompensed for his deeds in the body.’ ‘Recompensed’ translates a form of the verb *komizōzi*, which means, ‘to receive back what is due’—whether punishment for a criminal, or reward for one to be honored. When believers stand before the Lord Jesus Christ they will ‘be recompensed for’ the deeds they have done ‘in the body’ (cp. Rev. 22:12). Therefore, they cannot disregard their bodies, or treat them with contempt in some antinomian or dualistic fashion.

The contrast between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ is not one between moral good and moral evil. ‘Bad’ does not translate *kakos* or *ponēros*, the words for moral evil, but *phaulos*, which means ‘worthless’ or ‘useless.’ *Phaulos* describes those mundane things that inherently are neither of eternal value nor sinful, such as taking a walk, going shopping, taking a drive in the country, pursuing an advanced degree, moving up the corporate ladder, painting pictures, or writing poetry. Those morally neutral things will be judged when believers stand before the judgment seat of Christ. If they were done with a motive to glorify God, they will be considered ‘good.’ If they were pursued for selfish interests, they will be considered ‘bad.’

At the judgment seat of Christ, every child of God will give full account of what he has done in the body, the tent of this life. And all will be judged with unfailing scrutiny as our works and hearts are evaluated to determine not our destiny (which for believers is with God), but to evaluate our works (cp. 1 Cor. 3:12-15). This is a daunting thought, but Paul is implicitly confident because he has made it his aim to please God while in his earthly body. How is it with us? Will there be enduring architecture or monumental ashes?

For Paul, it is not condemnation that he fears (for there is none in Christ, Rom. 8:1), but evaluation. It is not the loss of salvation – which cannot be lost – but the loss of commendation which is at stake. Such an understanding is completely in line with the Lord’s teaching on the accountability of a steward to his master with respect to the faithful use of gifts entrusted to him (Lk. 12:42-48).

2 Corinthians – Lesson 7

There is no reference here to condemnation, but there is a recognition of responsibility, of accountability. There will be rewards but there will also be loss, although, as Paul has already taught his readers in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, this loss will not mean a forfeiting of salvation.

In that day, the full truth about their lives, character, and deeds will be made clear to each believer. Each will discover the real verdict on his or her ministry, service, and motives. All hypocrisy and pretense will be stripped away; all temporal matters with no eternal significance will vanish like wood, hay, and stubble, and only what is to be rewarded as eternally valuable will be left. Believers will not be judged for sin at the judgment seat of Christ. Every sin of every believer was judged at the Cross.

Whatever our ministry from God, it is sobering to note that what each one of us has done will one day be made manifest at the judgment seat of Christ. How faithfully have we used our time? How well have we pursued opportunities? How single-minded have we been in our Christian service? The teaching about the judgment seat before which all must come, believers included, reminds us that we have been saved, not for a life of aimlessness or indifference, but for a life of serving the Lord. The balanced view, of which the prospect of the Lord's judgment seat reminds us, is that while we are justified by faith alone, the faith that justifies is expressed by love and obedience (Gal. 5:6; Rom. 1:5). We are saved not *by* good works but *for* good works (Eph. 2:8, 10). One day each of us will stand before the judgment seat of the Lord and all that we are and have been will be visible. A healthy fear of the judgment is a true motive in every believer as he serves the Lord in the gospel.

Strong and paradoxical contrasts mark the whole passage 4:7-5:10. The apostle had written of treasure in jars of clay (4:7), of death and life (4:12), of outwardly wasting away and inwardly being renewed (4:16), of light and momentary troubles and eternal glory that far outweighs them all (4:17). Now he speaks of an earthly tent and a building from God (5:1), of being unclothed and clothed (5:4), of being at home in the body and away from the body (5:6, 8), and of being away from the Lord and at home with the Lord (5:6-8). It is quite possible that Paul is using these contrasts to correct the false teaching of the newcomers. Their preoccupation with such visible, tangible things as Israel, the temple, the law, and circumcision might well be designated as 'fixing their eyes on what is seen' (cp. 4:18), or 'living by sight' (5:7). Hope for them, apparently, was limited to the religious and political systems of the here and now. The Jewish Jesus of a Mosaic covenant as proclaimed by the newcomers could give no comfort to dying, sinful man, to man in his weakness. While, for them, the power of God was displayed in 'what is seen,' in bigness and success, for Paul the power of God is unleashed in our weakness. As we waste away outwardly, we are re-created inwardly, by the Spirit, for the new age. At the point where our tent-body is dismantled, we have another, better, permanent, glorious body – a building from God, eternal in heaven.

For next time: Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-21.