

INTRODUCTION:

One of my favorite cartoons of all-time has to be “Garfield and Friends.” Garfield is a sarcastic, lasagna-loving, tv-watching cat. But for everything he loves, he also hates: Nermal, the world's cutest kitten, Binky the Clown, and Mondays. In fact, he'll often try to sleep through the entire day. I'd venture to say that we've had days like that when we're tired and we'd just like to lay in bed and sleep all day, right? We've all experienced ailing bodies in various degrees: from a case of the Mondays, to getting a cold, to pulling your quadricep; or maybe we have an emotional scar from the loss of a relationship. Still others of us have experienced a chronic condition like memory loss, diabetes, or even cancer. Whether it's a case of the Mondays or cancer, we have all faced and will continue to face the reality of an earthly body that gets hurt and worn out. So what should we do? Turn to 2 Corinthians 5 and we'll seek God for help.

READ 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10

1. We have an eternal body in heaven

A. *Transient/made with hands vs eternal/from God*

If you've read any of Paul's letters, you know that he was a man familiar with hardship. Do you know of anyone that suffered more? He was whipped five times, beaten with rods three times, once he was stoned, and three times was shipwrecked, and that's not even all of it. And so it would make sense that he refers to his body in chapter 4 as a “jar of clay” and an “outer self that is wasting away.” Paul is well versed when it comes to physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual hardship, so it behooves us to listen to what he says here.

Look at verse 1. Paul uses various metaphors for his body in chapter 4, and here in chapter 5, he refers to his present, earthly body as a tent. If you've ever been camping with a tent you understand that tents are meant to be temporary. You find a nice spot, pitch a tent for brief while, then pack it up. Most people don't find a place in the Chequamegon and settle in their tent for the rest of their life. Tents are also fragile. It's fabric and some poles, NOT brick and mortar. - they're not meant to stand the test of time. You're not going to want to

be in a tent when an F5 tornado passes through. And so when Paul says “tent” we're meant to think of our current nature as sojourners, temporary inhabitants in this world. These bodies are meant to be short-lived vessels that are susceptible to the wear and tear of the storms of life. They decay and eventually die. To some of you this may be a foreign concept because your body feels really good now. The only “sign” of decay that you've experienced has been a bruise here or there. Take heed of the Word this morning: there will come a time, whether it be in an instant like a car accident, or when you start to slow down at 33 (me) - you'll start to “feel it”; so don't be surprised when this earthly tent begins to wear out! God didn't make it to last forever.

Paul knew this well. I mean, can you imagine what it might have been like for him? Let's say he starts to lose his eyesight, and once he does, it's gone. He's not stopping by Perry Arndt at the corner optometrist for some glasses. And there's no chiropractic back adjustments from Brad Veal when he sleeps on the cold, hard prison floor again. And that second time he was shipwrecked he got a bad ear infection and never regained his hearing. And now it takes him twice as long to head to Rome because his joints get stiff and he has to stop every 10 miles. And ever since that stoning his memory isn't as sharp - he can't remember the Old Testament like he used to.

So Paul, what keeps you going? How do you keep from getting discouraged and giving up? “Well,” says Paul, “even if my body is far from what I want it to be, I know I have a building from God that is eternal in the heavens.”

Now, what is this building that Paul is talking about? Well, let's look at the context: we said that the tent is our earthly body, so it must mean that Paul is using this metaphor to describe our heavenly body. This body is made by God and lasts forever - it doesn't wear out, and the moment we receive it, it will be just as perfect as 10,000 years from then. Revelation 21:4 also says:

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

No more cases of the Mondays, no need for glasses or doctor's appointments, no more crying from a broken bone or loss of a loved one, no more bullying, no more memory loss, no more wheelchair, no more cancer.

But we're not there yet, and life is still hard. Look at verse 2. *Yet in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling.* Why do we groan?

We're familiar with the story of Job: how there was no one more righteous in the world than him, when one day Satan visits God and has the audacity to tell God that the only reason Job is righteous is because of all the "stuff" God has given him. And so God allows Satan to take away his wealth, his family, and his health. Job has absolutely nothing. And in perhaps one of the darkest chapters (Job 3) of the Bible, Job cries out:

*Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire?
Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse?*

*For then I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept;
then I would have been at rest.*

Have you ever been there before? It doesn't seem like you can take the physical, emotional, or mental stresses of life – you're at your last straw. Maybe you've even prayed that God would take you in your sleep because the pain is just too much to bear. And so, like Paul, you groan. But Paul's groaning isn't a complaining, it's a yearning of what is to come. It's an expression of hope. And it's obvious what Paul yearned for in verse 8: to be away from the body and at home in his new body with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8).

B. Seen vs unseen

These circumstances don't lead Paul into a pit of depression. He doesn't give up and turn in the towel. Instead, he walks in faith, the assurance of things to come, instead of walking by sight.

This is so counter-intuitive to what we hear today. Popular mantras like "If it feels good do it," "You only live once" or "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas" promote a life lived in our transient

tent without thinking about the future. If, heaven forbid, you get a terminal illness, try to do everything you want to do on your bucket list. This rubs against what Paul is saying in verse 18:

We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Though our present life may be marked by tribulation, it's brief in duration and a trifle compared to what God has in store. To quote the commentator David Garland, "the incredible, eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison outweighs any earthly afflictions and makes them look like a tiny storm in a teacup."

Paul is confident and filled with courage because he knows that being away from his earthly body means he will be at home with the Lord in his new body. This courage isn't just thinking positive. It's trusting in the promises that God has made and walking by faith, not sight.

Courage isn't the absence of fear, but the decision to face it head on.

About 10 years ago I was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. If you've ever experienced extreme anxiety and panic attacks you know that your fight or flight kicks in and it feels like you're going to your demise. And almost every time I experience a panic attack I have the same thought: "What if I have to live with this for the rest of my life? What if it limits what I can do?" So when I look at verse 7, to walk in faith, not by sight. I think: "God's hand is in this – He is in control and has ordained that this shall come to pass, and the same power that raised Christ to triumph over the grave will raise me to a new body one day when there won't be even a whisper of anxiety!" So yes, my body will ache and be filled with pain. Yes, I'll continue to take the Tylenol. But I will echo the words of Paul that as long as I live I will make it about Christ, and continue to press on for the Kingdom as I look forward to the day when He decides my work is up and takes me home. This promise of a new body is why we're courageous.

2. We have the Spirit

A. *As a guarantee of a future body*

Paul is also courageous for another reason. Look at verse 5..
*He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us
the Spirit as a guarantee.*

God has given believers the Holy Spirit as a guarantee for their future
body

One thing I haven't had the chance to do much in my lifetime
is travel. And so I couple weeks ago I found a great deal on a trip to
Rome, so I jumped on it, and I'm excited to go next Fall. And I have
great confidence that, Lord willing, I will be able to get there. You
know why? Because I have proof of my purchase. I have that printed
out ticket that says "Kevin Hall, confirmation 1027189534676. I
sacrificed money to pay for the trip, and in exchange I received proof
for my spot on that airplane and in that hotel. Likewise, when God
opened your eyes, you repented and believed that Jesus Christ
sacrificed Himself to pay for the cost of your sins; you were sealed
with the Holy Spirit, who is the ticket for your new body when you
die.

B. Renews our inner self

But the Spirit isn't just a ticket for the "trip of a lifetime." The
Spirit also renews our inner self. Look at 4:16:

*Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed¹
day by day.*

Notice that both verbs "wasting away" and "being renewed" are
present tense. They are continually happening. This continual process
is called sanctification. Until the day we die, the Spirit helps us to
become more like Jesus as we fill our minds with the things of God.
Now, there's something specific about earthly hardship that the Spirit
of God uses to renew our faith. Paul tells us in Romans how it works:

*we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces⁴
endurance, and endurance produces character, and character*

*produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's⁵
love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has²
been given to us.*

God didn't make a mistake when he created these bodies. He ordained
them to wear out for a reason, and so our hardships in this life aren't in
vain. So we can be thankful that he gives us his Spirit to conform us to
the image of his Son, and confident that he won't reject those with his
Spirit.

3. We will be judged

A. Receiving what is due

READ v9-10

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

*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.*

Instead of ending the section in verse 8, Paul gives a warning
to the church: 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 bad. Wait, Christians have to appear before the
judgment seat of Christ? Well, let's see if this is confirmed anywhere
else.

Romans 14

*For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God;¹¹ for it is
written,*

*"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall confess to God."*

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2016). (2 Co 4:16).
Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2016). (Ro 5:3-5).
Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

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So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

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Or Revelation 20:

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

Yes, Christians will appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Now, are we saying that salvation is based on what we have done? By no means! We know that we are saved by grace, through faith – only what Christ has done. However, James states that faith without works is dead, as works is the fruit and evidence of faith. Our deeds are not the basis of salvation, they are the evidence of it. They are not the foundation, they are the demonstration. Notice the reason for the judgment in V9-10: that each one may receive what is due for what he/she has done in the body, whether good or evil.

If this warning makes your heart beat a little faster, good, it should. Paul is warning us against the attitude that says: “I’ve got the Holy Spirit. I’ve got my ticket to heaven. I’ve put in my X years of ‘serving God.’ My body hurts. I’m going to live as comfortable as possible for the remainder of my years.” This would be like if I just showed up at the airport to go to Rome with nothing. No passport, no luggage, no preparation. How foolish that would be! And how sad it would be for us, even in ailing bodies, to think that we can ease our way into eternity in our spiritual lazy boys. Take it from Paul, someone that literally had his body destroyed: cross the finish line pleasing God!

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The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Ro 14:10–12). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

4

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Re 20:11–12). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

B. Pleasing God

So how do we do please God? Look at Romans 8:5,7-8:

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

You are not pleasing God if your mind is set on the things of the flesh. When you shape your lifestyle around comfort, pleasure, or entitlement, you are telling God that you are fully content in your earthly tent. And you will one day stand before Almighty God and he will judge you based on what you have done.

But those that please God live according to the Spirit and set their minds on the things of the Spirit. You desire what the Spirit desires no matter what the circumstance. We have had some great examples of this, one being Celia Lemke, who has passed on. With virtually no vision and no money she continued to encourage others by sending encouraging cards in the mail - I’m thinking that was pleasing to God. And Jerry Mantik, who was in so much pain and had very little movement in his body – and even in his condition was encouraging others - that sounds like it was pleasing to God. Other examples? Serving in one of our various ministries here at FBC, sending packages to our missionaries, being a prayer warrior, developing a spiritual mentor/mentee relationship with someone, ...all of these can be ways of pleasing God.

And so in closing, we’re confident because one day those that have been born again will shed off their old, decaying tents in exchange for a new, glorious, eternal body. And until that happens, God has given us our ticket, the Holy Spirit, to renew our inner self and produce good works that would please God, so that when we meet him face to face he might exclaim, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”