

At Home With The Lord

2Corinthians 5:1-10

A few times in life I have ended up in places I didn't expect to be and where I didn't really want to be.

That was certainly the case back when Michelle and I were still living in London and I ended up having to work out of town.

I had quit my job teaching at Fanshawe College thinking I had God's plan for me figured out.

Turned out the exact opposite of what I thought would happen happened and it left me unemployed.

Not knowing what else to do I talked with the Electrical Company that I had worked at before going to teach and asked if they needed anybody.

Thankfully they did and I was back at work on the construction site.

Unfortunately, within a month or two things started slowing down and because I had just started back at the company it was looking like they wouldn't be able to keep me on.

In an effort to keep me employed they were able to make a deal with another company for me and few other guys to go and work for them until things picked up.

The good news was that I had a job to put food on the table for my wife and young daughter, the bad news was the work was out of town.

It was out of town and the work was in sewage plants.

So I would left home early Monday morning and got home sometime Friday evening.

My co-workers were worldly to say the least.

I'm thankful for some good opportunities to share the gospel, but I also missed being at home.

I had been around unbelievers all the time in my time in construction, but I always got to go home at night.

Not in that situation and while I tried to make the best of it, it was not the place I wanted to be.

I'm thankful I had a job, I believe it was where I needed to be at the time, but I wanted to be at home.

Have you ever felt like that?

Some people experience that regularly in their life.

I think of jobs that take people out of town constantly, or I think of those who serve in the military and are deployed overseas for months at a time.

If that is your situation and you love your family and your home, then you can't help but have a longing to go there.

How many people have heard the expression, “Home is where your heart is.”?

I believe that is true and I believe that our text this morning shows us that is true for the Christian.

[I invite you to turn with me to **2Corinthians 5:1-10**. In these verses the apostle Paul helps us to wrestle with the tension of death and hope as believers. The bible clearly teaches that death is a bad thing. It is the result of sin entering the world and therefore the world being subject to decay from that time on. Because it is bad, it is right for us to fight against it; however, we also know that we can’t overcome it and so it is also right for us to long for something better. To want a world where death has been defeated, to desire a place where the separation between people and God is gone, and that is what God’s word has to teach us this morning. This text ought to shape our thinking in at least three ways. First it shows us that...]

Point #1 – Right thinking Christians have a deep desire for fullness of life. (Verses 1-4)

The Bible very clearly teaches that this world in its present state is broken and while there is still much to be enjoyed it will always come up way short of the promises that God has for those in Christ.

In the verses leading up to chapter five we are told about how we need to fix our attention on unseen things and verse 1 here fills out that thought focusing particularly on our physical bodies. (Verse 1)

It is interesting that the image of a ‘tent’ is used here for the human body.

Tents, by design, are temporary structures.

Though the tents of the ancient world were made of heavier material than the modern tents that we are familiar with, they were still quick to put up and quick to tear down.

They could be easily damaged or even destroyed.

Those same qualities are true of our physical bodies.

While it is true that many people think of themselves as rather invincible when they are young, it takes only a few years to begin to realize that is far from reality.

The Bible describes us as a vapour/mist which appears for a short time and then disappears (James 4:14) and it compares us to grass that withers and flowers that fade (Isaiah 40:7-8).

The clear point is that our physical bodies are very temporary in nature, much like a tent.

Now the image of tent suggests there is more to a human being than the physical body.

A tent is a structure inside which someone stays.

From a biblical perspective the physical body of a human being houses the spirit/soul, which is the immaterial or non-physical part of who we are.

Commentator Mark Seifrid points out that much of the Greek speaking world of Paul's day believed that people had both a physical and non-physical part to their makeup.

However, in Greek thinking the body was viewed like a prison from which it was good to be set free.

In that way of thinking when a person dies their spirit/soul is separated from their body forever.

God's word here teaches something different.

If the body/tent we currently inhabit is destroyed, it says, "We have a building from God a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens."

That means that God Himself, will make for us a new body that will last forever for the purpose of spending eternity with Him.

Now, look with me at verses 2-4 to see how knowing this truth about what God will do for those in Christ is supposed to affect the Christian. **(Verses 2-4)**

Our physical bodies here are compared to clothing. When our souls are in a body it is like being clothed and when they are separated by death it is like the soul is naked.

It seems very clear in these verses that this separation of the material and immaterial parts of a human being is a bad thing.

Because of that the apostle says that believers who know this are groaning and longing for their 'heavenly dwelling' so that this temporary tent may be replaced by a permanent structure so that *'what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.'*

This is much more than a desire to die and have his soul go to heaven, this is a longing to be with God both body and soul forever.

It is a longing for fullness of life.

[One of my least favourite places to go is the auto repair shop. Not because I don't like the people I take my car to, they have always treated me well. It's just because it usually means a fair chunk of change is going to be leaving my bank account. Given the fact that not too long ago you could buy a house for the price of a minivan these days you would expect them to last a really long time. How cool would it be to have a car run like new for thirty years without any maintenance? That is the kind of car I would like, but I don't think there are any available.]

I think on some level we all understand what it means to want something better.

Sadly far too often people are looking in the wrong places.

People have been looking for the elusive 'fountain of youth' for thousands of years.

While the bible is clear that we should do reasonable things to take care of the gift of our body, we are simply chasing after the wind if we think we can make these ‘tents’ of ours last forever.

I read recently of a tech billionaire named Bryan Johnson who is on an insane quest for immortality.

He pays millions of dollars a year to be monitored by health experts, he takes 111 pills every day, and was even at one point receiving injections of his teenage son’s plasma in an effort to maintain youth.

[People have tried freezing themselves and some want to try and download their higher brain functions into computers. I’d be willing to bet none of those ideas will work in an ultimate sense and even if they did, it would do them little good when they come face to face with King Jesus. Right thinking Christians know better. They know nothing made with human hands can solve the problem of death. They know that we need a better ‘building from God’ one that will last forever. Not only do they know their need, they long for it. Now knowing our need of a better body is important, knowing that only God can give us one is important, and knowing that should make us long for it. But those things are not enough for the believer. We need something more than knowing and longing for fullness of life. That is what Paul shows us next here. He shows us that...]

Point #2 – Right thinking Christians trust that God gives fullness of life. (Verses 5-7)

The LORD is always at work in His people. That is true even now and because of what He is doing now believers can be confident of what He will do in the future.

It is one thing to know that fullness of life is possible and want it, it is another to have confidence that God will give it to you.

Let’s look together at verse 5 and see the reason for this confidence. **(Verse 5)**

Notice the word ‘prepared’ and notice how it is in the past tense.

God has already done something to us in the past to prepare us it says ‘for this very thing’ which must be referring to ‘mortality being swallowed up by life.’

It is critical for us to understand here that God’s preparations never fail.

That is altogether different from our experience.

[I’ve spent enough time in the kitchen to know that my best laid plans don’t always work out. I’ve made bread as hard as a baseball, a cake that was half baked, dropped a pizza on the door of the oven, and that is just to name a few.]

Sometimes our preparations don’t work out.

Listen, God’s always does.

If you are in Christ this morning God has prepared you for fullness of life in an eternal physical body to live in the light of His glory forever.

If you understand that you have broken God's laws and as a law breaker you deserve His eternal wrath, if you understand that there is nothing you can ever do to fix your law breaking and that God has made a way for you through the cross and empty tomb of Jesus Christ, and If you look to that cross and empty tomb by faith trusting Christ as your Saviour, then you are in Jesus and God has prepared you for eternity.

How do you know? It says it right here, it says that God has "given us the Spirit as a guarantee."

You might ask, "How do I know if I have the Spirit?" You know because He does stuff in your heart.

Can you say, I mean truly say in the depths of your heart that Jesus is Lord and that you love Him?

According to 1Corinthians 12:3 that is only possible by the Holy Spirit.

If have the Spirit you can be sure that God is giving you fullness of life.

To that **verses 6-7** add this.

If you know your bible, then you know that God is present everywhere (Psalm 139, Matthew 28).

There is nowhere we can possibly go to escape the presence of the LORD.

That said, He makes His presence known at different levels of intensity throughout creation.

So when Paul says here that while we are in this mortal body we are 'away from the LORD' he means we are absent from the intense visible presence of God's glory which is always being displayed in heaven.

If you want a sense of what that display of glory is like, read Genesis 28, Exodus 19, Isaiah 6, and Revelation 4 to name a few.

We don't see that at present so he says, "We walk by faith not by sight."

In other words we live in this mortal body, this temporary tent, trusting that God will give His people an eternal body.

[Take a moment and think of another human being that you trust. If you can think of more than one person think of the person you trust more than anyone else. Now ask yourself, "Why do I trust that person?" I'm guessing the person you trust most in the world has given you good reason to trust them. I'm guessing this person tells you the truth, I'm guessing this person keeps their word, I'm guessing this person has helped you when you needed it even at a personal cost to them. They have proven themselves trustworthy.]

The right thinking Christian knows that is true of the LORD.

They know the life changing work of the Holy Spirit in their life.

They know what they were before they met Christ and that God loved them anyway.

One of the most amazing verses in the Bible is Romans 5:8, **“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

In Romans 8:32 it tells us that, **“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”**

Think that through! The point of that verse is to say that God giving the whole universe is a smaller thing than the giving of His Son; therefore, if God gave His Son for you He will certainly give you fullness of life.

[The question before us in this text is not, “Is the LORD trustworthy?” That is beyond dispute. The question before us is, “Do we trust Him?” Right thinking believers trust Him to give us fullness of life. So, if we desire fullness of life and if we trust God to give it that will lead us to this third lesson we find in verses 8-10. The lesson is that...]

Point #3 – Right thinking Christians live like they want to be with the LORD. (Verses 8-10)

It is very easy to be happy with God’s stuff and have no affection for Him, but the believer understands that the highest treasure of all is being in His presence.

In verse 8 the phrase from verse 6 is repeated. (Verse 8)

Without a doubt there are a number of good reasons for the apostle to be discouraged, no doubt we feel that way from time to time, some I’m sure more than others.

Instead, however, he finds reason for encouragement as he focuses his attention on being with the LORD.

He plainly says here that he would “rather be away from the body and at home with the LORD.”

It seems fairly certain that by, “away from the body” he means dying and having his soul separated from his physical body.

Given what the bible teaches about believers being given their new resurrected bodies from passages like 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15, Paul means here that to die before Jesus’ return means that our souls go to heaven and we wait there until Jesus returns to earth to receive our resurrected bodies.

Even though the ultimate hope for a believer is better than being a disembodied soul in heaven, being with the

LORD in any state is what the right thinking Christian longs for.

Now look at what that desire to be with the LORD does in verses 9-10.

The word 'so' at the beginning of verse nine is a Greek word that is often translated by English as the word 'therefore'.

In other words because of this longing to be in the visible presence of the LORD, he says, the Christian makes it his/her "aim to please him".

The believer should want to live on earth like we will live in heaven.

Now someone is going to say, "That's impossible!"

You would be right to say it.

We are far from perfect in this life. Paul doesn't say here that he does it.

He knows very well his daily struggle with his wayward desires. Just read the end of Romans 7 and you will see that is true.

He would never say he has achieved heavenly perfection, what he says here is that should be our aim.

[I've always liked the phrase "aim small miss small". When I have taught my children to throw a ball, shoot a pellet gun, or a bow and arrow I tell them that. Don't just aim at the bullseye, aim at the center of the bullseye. Do they always hit it? No, I don't either but we all come a whole lot closer than if we were shooting with our eyes closed.]

If we really are wanting to be with the Lord, then we should be striving to live like it.

He says here that the aim is the "please him".

That takes more than just doing what God says.

[Just think back to when you were a kid for a moment. Did any of you have a parents that made you do chores around the house? Now, if your mom asked you to clean up your room and you completely refused was she happy with you? Of course not. What if you cleaned it, but did it after you said, "I hate you" and stomped down the hall and slammed your door? I mean you technically did what you were told, but was she happy? No. What would make her happiest? If you said, "Yes mom and cleaned your room because you could see that it was a good thing to do.]

Obedying God out of obligation is certainly better than disobeying, but it is still wrong because it denies the goodness of His ways.

The right thinking Christian is looking forward to heaven to enjoy the glory of God and everything else that is there serving that end.

If that is not true for you then you are no better than the devil himself.

The devil would love nothing better than to have all of God's stuff while having nothing to do with God.

Is it your "aim to please him" this morning?

If you want to be with Him then that will be your aim.

Verse 10 reminds us here that "we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ" and we will "receive what is due" for what we do in this life.

For the unbeliever that can only mean eternal judgment.

For the believer it will be a matter of receiving or missing out on eternal reward.

Now it is very important that we have this right in our minds.

This verse is NOT talking about earning our way to heaven based on works.

The one who knows Jesus as their Saviour ought to have no fear of being condemned by God.

Romans 8:1 makes that as clear as it can be. It says,

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"

If Jesus is your saviour you can never be more right with God than you are right now.

This great work of salvation is about much more, though, than escaping punishment, it is about being changed from loving things that God hates to loving the things that God loves because we love God.

It is impossible to want to go to heaven and have no desire for the things of heaven.

The right thinking Christian is looking for something more than this world has to offer.

The right thinking Christian longs for fullness of life.

The right thinking Christian trusts God to give fullness of life.

And the right thinking Christian lives like they want to be with the LORD.

If you have air in your lungs today, God is calling on you to live for Him in this world.

The life He has given us in this world is a gift and we should be thankful for it and seek to live healthy and Godly lives, but this world is not our home.

We won't be home until we are at home with the LORD.