

Moving House

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Preacher: The Venerable Daniel Gifford

[0 : 00] We're looking at 2 Corinthians 5, and it's verses 1 through 10. This is part of a series that David put together on dying well.

And he titled this particular sermon, Moving House. And it's a title that actually has extra meaning for me, and I think actually a couple of people on our staff as well, who all seem to be moving house during the next month or so.

Catherine and I moved about 8 blocks, and I think Darren and Sarah are moving 8,000 miles. And Kim and Brian are moving as well a couple thousand miles. When you compare notes with people who have moved recently, everybody seems to say it's not a pleasant experience.

And we found out that's very true. It's not, even if you're moving 8 blocks. But we also found out that it makes a big difference if you are moving to a place that you are looking forward, to moving too. That there's a big difference in the way that you are moving. Now, Paul apparently didn't have good experiences in moving either because he likens moving to death.

[1 : 14] And that's what the idea of moving house is. And he talks about two different houses that we have. He says that the first house that we move from is our body here on earth.

And in 2 Corinthians 5, 1, if you look at it, he says, our first home is a tent, which is the earthly home. He calls it a tent, something very transitory.

And in the Bible, tents are significant. The Israelites lived in tents in the wilderness for 40 years before, because they were looking forward to the day that they would enter into the promised land, in the place where they would live permanently.

And if you just keep your finger in that verse and turn to the right, to page 210, I want you to look at Abraham for a moment. On page 210.

And that's from Hebrews 11, chapter 18. Actually, it's actually verse 8.

[2 : 16] Chapter 11, verse 8. At the top of page 210. We read that it's by faith that Abraham obeyed when he was called out to go to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance, and he went out not knowing where he was to go.

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Well, that's a beautiful picture of our own tents, our own bodies, that Paul is describing as well, that our bodies are temporary, like the tents that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob lived in, and they are places where one looks beyond themselves to a place that God designs, a place that is permanent, a place that they are meant to be.

And that's a picture of our own lives as well, our own bodies. Because we know that unless Jesus comes back first, each of our tents will be dismantled.

In a sense, that's what they're made for, to actually come down. Our bodies will die. But if this happens, Paul says, we have a building from God, a house that's not made with hands, in other words, it's not of this world, of this creation, but eternal in the heavens.

[3 : 48] He's talking about the inheritance of the resurrection body that Jesus has bought for each of us. And you can see what Paul is doing here. There's an incredible contrast that he's set up.

The first body, the tent, is a tent that's temporary. It's earthly, and it will be destroyed or dismantled. The second one is a building, something solid with foundations, that is from God and is eternal in the heavens.

Two different homes. And Paul sees that for the Christian, death is not finally about destruction. It's about moving, as the title says.

It's about moving from a temporary home to a new permanent home, a body that God has personally made for us. And Paul says, as Christians, that we have, in our earthly bodies, two distinctive qualities.

And it might be a bit surprising what those qualities are. The first is in verse 2. He says that the first quality is that we groan, that our bodies groan.

[5 : 00] Now, when Paul is talking about this, he's not talking about complaining about aches and pains and not getting enough sleep and the fact that we're getting older. I'm told that as soon as I turn 43, I'm going to have to have glasses.

That's the magic cutoff date. But Paul's not talking about groaning about things like that. He's talking about a kind of groaning that is God-given. It is a longing that God puts into our hearts for that heavenly dwelling that God is building for us.

We want what God has promised to us in Jesus Christ, that resurrection body that Jesus accomplished on the cross. And you see in Jesus, each of us, you see in Jesus our future and our own bodies.

We know that at death, we lose our bodies. And Paul says there's an anxiety about that in verse 4. We sigh with anxiety because at death, there is a nakedness.

We are losing our bodies, something that is essential to life and to who we are, to our identity. But God has promised a new body that Paul says in verses 2, 3, and 4 that we put on over ourselves.

[6 : 19] And that it further clothes us is the way that he talks about it. In other words, he's not saying that our body is simply destroyed. He is saying that the new body comes over us.

And the way he puts it in verse 4 is the mortal body is swallowed up by life. It's an extraordinary phrase, isn't it? Your body will be swallowed up by life.

Now we as Christians are meant to long after that new life, to want to be clothed by a new permanent body. And that's the only kind of groaning that Christians are supposed to be good at. We have to remember that. It's a type of longing for the new body. Now there's important implications to this for you and for me about this.

Because the fact that our new bodies are put over us means the essence of who you are and who I am will continue into heaven. One of the favorite shows that, in fact, I think the only show that we watch together, Catherine and I, is a show on Sunday nights called Extreme Home Makeover.

[7 : 31] I don't know if any of you watch this show. It's sort of a fantasy to think maybe a team of people will come to our house and totally change it. But the premise of the show is that they take a very needy family with a house that really needs work.

It's much too small or very shabby, completely inadequate. And in one week, they completely transform that house. Most of the houses, they completely demolish and they replace it with a brand new house that the family comes back to.

But with some of the houses, they keep the essence of the old house. And so they will keep a part of that old house or maybe the whole thing, totally renovate it and add to it, often quite a bit to it.

But in some way, they will keep the character of that house and I want to say that this picture is actually a good picture and illustration of our own new bodies because God will not simply destroy the body that we are living in now.

He will renovate it and He will change it, but there will be the essence of that tent in us as well.

[8 : 43] Now, nothing sinful will make that move. The death of you will be free from sin, which cannot survive in the presence of God, but at death, the you is not destroyed.

It is swallowed up by life. It's surrounded by life and the resurrection life. And yes, you will be transformed as a result, but you will continue to be you.

And we see a glimpse of this when Jesus met His friends after He rose again. They all recognized Jesus, even though for some of them it took a long time because of the fact of their disbelief or their grief, their eyes being clouded by these things.

He was the glorious, risen Lord, and unexpectedly so, but they knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that this was their friend and teacher who they had lived with for three years.

And in heaven, you and I will recognize one another. What God was doing in your life here on earth now will be completed in heaven.

[9 : 49] And there will be reunion in heaven. And wonderfully, I think, there will be a joyful marveling at what God has done in you. You know, did God do that in you?

What a great God that we have. And it is good for us to groan, to long for that, that new resurrection body. Now, the second attribute of our earthly tense, besides groaning, is that we are meant to be of good courage.

Even as we face death, even as our bodies are meant to be dismantled, we are meant to have good courage and be confident, is the way that the Bible puts it here in this translation.

Be of good courage, verse 6. Now, there's two reasons for this. One is that God has given the Spirit as a guarantee in verse 5, or a deposit.

And so, he's saying that the same Spirit who brought Jesus from the dead and gave him this new glorious body and raised him to be King of King and Lord of Lords, this same Spirit is working in you now.

[10:57] He is leading you into truth. He is changing you, your heart. He is healing your mind and your body. He is strengthening you to serve. He is helping you to understand his word.

If that Spirit is working in you now, you can know that he will finish that work by giving you a resurrection body. And the second reason for confidence is in verses 6 through 8.

That section says that when we are away from our body, we will be home with the Lord. And Paul is saying we are with God now, but we don't do it with sight.

That's why he says we walk by faith, not by sight. We do not see God. We see his work. We see and hear him speak through his word. He ministers to us in many different ways and through other people, but we cannot see him with our eyes.

But when we receive our new bodies, we will be able to see God in his glory. We will be with him in the sense that we are with one another today.

[12:02] 1 John says we will see him as he is. The anxiety that we have about death is that it separates. And that's what is at the heart of our grief when we experience the death of loved ones and as we face it ourselves.

But Paul says as a follower of Jesus that when you face death, you will know the opposite of separation in God and with him. Paul says you will be at home with him, that you will see him, that there won't be faith in the presence of God, no need for faith at all, because you will walk by sight. You will be at home with him. And this is the great joy that is near to everyone who is facing death or who is near death in some way. It gives courage and it gives strength to know this is the end of the story, to be with God and to be able to see him.

Hebrews 12 talks about Jesus facing death. And the way that Jesus faces death, it says, is that because of the joy that was set before him, Jesus endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The courage and the strength that Jesus had to face the cross came because he knew the joy of the Father's presence is what he would receive.

[13:30] That's what would come through his death. And Paul is telling us that that same joy is waiting for us as we face death. And that this should be our great source of courage and confidence.

It also gives great focus and ambition to your life as well. I had a friend of mine who one summer I worked with and he lived hundreds and hundreds of miles away from where we were working.

And at the end of the summer he was driving home to his wife and his two children. And it was at least 500 miles that he was driving.

He lived in the prairies. And he told me after he got I said how did the trip go? He said well it went great but one mile from home I got a speeding ticket.

And I said how did you do that? We drove around all summer no tickets no hint of it. He drives 600 miles and right next to home he gets a speeding ticket. He said well it was the more I the closer I got to home the more I thought of my wife and my kids and how I'd missed them and wanted to see them and subconsciously the pedal started getting heavier and heavier and heavier and he said I just didn't realize it but I was going way over the speed limit.

[14:50] And I think that this is something that Paul is calling us to as well that we ought to even as we get closer to death to have the glorious things of God the fact that we will be in his presence sharply in focus in our minds and to let that push us to run the race more quickly with more focus striving for that groaning and longing for what he will have for us.

And he says verse 9 he says the way that we do that practically is that whether we are at home or away we make it our aim to please him that one day we will be home with him.

This is what the life of heaven is all about and we will want to please him. This will be the life of heaven. You know that it's often been said that we don't take anything from this world. And that's not a true saying according to Paul because the things that we do take with us are the things that we pleased God with. The thoughts the things that were done for the sake of God and Jesus Christ his son these are things that will go with us into heaven. Jesus will welcome these things all that you have done to please him and he will reward you. And in fact verse 10 the way this passage closes sharpens our ambition strengthens it and pushes us and our aim in life as nothing can.

[16:20] It says we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each of us may receive what is due for what he has done in the body whether good or evil.

Now the word appear has a strong meaning in the original it means everything will be revealed or laid bare. So literally it's saying our hearts and our minds will be revealed before Jesus Christ. And this is the judgment of Christians. And it's not a judgment that determines whether we are saved or not because only Jesus can save and bring us into his presence. Only Jesus can give us eternal life.

We cannot contribute to that gift in any way. But this judgment is a judgment of evaluation in which the things you and I did as Christians are revealed to us and we will see very clearly with Christ what was pleasing to him in your life and what was displeasing to him in your life. And there's a strong sense of reward here in this verse that we will receive or miss out on as we enter into heaven. And I think the power of that verse the way God works through it is that it actually reveals our life now.

[17:38] It's a preparation for that day. It makes us think about the ways that we can please God as well as the things that we can get rid of in our life that do not please him. And our heart is revealed in that as well because the sincere desire to please God always comes from a love for God.

And this passage causes us to love God more deeply because it shows us what he has prepared for us at the cost of his beloved son. And that brings us to the point of the sermon series about how do we die well.

Well the best way to prepare for death is to know about the new home that Christ has given to us that we will move into one day that he has built personally for us and that we are to groan and long for it and be strengthened by that truth in our life and that our preparation very practically is to make it our aim to in everything that we do please God.

Is that the basis of our decisions? Is that the great ambition that we have in our life? How can I please him? Well this is preparation because it is the life of heaven.

It is the thing we have in common today and in heaven that it will be about pleasing God. That is the joyful exciting life that God has for us in the new dwelling the resurrection body.

[19:04] May God by his Holy Spirit strengthen us to know the riches of our inheritance and to live for it now. Amen. Amen.