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Eternal Longing

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10

Introduction

1. Is there something in life which you want more than anything else?
2. For the apostle Paul, there was.
3. I believe he shared it with us in the text we examined last Sunday evening.
4. It was what he called “an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2 Corinthians 4:17b).
5. As he told the Philippians in his letter to them, it was his “desire to depart and be with Christ” which he said “is far better” (Philippians 1:23).
6. It is what I am going to call “an eternal longing.”
7. A thousand years before Paul would pen these words, the wise man Solomon had written that God has “put eternity” in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11).
8. Deep down, in our eternal soul, there is a longing to be with God in that home of the soul of which we often sing.

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9. Listen to the words of James Rowe from the first stanza and the chorus of that beautiful song which he titled, “**Home of the Soul.**”

**If for the prize we have striven,
After our labors are o'er,
Rest for our souls will be given,
On the eternal shore**

**Home of the soul, beautiful home, there we shall rest, never to roam;
Free from all care, happy and bright, Jesus is there, He is the light!**

**Of, in the storm, lonely are we, sighing for home, longing for Thee,
Beautiful home of the ransomed, beside the crystal sea.**

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I. The Temporal vs. The Eternal

A. OUR EARTHLY TENT

“For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down,” (2 Corinthians 5:1a, NASB95).

1. Because Paul had been trained to support himself as a tent-maker, it was natural for him to use this analogy when speaking of our present physical bodies.
2. A tent is a temporary shelter, something which could be quickly “torn down.”
3. It is also something which is vulnerable to the elements over time (i.e. sun, wind, rain, hot and cold).
4. As Paul had pointed out in 2 Corinthians 4:16, our tent, our “outer man is decaying” (“perishing,” NKJV; “wasting away,” ESV, NIV84).
5. No wonder, it is earthly, mortal, temporary.

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B. OUR ETERNAL HOUSE

“. . . we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1b, NASB95).

1. On the other hand, our eternal house is “a building from God, a house not made with hands” (2 Corinthians 5:1b, NASB95).
2. It reminds us of Jesus’ description of His own resurrection body, “I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands” (Mark 14:58, NASB95).

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3. It is this glorious body of which Paul will write later in his letter to the Christians in Philippi (Philippians 3:20-21).

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.” (Philippians 3:20–21, NASB95)

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4. He had already spoken of it earlier in his first letter to the brethren here in Corinth (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.” (1 Corinthians 15:51–53, NASB95)

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II. Our Present Groaning

A. WE GROAN

“For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.” (2 Corinthians 5:2–4, NASB95)

1. While we are in our present house, our tent, we groan. Why?
2. It is because we long to be clothed with “our dwelling from heaven,” our eternal house.

3. Until that happens, “we groan” because we are “burdened” with the fact that we are not yet appropriately attired.
4. In Romans 7:14-25, we find Paul struggling with the two natures within him — one is “the law of God,” the other is “the law of sin.”
5. As he wrestles back and forth, he finally cries out, “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24).
6. He then declares, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:25, NASB95).
7. It is only when you and I have put on “our dwelling from heaven” that we “will not be found naked,” but clothed with our glorified, eternal body.

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8. I believe that the apostle John gives us an insight to this important event in 1 John 3:2:

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.” (1 John 3:2, NASB95)

9. It is then, as Paul states here that we will “be clothed” and that which “is mortal will be swallowed up by life” (2 Corinthians 5:4).
10. The one thing here which it is important for us to remember is what Paul states in verse 5: “Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the Spirit as a pledge (guarantee)” (2 Corinthians 5:5, NASB95).

Slide 9**B. CREATION GROANS**

“For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For

we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.” (Romans 8:19–22, NASB95)

1. We aren't the only ones who are groaning.
2. God's creation around us is also groaning.
3. In Romans 8:19, Paul tells us that the creation is anxiously longing, eagerly awaiting “the revealing of the sons of God.” Why?
4. Because, at present, it is enslaved to corruption because of sin.
5. Only when the Lord returns will it be “set free from its slavery to corruption” and be able to experience the “freedom of the glory of the children of God.”
6. Until that day comes, all of creation continues to groan and suffer.

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III. Our Present Attitude

A. ALWAYS BE OF GOOD COURAGE

“Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight— we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:6–8, NASB95)

1. Even though we, like Paul, prefer “to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8).
2. The reality for each of us who are Christians is that while we are at home in our physical bodies, “we are absent from the Lord.”
3. Perhaps, like Abraham's nephew, Lot, we feel our soul being tormented day after day by what we see and hear around us (cf. 2 Peter 2:8).
4. However, we can always be of good courage, because “we walk by faith, not by sight” (v. 7).

5. We focus on the “eternal weight of glory” which is “far beyond all comparison” (2 Corinthians 4:17).
6. We “keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1).
4. We don’t worry about “our outer man” which “is decaying” (2 Corinthians 4:16a).
5. Instead, we lock in on “our inner man” which “is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16b).

Slide 11**B. MAKE IT YOUR AMBITION TO PLEASE GOD**

“Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:9–10, NASB95)

1. When we seek to please someone we say and do those things which gain their approval and praise.
2. Whose approval and praise could we possibly want more than that of our Lord.
3. I don’t think there is a single one of us here who does not want to hear Jesus say to us on that final day, “Well done, good servant!” (Luke 19:17).
4. There is one other factor which should motivate us to live lives which please God.
5. It is the fact that each of us will stand before Christ in judgment on the last day.
6. On that day, we will each receive from Him what is due for what we have done in our bodies, our earthly tent, whether it was good or bad.

Conclusion

1. While exiled on the Island of Patmos, the apostle John was privileged in a vision to see “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2).

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2. He suddenly heard a voice from the throne, which said,

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”” (Revelation 21:3–4, NASB95)

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3. In 1955, Jim Hill wrote the words to a hymn which he based on what John recorded from this vision:

**There is coming a day, when no heartaches shall come,
No more clouds in the sky, no more tears to dim the eye;
All is peace forever more on the happy golden shore —
What a day, glorious day, that will be.**

**There'll be no sorrow there, no more burdens to bear,
No more sickness, no pain, no more parting over there;
And forever I will be with the One who died for me —
What a day, glorious day, that will be.**

4. Are you ready for that day? Are you living in anticipation of it?
5. If you haven't yet prepared for it, there is no better time to start than now.