

We Make It Our Goal To Please Him

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Key Verse: 5:9

“So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.”

In the previous passage we learned that we have a treasure, Jesus, in jars of clay. We have a great treasure in our body. Wow! Because of this we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day by day. God will turn all of our troubles into everlasting glory in his kingdom. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. In chapter 5 Paul explains more specifically what is unseen. He teaches us what our true hope is, and what our life goal should be.

I. Longing for our heavenly dwelling (1-5)

In verses 1-5 Paul uses metaphors to explain what our true hope is. In verse 1 he mentions "earthly tent" and "eternal house," or "building from God." In verses 2-4 he mentions "clothed with our heavenly dwelling" and "nakedness." Verse 5 explains how we can have assurance of our great hope.

First, we have a building from God (1). Look at verse 1. "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands." Here, Paul compares our body to an earthly tent and the kingdom of God to a building, an eternal house. Why did he compare our body to an earthly tent? Tents were familiar to Paul because he was a tentmaker. There are many similarities between a tent and our bodies. Tents are temporary, flimsy and shabby. People usually use tents for camping. It is refreshing to be in the great outdoors for a little while. However, nobody lives in tents permanently except refugees or nomads. Like tents, our bodies are temporary. Still, God created our bodies in an amazing way. When we compare a human body to a car engine we can understand this. If a car engine is used 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, it will wear out in less than a year. However, a human heart, which weighs less than a pound, pumps blood at a rate of about 70 beats per minute, without ceasing for 70, 80, or even 100 years. Still, no one can live forever. Last week Dr. Mark Yoon's father (age 82) and Aaron Lomahan (3 months) went to be with the Lord. And during our time on earth we suffer from disease, disasters, accidents, violent crime, and so on. Moses said in Psalm 90:10: "The length of our days is seventy years-or eighty if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away." The problem is that people

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want to live in their bodies forever. Emperor Chin of China sent 3,000 young people out to find the secret to eternal life. No one did, and Emperor Chin died at age 49. Though a man possesses honor, power and wealth, he is destined to die. Once a human body is destroyed, it cannot be restored. Because of this, people despair.

If our body is destroyed, is it the end of everything? No. As believers, we have hope. Verse 1b says "...we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands." In John 14:1,2 Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms (mansions KJV)...." In the kingdom of God there is no housing problem. Everyone has their own spacious and beautiful house as a free gift from God with no mortgage. Hebrews 11:10 says that the architect and builder is God. It never perishes, spoils or fades; it is eternal (1 Pe 1:4). God constructed this building on the foundation of Jesus' death and resurrection, which destroys the power of sin and death. Revelation 21:4 says, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." Though our bodies will be destroyed, we have this glorious hope. So we do not lose heart. Instead we live a powerful life full of spirit.

There are two kinds of people: those who have hope in this world, and those who have hope in the kingdom of God. Those who have hope in this world try to pile up treasures on earth during their lifetime. To do so, they become selfish and greedy, without room in their hearts to consider others. Yet, when they die, they lose everything. Death snatches away their wealth, power, beauty, and honor, and they never get it back. However, we Christians have hope in heaven. This hope enlarges our hearts to serve others. We can live sacrificially as holy pilgrims.

Second, we groan, longing for the heavenly dwelling (2-4). Look at verse 2. "Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling...." Here, Paul explains that we groan inwardly. Why do we groan? It is because of the limitation of our earthly body. Though we want to live a holy life, the weakness of our mortal body limits us, and we despair. But this leads us to long for our heavenly dwelling. Usually when people groan it expresses one's desire to escape hardship. For example, if one cannot find a proper marriage partner, he or she groans. If a student has to stay up late at night to study for an exam, he or she groans. But the groaning Paul mentions is different. It comes from our longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, "because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked" (3). Here, "naked" describes one whose earthly body has died and who is waiting to be clothed with a spiritual body when Jesus comes again. At that

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time, our bodies will be raised into imperishable, glorious, powerful, spiritual bodies (1 Cor 15:42-44). Paul longed for this: "so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life" (4). Why do we need to be clothed in this way? While on earth, we need an earthly body. However, in the heavenly kingdom we need a spiritual body in order to be fitted to live there. Paul says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1Co 15:50). Here we learn that we should not groan only over our wretchedness, but in the great hope that Christ will clothe us with a glorious spiritual body. The groaning of a Christian must be different than that of worldly people who have no hope. Furthermore, we should not avoid hardship with the excuse that we will go to heaven. Instead, with this hope, we must work hard as stewards of God's world.

Third, we have the Spirit as a deposit (5). How can we really be sure of this hope? Look at verse 5. "Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." Usually we decide that something is trustworthy by looking at the expertise of the one who made it. However, even experts make mistakes. But God never makes mistakes. God is the one who created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. God is the one who raised Jesus from the dead. God is Almighty God. What is impossible with man is possible with God (Mk 10:27). It is God's unchanging purpose to bring us to his eternal house in heaven, and clothe us with a glorious spiritual body. God has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing this. The Spirit enables us to call God, "Father." As God's children we are heirs of God who inherit his kingdom (Ro 8:15-17). When we have this assurance, we can go through hardships in this world. So Paul said, "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed..." (2 Cor 4:8).

II. Live by faith, not by sight (6-10)

In this part Paul teaches us what our life goal should be when we have true hope in the kingdom of God. Look at verse 6. "Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord." Here, "we are at home in the body and away from the Lord," refers to living on earth in our mortal bodies. While we live in this world we are always confident that we will live in the heavenly kingdom forever with a glorious spiritual body. Paul stresses that we are "always" confident. That means that we live always with a sense of victory even though we go up and down according to the situation and our own spiritual condition. However, basically we have confidence. It is like the undercurrent of the ocean. Even though the surface waves go up and down, the undercurrent is steady. Those who do not have hope of the kingdom of God always have a sense of defeat. Even though outwardly they seem to be courageous and full

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of confidence, inwardly they always feel defeated. Finally they will be destroyed by death. But when we have true hope of the kingdom of God in our hearts we live with a sense of victory. When we see the "Rocky" movies, we know that Rocky Balboa will win the final victory. He goes through many hardships and tough training, but in the end he wins the victory. So we do not lose heart. Likewise, in our spiritual struggle, though we may lose a battle, we will have final victory. So we can always live with a sense of victory in Christ.

Some people think that hope in the kingdom of God is only for the future, and that it is unproductive and unrealistic at present. They think that hope in the kingdom of God does not apply to young people but only to old people. This is not true. Hope in the kingdom of God affects us in this life, even at a young age. Those who do not have this hope are always fearful. Those who have this hope are always full of confidence and spirit. Their lifestyle is different. Verse 7 says, "We live by faith, not by sight." The people who do not have true hope in their hearts live by sight in this world. For example, the people of Noah's day lived without God. They had no true hope. As a result, when they married, they only looked at the outer appearance and married anyone they chose. Their offspring looked strong and glamorous. But inwardly they were corrupted, immoral and violent. So God sent a flood judgment. We should marry by faith, not by sight. Soon we will elect our president. We should elect our president by faith, not by sight.

By faith means we trust and obey God, believing he will bless us in the best way and be responsible for our future. To live by faith we must not follow the pattern of this world. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will." In order to live by faith, we must know what God's will is. To know God's will, we have to study the Bible. When we study the Bible, we should not merely seek our own benefit. Rather, we have to listen to what God is saying until we know what he really wants us to do. Ephesians 5:10 says, "...and find out what pleases the Lord." Then God will surely guide us into the best way and bless us. People think that to live by faith is a losing business in this pragmatic society. But it is not a losing business because God blesses those who please him. Paul was absolutely sure about this. So he said in verses 8-9, "We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it." Paul wanted to leave this world and go to be with Jesus as soon as possible. However, whether he lived in this world or went to be with the Lord, his life goal was the same. It was to please God.

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Why did he set his life goal to please God? Genesis teaches that man's life purpose is to please God. The Westminster Catechism states that man's chief purpose in life is "To glorify God and enjoy him forever." God purchased us with the precious blood of Jesus (1 Cor 6:20). Romans 14:8 says, "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord." This is why we make it our life goal to please God in whatever we do. So 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." When we say that man must live for the glory of God, some people become rebellious, saying, "Why should I live for the glory of God instead of pleasing myself? Who will please me if I don't please myself?" But if we try to please ourselves we will be miserable. We will be empty, weary and tired. For example, King Saul in the Old Testament tried to please himself instead of pleasing God. Then God's Spirit left him and demons occupied him. He became a slave of jealousy and a murderous man. His end was tragic. The Samaritan woman tried to please herself by stealing men's hearts one after another looking for the perfect husband. She became weary and thirsty and a stench to her townspeople. But when she met Jesus, her life goal was changed. She ran back to her townspeople and witnessed to Christ. Levi the tax collector tried to please himself by making money. He became rich, but he was not happy. He became selfish and greedy. He lost everything: his identity, reputation, and friends, as he pleased himself. When he was called to be a disciple of Jesus, his life goal totally changed. He tried to please Jesus. He said: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Mt 6:33). He was happy and full of spirit.

Then how can we please God? Verse 7 says, "We live by faith, not by sight." So we must live by faith. Hebrews 11:6 clearly says, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." When we do something, our motive is important. When we study to get a good grade in order to get a good job or earn a good reputation, surely we study hard. But the motivation is not pleasing God. If one works hard at his job only to be promoted and to make more money, he cannot please God. If one raises his children only for his own satisfaction or honor, it does not please God. If one feeds many sheep in order to gain recognition from church members, it does not please God. If we do not please God, God will not bless us. However, when we please God by faith, then God will surely bless us in what we do. Old Testament Joseph-whether in his father Jacob's house, or as a slave, a prisoner, or prime minister-worked hard to please God by faith. So God blessed him to be a blessing in whatever he did. At one time, Marsha

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Teodori was sorrowful because she did not have children. Dr. Samuel Lee encouraged her not to dwell in her sorrow, but to please God by teaching the Bible one-to-one. Students responded and her ministry became fruitful. God blessed her with three beautiful children, whom she is rearing by faith. Dr. Alan Wolff helped many people of God obtain jobs at Northwestern, though they did not join his fellowship. He worked to advance the kingdom of God, not his fellowship. Then God blessed him to be a fruitful steward of God's work, and helped him to obtain a Ph.D. for the glory of God. So let's pray that we may live to please God. Then God will reward us.

Verse 10 further explains the reason why we should please the Lord. It says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." Here the judgment seat of Christ is the seat of final judgment. First of all, the final judgment determines eternal life and eternal condemnation. If one's name is written in the book of life, he goes to heaven. If not, he goes to hell (Rev 20:11-15). After that, there is a judgment of rewards among those who are saved. It is the evaluation of one's labor for the Lord. The parable of the talents explains this (Mt 25:14-30). Talents were given to each worker according to their ability. One person received five talents, a second person received two talents, and a third person received one talent. The one with five earned five more, and the one with two earned two more. When the master returned, they joyfully presented their profit, saying, "See, I have earned five more!" "See, I have earned two more!" Then the master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness." (Mt 25:21) However, the one who didn't work hard and hid his talent in the backyard for fear that it would be lost, was rebuked by the master: "You wicked and lazy servant!" He took the man's talent and gave it to the one with ten talents. God will evaluate what we have done. That is why we have to make it our goal to please him.

In this passage we learned what is our true hope and what our life goal should be. Our true hope is the eternal house which God established through Jesus' death and resurrection. When we have true hope in our hearts, we will not be crushed or destroyed. We will always be full of confidence. We can live with a sense of victory. We can live by faith, not by sight. We are not deceived by the things we can see. Most of all, we can make it our life goal to please God. When we please him by faith, God will please us and will surely bless us. We will live the most fruitful and blessed life in this world and finally we will inherit the kingdom of God.