



First Baptist Church At The Villages

COMPANION STUDY TO MESSAGE: *CONFIDENCE IN DISCOURAGEMENT* (5/10) •

STUDY TITLE: THE HOPE OF HEAVEN • 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18; 5:1-10 •

FOR USE 5/10 THROUGH 5/16/2020

MAIN POINT

As the children of God, we can look to the future with hope and confidence knowing that Jesus is restoring what was lost and making all things new.

INTRODUCTION

As your study time begins, use this section to focus your mind and heart the topic of discussion.

Do you think of yourself as an optimist or a pessimist? Have you always been that way?

How would those closest to you answer that question about you?

What's the difference between optimism in general and the kind of optimism a Christian can have?

Christianity is about hope no matter what else is happening. Even though all around us we see the hopelessness and despair that came about because of the fall, we can rest assured that Jesus is making all things new. If we fast forward to the end of history, we see the consummation of the hope that was begun when Jesus was born.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18.

In what ways are you looking to the things seen and neglecting that which cannot be seen?

When has there been a time in the recent past, or maybe even during these past few weeks, where you were tempted to lose heart? How did you turn to God to sustain you?

| READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-5.

Why do you think Paul compared our bodies to tents? How do you see that comparison to be true in your day to day life?

In what ways are you comforted by the knowledge that something better is waiting for you after death?

Paul compared life in our mortal bodies to living in a tent—knowing that living in a palace lies ahead. Our earthly house (body) is just a tent. One day—at death—it will be destroyed, like a torn or worn-out tent. But that isn't the end of the story.

What are the differences between our earthly bodies and our everlasting bodies?

What are the positive aspects of having a temporary body? How does this knowledge make us groan?

How can the pain you feel in your physical body actually point you to have an eternal perspective?

In contrast to the we know of verse 1 is the we groan of verse 2. While we are still living in the physical body subject to decay, there is a kind of moaning or sighing. Paul thought of death as being like stripping off rotten, worn-out rags and putting on the most amazing attire imaginable.

Do you groan more because of the temporary nature of your body or because you wish for Christ's return?

Which of these two groanings is more common? Why?

We groan for the ultimate glory of being clothed with the resurrection. Now, believers are burdened. In the resurrection, the burden will be lifted. In 1 Corinthians 15:54, Paul wrote that when believers receive their resurrection bodies, the saying "Death has been swallowed up in victory" will become a reality. The victory of the resurrection will so completely swallow up death that it will no longer be regarded. Which human beings have confidence that this will surely happen? Only those who have been prepared for it by God Himself.

| READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-10.

What do you anticipate about being at home with the Lord? How will your heavenly home be a better place?

What are the limitations of being “at home in the body”?

Why is “walking by faith” such an important dimension of our experience as believers?

The life of faith in the present will give way to walking by sight after the death of those who have prepared by trusting Christ. As much as believers feel that we are at home in our bodies (after all, what other experience have we had?), there will be an even greater experience of “at homeness” when we are with the Lord Jesus. That truly will be a time to be satisfied beyond all comparison.

Who are the two kinds of people prepared for Christ’s return? Who will face God’s judgment?

In 2 Corinthians 6:9 Paul apparently thought ahead through time. There will be two kinds of people prepared for Christ’s return (and for the judgment spoken of in verse 10). First are those who are at home in their bodies when Christ returns. Second are those who have already died and are away from physical life when He returns.

On what will believers be judged? What can believers look forward to at judgment?

CONTEMPLATION & APPLICATION

Identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to your life.

How often do you think about God’s restoration of all things? What do you think would change in your life if you thought about it more often?

What is our responsibility in light of this promise? How specifically does knowing this day is coming increase your urgency to offer 'The Hope' (Jesus) to the world?

What situation in your life needs to be informed by God’s promise of the future? How are you going to do that? LIVE BOLDLY: Share your answers to these two questions with someone this week. Ask them to pray for you, to encourage you, and to hold you accountable. Then offer to do the same for them.

PRAYER

Thank God that His Word is faithful and true, and that what He has promised will come to pass. Thank Him for the sure and certain promise that He is making all things new, and ask Him to help you live with a sense of expectation, urgency, and hope in light of that coming day.

COMMENTARY (additional background and/or explanation of the verses to help in understanding the biblical text)

| 2 CORINTHIANS 4:17-18

4:17-18. Although Paul never invited persecution or bodily pain, he viewed all the suffering he endured as momentary, light affliction. Certainly Paul's sufferings for the sake of Christ were not trivial or inconsequential. Paul's statements in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28 clearly show that his suffering was intense. Why then did Paul refer to his suffering as momentary, light affliction? The key lies in Paul's perspective on life. Paul's afflictions seemed light and insignificant in contrast to the eternal weight of glory he anticipated.

Furthermore, Paul's sufferings for Jesus' sake led him to depend on God instead of on himself. If Christians are prepared to be identified with Christ in this sinful world and accept the sufferings that come as a consequence, they will share Christ's glory (see Rom. 8:17). Paul described this result as an eternal weight of glory, thus making his afflictions seem as nothing in comparison. Although Paul once had acted from the perspective of a zealous Pharisee and a persecutor of Christians, his perspective forever changed on the road to Damascus (see Acts 9). To the Christians at Philippi, he wrote: "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Phil. 3:8-9).

The Greek verb translated look . . . at in 2 Corinthians 4:18 carries the concept of fixing one's gaze intently or concentrating on something. As a Christian, Paul did not value material, temporal things visible to physical eyes. Rather, he valued spiritual, eternal things. Jesus changed Paul's perspective and enabled him to see what really mattered in life.

| 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10

Paul compared life in our mortal bodies to living in a tent—knowing that living in a palace lies ahead. Our earthly house (body) is just a tent. One day—at death—it will be destroyed, like a torn

or worn-out tent. But that isn't the end of the story.

Note the absolute confidence of Paul's conviction, stated by the bold we know. His assurance that some day he will live in a resurrection body—a building from God—was based on the resurrection of Jesus Himself. In describing the eternal, resurrection body of believers, Paul used language similar to the language Jesus Himself used of His own coming resurrection body. His enemies at His trial quoted Him as saying: "I will build another not made by hands" (Mark 14:58; compare John 2:19-22). Followers of Christ may be confident that an everlasting body, fit for heaven itself, is waiting for them.

In contrast to the we know of verse 1 is the we groan of verse 2. While we are still living in the physical body subject to decay, there is a kind of moaning or sighing. It is not that the material world is inherently evil, but that the physical body is inherently temporary. Who cannot but groan as we wait for Christ's return? When we have grasped the reality that there is a house from heaven waiting for us in the resurrection, who cannot but sigh until Christ's promise is fulfilled? (Some Bible students suggest that Paul was talking here about an interim body during the intermediate period between bodily death and the resurrection.)

Many Greek philosophies of Paul's day, following the famous Plato, supposed that the preferred state for eternity is to continue as a kind of naked (disembodied) soul or spiritual entity. Today, some of the world's major religions adopt a similar belief. Even popular music celebrates the notion of nirvana—a dreamy spirit-paradise. Paul found such belief horrifying. He desired to be clothed with his resurrection body. In verse 3 the image of what believers long for shifts from that of an eternal building to that of wonderful garments. Paul thought of death as being like stripping off rotten, worn-out rags and putting on the most amazing attire imaginable.

For a second time, the apostle referred to the groaning of believers who are in this tent. We groan for the ultimate glory of being clothed with the resurrection. Now, believers are burdened. In the resurrection, the burden will be lifted. Paul was projecting one chief truth for believers: mortality will be swallowed up by life. The New Testament uses the Greek verb translated swallowed in other places in a figurative sense. In 1 Corinthians 15:54, Paul wrote that when believers receive their resurrection bodies, the saying "Death has been swallowed up in victory" will become a reality. The victory of the resurrection will so completely swallow up death that it will no longer be regarded. In a parallel manner, Paul now said that the life of the resurrection body will totally envelop everything that belonged to the mortal, temporary state of earthly existence. It will no longer be remembered.

Which human beings have confidence that this will surely happen? Only those who have been prepared for it by God Himself. This hope does not belong to the natural order but to the

supernatural. When we were born again, God gave us the Spirit (see John 3:5-8). Those who have repented and believed the gospel have received the Spirit, for “if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him” (Rom. 8:9). The indwelling Spirit of God is the down payment guaranteeing believers the resurrection. Only three times in the New Testament is the Greek word translated down payment used: here, 2 Corinthians 1:22, and Ephesians 1:14. All three times Paul spoke of the Holy Spirit indwelling believers as the guarantee of future blessings. And if the Holy Spirit of God Himself is “merely” the down payment, how glorious must the full reality be!

Although temporary, this life has great value. This life is not to be despised but rather is to be enjoyed as a time of preparation for eternity. This means that every day we can be confident, just as Paul was. Here, the present experience of believers is described as being at home in the body. During this time, we are away from the Lord in the sense that we do not perceive Him with our physical senses. On the other hand, we do enjoy the spiritual presence of the Lord now. Another way of describing the present experience of Jesus’ followers is that we walk by faith. We trust in the greatness and goodness of God on our behalf. The Christian life throughout Scripture is characterized as a life of faith, “just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith” (Rom. 1:17, quoting Hab. 2:4). Paul surely wanted the Corinthians to understand that the only way to prepare adequately for death is by faith in Christ.

The life of faith in the present will give way to walking by sight after the death of those who have prepared by trusting Christ. For a time, this will be characterized as being out of the body, that is, during the interim time after death and before the resurrection. Yet this will be a wonderful experience, for it will mean being at home with the Lord. As much as believers feel that we are at home in our bodies (after all, what other experience have we had?), there will be an even greater experience of “at homeness” when we are with the Lord Jesus. That truly will be a time to be satisfied beyond all comparison. Paul did not picture the period between death of the body and the resurrection as a kind of unconscious limbo or state of soul sleep. In another letter, Paul’s teaching was that departing from bodily life to be with Christ was better by far (see Phil. 1:23).

In 2 Corinthians 6:9 Paul apparently thought ahead through time. There will be two kinds of people prepared for Christ’s return (and for the judgment spoken of in verse 10). First are those who are at home in their bodies when Christ returns. Second are those who have already died and are away from physical life when He returns.

Both groups, however, recognize one central purpose for their existence: to be pleasing to Him. This means that God created us and redeemed us not mainly for our own sakes, but for His sake. God has “wired” us as humans in such a way that the most satisfying, enjoyable life

possible is not one of self-centeredness, in which we focus on pleasing ourselves. Rather, the greatest life possible is the one centered on the Lord Jesus, reflecting back to Him the glory He has shown to us. Both in this life and throughout eternity, all who have entered into a relationship with Christ seek to love Him, to please Him, to honor Him above all (see Matt. 22:37-38). A life pleasing the Lord is possible in this life as we walk by faith; it will be fully realized in eternity as we walk by sight.

Believers are saved by faith, but our works will be judged. This truth is taught not only here, but also in such passages as 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. Believers must all appear so their works may be evaluated. Paul did not state whether this judgment occurs immediately after a believer's body dies (as the context suggests) or whether this will be a general judgment involving many persons at once. It makes no difference as long as we are prepared.

The phrase judgment seat translates a single Greek word (bema) that was used originally of the place from which an earthly ruler gave legal decisions. In two New Testament passages, the phrase refers to the place from which God or Christ will give judgment about humanity. Earthly behavior obviously has an eternal perspective. Those who have been saved by faith will be repaid for the deeds they have done while in the body.