

# "The Story Doesn't End Here"

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 25 February 2024

Preacher: Justin Bryant

[ 0 : 00 ] I invite you to turn with me to 2nd Corinthians chapter 5. We are moving through the book of 2nd Corinthians. I hope that you are coming to love it more and more.

We finished one of the high point chapters for me, but the wonderful thing about the Bible is even after the high points, it is still so rich and so full.

The lowest, the smallest, the meekest passage of the Bible far outstrips anything that this life has to offer. And so we hold in our hands a treasure trove.

A lot depends on where you end a story. If you end the Star Wars story after the prequels, it's a tragedy.

Anakin becomes Darth Vader and the Republic is lost. If you stop the story of Joseph from Genesis when he is in jail, it is a sad story of betrayal by your very own brothers.

[ 1 : 11 ] If you hear about Jesus, about his crucifixion, if you hear about them laying him in the tomb and you stop the story there, it's horrible.

It's not good news. It's no gospel. Look at the disciples' response. When Jesus died, they went into hiding.

They scattered. They thought that all was lost. But the story didn't end there. If you don't stop with the prequels and you go on to watch the originals too, you'll find that Star Wars isn't a tragedy, but is instead a redemption story.

If you read on in the story of Joseph, you will find not a story primarily about betrayal, but a story about forgiveness and love.

And praise God that Christ's story doesn't end in that tomb. Our God lives. He is risen. He is risen indeed.

[ 2 : 29 ] The story doesn't end there. Keep that in mind as we read this passage, that we are looking to find the real ending of our story.

Chapter 5, verses 1 through 5. For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation, which is from heaven. If indeed having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.

For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

Now he who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the spirit as a guarantee. This is the word of the Lord.

[ 3 : 42 ] Thanks be to God. In preaching this sermon to you this morning, I need you to know that the story does not end here with this life.

We often live our life as if things have to work out now for it to be a good story. We think that unless everything ends up good here in this life, it will be a tragedy.

Many of us think that we live in tragedies because we're sick, because we're disabled, because we're lonely, abused, misunderstood, overworked, underpaid, maybe because we make mistakes or we've missed out on our dreams and many, many other reasons.

But here in this passage is a sweet reminder that this life doesn't have to work out well for you for your story to have a happy ending.

You may suffer now, but that doesn't make your story a tragedy because the story doesn't end here.

[ 5 : 12 ] Look past this life to what goes beyond. Verse one says, for we know that if our earthly house, this tent is destroyed.

Paul here is talking about our bodies. If the troubles of this life culminate and climax in our death, we have good reason to still be encouraged.

It's not all black. It's not death and that's the end. So we will not lose heart.

Remember that was Paul's point from last week. Do not lose heart. Why? Because we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

When this body, this tent, this house fades away, it will eventually yield to a perfect, a heavenly body.

[ 6 : 19 ] For now, our souls are wrapped up, clothed in broken bodies. And those broken bodies one day will break completely and we will die.

Yet we, if we pay attention to the word of God, know that that is not the end. One day, our broken bodies will give way to perfect bodies.

First Corinthians 15, 51 through 53 says, Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall 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 shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishable.

And this mortal body must put on immortality. In other words, this body that can die will one day become a body that will never die.

[ 7 : 33 ] Paul here is talking about the resurrection. When we die, we aren't immediately given glorious bodies, our heavenly bodies.

We are spiritual in heaven without physical form. But one day, in Christ's second coming, we will all be raised together in new heavenly bodies with him, like he too was raised.

Right now, we have mortal bodies. They are defined by decay. Our bodies are breaking down and every bit that they break down is a promise that one day they will stop working entirely.

But the story doesn't end there. We will have immortal bodies that will never die.

Think of how much death shapes the way we live our lives. We have speed limits. We set up doctor's appointments to maintain our health.

[ 8 : 49 ] We rush around everywhere because we've only got so much time. I mean, every phase of our life is shaped by a ticking time clock.

We know that we won't live forever and that we won't be able to do everything we want forever. You know, we need to work hard when we're young in school because you're only going to be kids for so long so you need to be ready for when you're an adult.

You need to get a good job and work hard at that so that you don't have to labor forever with no free time and that you actually have a chance to live life.

We need to get married and have a family before our biological clock runs down. We need to save for retirement before we're too old to work.

But what will it be like to have eternity with no threat of death? To be capable and able, clear of mind, strong of body, with no threat of death forever.

[ 10 : 06 ] How much will that free you from worry and care so that you might focus solely on your God? What a wonderful thing that will be to no longer have to worry about this body that breaks down, that is full of weakness.

Now we have broken bodies, but one day they will be whole. Now I know you all.

I know that you know more than most what it is like to have broken bodies. Some of you have bad eyesight.

Others are disabled. Many of you have illnesses that you have to fight against that threaten your very lives. We remember our brother Steve and his recent stroke.

Or Mary G, who is too sick to be with us, who is in the hospital. I know believers who have had brain damage.

[ 11 : 19 ] All of us suffer in many ways this present broken body in this present broken world. I think about some believers I know who, before they were believers, were drug addicts.

And even now, their brain isn't quite what it used to be. But there's hope even for them, and there's hope for us in our broken bodies, that we will not be like this forever.

This is but a time. One day, our brother Don will be able to see better than any of us see right now.

And Tony will be running laps around me.

One day, these broken bodies will yield to heavenly bodies. And the idea of that should make us long for glory.

It should make death way less scary, because we realize it's not the end of the story, but the beginning of the best chapters. Look at this longing in verse 2.

[12:32] For in this, we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation from heaven. We groan.

Of course we groan. This life is hard. It's difficult. It's painful. But this groaning isn't just the complaint of people who are frustrated with the hand they've been dealt.

This is the groaning of someone crying out for relief, who knows what will fix their ailments and can't wait to get it.

Think of how a baby groans. It longs for milk to satisfy it. Do you long for glory? Do you long for the reward of Christ?

Or is all of your attention in this life in trying to make this life work out as best as you can? When you don't long for glory, it's going to be very hard to live for Christ because he calls you to sacrifice in this life.

[13:51] Sometimes your health, sometimes your wealth, your opportunities. You may have to give up something that was your dream for the sake of following your Savior.

How are you going to do that if you need this life to work out to be happy? But if you realize that this life is not the end, but it yields to something even better, you might say, come what will, I know the ending.

I know one day it will be glorious. This is the promise. This is a promise given to us to satisfy us while we live in broken bodies in a broken world.

That God's love will craft for us complete bodies with no sickness, no weakness, no illness, no pain. They don't tire.

They don't wear down. They are clear and built for God's glory. Think about when Christ walked among us.

[15:08] Think about all the crippled people that he came to. Blind, paraplegics, people with seizures, lepers, even the dead.

And he used his mighty power to overturn all of that. And that was a picture for us so that we might long for the one who is capable of overturning all of the effects of sin, every bit of fallenness in our bodies and in this world.

He used his power to cause the lame to walk and the blind to see. He will use his power for you. If he did all those things when he came for the first time and when he was hiding his glory, then when he comes the second time and he reveals all of his glory and the fullness of his power, he will do far, far more.

Oh, Lord, haste the day when he comes again, when death will be swallowed up in life, when the perishable will put on imperishable.

Lord, bring Christ back. Amen. But let's take a moment. We're thinking about these great promises, but we need to remember where they come from.

[16:49] We must not be deceived that we do not earn these heavenly bodies. We do not deserve them because of what we've done.

This is not like the paycheck I get at the end of the week where I worked for it and I am entitled to that money. You do not deserve a perfect body.

You do not deserve to be freed from the fallen state of this world. God is God is much better than you deserve.

And if you don't trust in Christ, this is the best you're ever going to get. God rightly punishes sinners by subjecting them to broken bodies.

look all the way in the beginning in Genesis 316 where God curses the woman Eve and says, I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception.

[17:56] In pain shall you bring forth children. As a punishment for sin, the pain of the body is increased. Now, we can't take this too far.

You shouldn't interpret whenever you have physical difficulties that it is some punishment from God. But rather it is the result of the fallenness of mankind.

This is dangerous. Some people will find ourselves tempted to say, oh, I'm not well. Perhaps God is punishing me.

Christ corrects this when the Pharisees ask him, who sinned that this man is blind, himself or his parents? And he says it is not that either of them sinned, but that the glory of God might be

revealed.

God has allowed the brokenness of this world to continue so that he might one day display his glory in triumphing over it.

[ 19 : 08 ] Look further at the consequences of sin though. Genesis 2, 16 and 17, And the Lord God commanded the man saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die.

the wages of sin is death. Our bodies will perish because we are sinners and that is the right thing that should happen.

But the punishment for sin goes even beyond physical death and it goes all the way to spiritual death and the threat of hell. Matthew 10 28 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. No human being deserves a heavenly body.

What we all rightfully deserve is to suffer to die and then to go to hell and suffer for all eternity. And nothing you can do no amount of work you do will ever change that fact.

[ 20 : 43 ] Paul points out here that the heavenly body is not made with hands. He highlights that no work of your hands can change the fate of sin.

But the story doesn't have to end there. I will warn you that once you are dead it is too late.

The story has ended there and there is no turning the page to a better chapter. So repent before it is too late. Since you are alive now turn to Christ and he will cover you in his righteousness.

But the story doesn't end for believers in hell. When we die we long and will be received with something much better.

When you turn to Christ he will cover you with his righteousness. He will clothe you in new holy garments. He will build a home for you.

[ 22 : 01 ] If you are trusting in Christ here is his promise to you. John 14 1-3 let not your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my father's house there are many rooms. If it were not so would I have told you that I go and prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and will take you to myself that where I am there you may be also. This is the promise for believers.

Death will yield to life. This broken world will yield to a perfect one. As you face the pain of this life the reality of death look to Christ.

In him is the answer for every suffering every agony. In him is the true happy ending. So happy and so bright that every pain and evil that faces you here is nothing in comparison.

[ 23 : 14 ] I mean this is what Paul was saying in our study last week. Verse 17 for our of chapter four for our light affliction which is but for a moment is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

While we do not look at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen for the things which are seen are temporary but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Don't you see that it's not about this. It's not about this and what you can touch but the better things that come afterwards. We have this treasure in jars of clay.

To get at those diamonds you have to break the jar first. And look also at how this connects us back to Christ and his example.

Death was not the end of his story. He did not lie in that tomb for long and when he arose his body was glorious.

[ 24 : 32 ] Look at what Paul promises in Philippians. He connects Christ's resurrection with ours to show that when we are united with him we will die like him but also live like he lived.

Philippians chapter 3 verses 20 and 21 But our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await the Savior the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

When we die like Christ we can be confident that we will be raised from the dead like Christ was.

When we die walking faithfully with God we will also be raised like Jesus was.

So now for the believer death is far from a threat but is the gateway to glory. Long and hope for that resurrection life.

it is not that that we hate being alive but it is that we long for the thing that is so much better.

[ 26 : 05 ] Look at what Paul says in verse 4 for we who are in this tent groan being burdened not because we want to be unclothed this is not the suicidal lament of someone with a difficult life kill me now and make it end.

This is far better than that. This is I wait patiently longing for the glory that is to be revealed. We are in this tent groaning being burdened not because we want to be unclothed but further clothed that mortality may be swallowed up by life so we wait patiently in these bodies but one day the death in our bodies will be overwhelmed with life in Christ like a plant that's been transferred to the right soil and suddenly blooms vibrantly wonderfully so too our souls will bloom when they are planted in new bodies and what did Paul say brothers and sisters do not lose heart even in the face of death don't doubt it we we even have a guarantee look at verse five now he who has prepared us for this very thing is

God you know how you you know when you can trust something when God is the one who has made it for you you know I think about sometimes how construction companies cut corners to save money they prepare a house for you and then you come in and it's nice in the beginning and then the paint starts peeling and you know the tub starts leaking and all of the corners that were cut start to have their bad consequences that's not how God builds a house that's not how he prepares things for us the bodies the life he has prepared for us is perfect and complete and no cracks will ever show but if that wasn't enough to give you confidence look even further in verse five

God who also has given us the spirit as a guarantee if you are a believer God has sent his spirit into your heart and has changed you you have been born again once you were spiritually dead and now you are spiritually alive if that isn't a sign that God is bringing life out of death even in you then what is look to the changes he has made in you and be confident that he will continue making those changes till there remains no sin left to be conquered by his power he has given you the spirit as a guarantee so as you face the brokenness of life as you face the threat of death do not lose heart remember that the story doesn't end here

[ 29 : 54 ] I think also I love to read fantasy novels! Sometimes they're huge hulking books and I'll be reading along and the author will put the main character into a situation where it looks like he might die like things are getting really bad for him like it's really dangerous but then you realize there's half the book left there's no way he's gonna kill him you know and it spoils the ending look and see that this life is just the very smallest first section of the book there's still so much left and eternity left so don't get down about what's going on right now but rejoice and long for the better things that will fill up the rest of that book look and see that this life is only the beginning when it is hard when it is painful when life feels like a tragedy know that it has a happy ending in

Christ remember as we learned last week that this light affliction which is but for a moment is working a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior let us close in prayer Lord Heavenly Father our God our Savior our King the Giver of Life we ask that we would have the faith to perceive the things which our eyes cannot see that we would have the trust to hope in you no matter how consuming the troubles of this life feel might we be faithful to groan in prayer for your second coming for the day when the mortal will put on immortal and might we remain faithful to the end trusting in you upheld not by our strength but by the strength of Christ our Savior it is in his name we pray through