

Our Eternal Home

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[0 : 00] Well, we know that if the tent which is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked.

But while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

The passage we have before us this evening runs very closely with what we saw last time at the end of chapter 4, and these letters that were received by these churches when they were written didn't have chapter headings such as we have.

They have been inserted just for convenience as we read through it in the translations that you find. But it would have read straight through from what is chapter 4 into what we know of as chapter 5. And that's important because it's an unbroken continuation of Paul's line of thought from chapter 4 into chapter 5. The anticipating hope that you read of there in chapter 4 verse 18, as we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen, for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

[1 : 32] That anticipating hope, you might say, that's built into these words, then carries through in a straight line to this passage in chapter 5, which really deals with resurrection life.

A lot of people in the past, and certainly today, have tended to look at this chapter, chapter 5, as an indication of life after death, immediately after death, but not necessarily after Christ's return and the resurrection.

But I think the language of the passage, I'm sure we'll see tonight, is very much to do with resurrection life, very much to do with life following resurrection, or life in the resurrected state of God's people, where death then is behind in the full sense.

After all, the goal of sanctification, we saw in the last passage that it's very much to do with God's sanctifying work, where he speaks there about God actually working in them.

Our inner nature is being renewed day by day. The renewed person, the person who's in Christ, is being renewed day by day. The work of the Holy Spirit goes on and will go on until that person leaves this world.

[2 : 50] And that goal of sanctification is not what is generally called the intermediate state, the state immediately beyond death, where the soul continues, where we rightly say we go to heaven as believers in Christ, but where the body is left behind temporarily till the resurrection.

Well, the goal of redemption is not that intermediate state, but what then lies beyond the resurrection once that takes place at Christ's return. The goal of sanctification and of redemption is the entire renewed person in Christ being glorified together with him.

And that's really what's before us in this wonderful passage that's just so full of great teaching. It deals, first of all, with what we can call an assured hope in verse 1.

Assured hope where he's saying that we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. So the first thing to notice is the way he speaks of we know. It's not something theoretical to the apostle. Now, what he's saying here, if the tent, which is our earthly home, we'll see what that means in a minute, but he's sure that following life in this world and following the dissolution of our body, then resurrection follows.

[4 : 14] And God has already prepared that wonderful home, that dwelling place, where the whole entire redeemed people as entire redeemed individuals will together share in being with Christ in the glory that he has purchased for them.

So he's really saying here we know when this takes place. The word if there is not introducing any element of doubt, it's really equivalent to saying whenever this will take place.

If the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands. And you can note the positive, certain element in the way that Paul speaks there.

Not talking here about something theoretical. It's not something uncertain. If somebody were to ask the apostle, what do you think of life beyond death? He's not going to reply and saying, well, this is my belief, but I'm not absolutely sure that I'm right in saying so.

And there are other alternatives that may be equally valid. This is a man who is sure by God's teaching of him that this is, in fact, what awaits God's people.

[5 : 26] This is the certainty. And of course, and we'll come to draw together at the end of our study tonight some of the practical implications of this. But it's important that we note, even at the beginning, that Paul is feeding this into the congregation in Corinth so that they will firstly be brought back, as they need in some things, to living for Christ as they ought to, and so that they will regard resurrection itself in the right way, in a proper way, and that that will affect their way of life in this world.

And you can compare also, you can take in along with verse 1, you can see the words that you find there in verse 5. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

And that fits in so well with the certainty of the hope, the assurance that he has where he says, we know that this is the case. God has given us, he says, the Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

And he's given us the Holy Spirit as a guarantee. The word literally means a deposit. A deposit that guarantees things will follow on from that. And what Paul is saying is really somewhat equivalent, really, I suppose.

You could say that when you actually pay a deposit for a loan, it's for a mortgage, whatever, you're paying the deposit, and it's not just merely the first installment of what is following it, it's the pledge, it's the guarantee that you are going to make up the whole of what is owing.

[7 : 03] Your first installment, the deposit, is really saying to the person or the bank or whoever you're actually giving the deposit to, here is my pledge by giving you this deposit that the remainder of what it cost me or what I owe will be paid.

And what Paul is actually saying is that God has given us the Holy Spirit as the first installment of the life of glory. He has given us the Holy Spirit as a pledge, as a guarantee, as it's translated here, for what is spoken in the chapter as our eternal home.

The certainty that Paul has is not of his own making. It's something that is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and that Holy Spirit himself, as that Holy Spirit comes into our life, into our souls, is God's pledge that eternal life is made certain, will follow.

This is but the first installment when you have the Holy Spirit in your life right now. But it is the first installment. The rest is bound to follow because that's how God has actually purposed it and how he promises it.

So the we know there is important, but let's look at what he says here about what he does know.

What is it that he knows? What's he conveying to the Corinthians by this certainty?

[8 : 29] Well, he's, first of all, describing it as a movement, if you like, or a translation from a tent to a more permanent place of residence.

We know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, in other words, he's talking there about his Christian life, especially the body that he knows as well is part of his person.

If that is destroyed or whenever it's destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And the tent, as you know, a tent is used in the Bible often to describe the temporary nature of our life in this world as Christians.

Hebrews chapter 11, verse 9, comes to mind where where Abraham, along with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise of God, it says, where they looked forward to a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God, but it describes them as going from place to place, living in tents. The tent is a thing you can lift up and take with you. It's not permanent. It's not anchored. It's not founded in one place. That's the nature of the tent.

[9 : 50] That's the nature, Paul is saying, of life in this world. It's not our permanent dwelling place. It's a place which is made rich by the knowledge of Christ, by the Spirit of God, but it's not our home.

And if this house, whenever it's destroyed, there is a resurrection in view, the apostle is saying, in which a building not made with hands, not of human construction, awaits us in heaven. And so that too is important, that it's a house that's not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. God is the architect. God is the builder. God is the creator. God is the finisher. Everything is under the control of his grace and the beauty of his building ability in grace. Jesus. Remember Jesus in John chapter 14, where he began teaching the disciples there, or near the beginning of teaching them in the upper room, let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? [11:08] And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, so that where I am, you may be also. What is he saying? He's saying, I'm actually going to be going away.

The Holy Spirit is going to come and you will know me through him, but I'm going to come back. I'm going to return. And I'm going to return for you because I'm going now to prepare this place for you. I'm going to prepare an eternal dwelling, you might say in the words of 2 Corinthians, so that where I am, you will also be. And so this wonderful resurrection habitation, this glory, this final dwelling place for God's people, body and soul together glorified, is something that follows the return of Christ and the resurrection.

You can see in chapter 4 here of 2 Corinthians, and verse 14, where again he mentions a very similar point, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.

You see, for the apostle, the raising of Jesus is so inseparably tied with our resurrection, the resurrection of those who have trusted in him, who live by faith in him, who have this hope, this assured hope.

[12:34] This is what awaits them. This final dwelling place through being raised up with Jesus and being brought with those he's writing to hear with you into his presence.

And even in the Old Testament, you have evidence not of the same extent, of course, as the New Testament.

You wouldn't expect that. But even through the years of the Old Testament, God revealed bit by bit that there was something more to life beyond death than just living on in the spirit or in your soul. You remember Enoch? The verses that remind us of Enoch teach us that God took him. Remember that Elijah also went without actually seeing bodily death.

He was taken by God straight from earth into heaven. And so that, along with certain teachings like Psalm 73, which we'll sing in conclusion tonight, where the psalmist is there saying God being his portion, you will guide me with your counsel and afterwards receive me.

[13:49] Or the word is take. Same word is used for Enoch. God took him. You will afterwards receive me, take me to glory. There's the Old Testament church, if you like.

It's, of course, it's really one church spiritually from the Old Testament into the New Testament. We're not dispensationalists, kind of people that believe that there are unconnected stages in God's revelation or in God's church in the world.

This is the one church right through from the Old Testament, right through into the New and on into glory. And you can see how the Old Testament saints, the believers, had such as Elijah and Enoch's, the way in which they left this world, just as a reminder to them that there's actually a body in glory.

There's a body in Elijah, his case, and in Enoch's case. And if they were asking the question in the Old Testament, well, if life is just a spiritual life without any physical existence beyond death, why did God take Enoch and why did he take Elijah and their bodies included in the take?

It's keeping before the mind of the Old Testament. There's something better, something above, something greater than just living on spiritually in a disembodied state.

[15:17] So there's the assured hope that the apostle is setting out. We know this, he says, and we know that if this present tent in which we live were destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

Then he goes on, secondly, to speak about an active longing, along with the assured hope, or part of it, you might say, is this active longing.

He's saying here, for we groan in this tent. In this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked.

Let me just read from Romans chapter 8. There's a passage there that helps us really to understand what the apostle here is saying. Romans chapter 8 from, well, it's really from verse 18, which talks about the sufferings of this present time.

Not being worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us or in us. Talks then about the creation groaning towards the time that God's own children are going to be set free.

[16:30] For he says, now, we know that the whole creation, you see he's saying again, we know, there's a certainty about this, that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

And not only the creation, but we ourselves, that's we believers, who have the first fruits of the spirit. You see, again, we have the spirit as the first fruits, the deposit.

We have this, but what does that actually leave us doing? We groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

That's the adoption he's speaking of there. The body, as it were, being adopted again into glory, having been in the grave. That's being taken into the possession of this eternal life in heaven following the resurrection.

So he's saying, we groan inwardly as we eagerly await for this, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now, hope that is seen is not hope.

[17:36] Now, you see, the similar language that the apostle is using there comparing it with 2 Corinthians. Because he's talking here about this groaning, this inward groaning, this groaning towards something that's yet to be, towards the resurrection and towards what's after the resurrection.

This is what we're groaning for. This is what the creation is groaning for. So you can see from that it's not actually a groaning that's actually caused by the sufferings of this present time as Romans 8 puts it.

It's not Paul saying, well, these are terrible sufferings. I'm just groaning in the pain of my sufferings, of my afflictions. And that's really all that he's saying to us.

It's not really that. It doesn't mean there is no element of suffering at all in what Paul is saying. But what he's saying is that our groaning is actually the pangs of childbirth.

It's groaning of longing towards something. It's the language of longing. You can get a slight indication of it perhaps when you've been working for all of these months and the work's been hard and you haven't had much of a break and you've arranged a holiday and as it gets nearer you really begin to feel the weight if you like of the work that you're doing but it's an anticipation and the anticipation you have of some time off and of some holiday time whether it's with family or whatever that really in a sense makes you groan towards it as something of an eager longing that just reaches out with the groaning with this active longing for it that looks forward so much to that coming.

[19:22] And that's what Paul is saying of the resurrection of life after the resurrection of being with Christ of being at home there in this tent now he says while we're in it we're groaning we're longing to be longing to be put on our heavenly dwelling if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked and naked there really means life without the body in the sense of the intermediate state he's saying we are in this tent we groan being burdened not that we would be unclothed but that we would be further clothed so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

In other words you can see how that compares with what Paul is saying elsewhere about this mortal body Philippians chapter 1 for example you can see what he's saying in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 what he's saying here to the Corinthians is here is something of the anticipation that makes you groan towards this final reality of for God's people because now we are actually hampered in a sense by our present tent it's a small living place it's a place of privilege as a Christian but a Christian is not made for life in this world we're not renewed we're not recreated in Christ so that our home will be in this world it's for a much better much greater home in heaven following resurrection and you remember yourselves the words of 1 Corinthians chapter 15 where Paul is reminding them they were teaching about the resurrection there was obviously a problem in

Corinth about the resurrection a problem of understanding because near the beginning of 1 Corinthians 15 he spoke to them about how is it that some of you say that there is no resurrection anyone want to speak about Christ's resurrection and if there is no resurrection then Christ has not

been raised and if Christ has not been raised then we are yet in our sins he's demonstrating the reality and the necessity of resurrection including that of Christ of course and then chapter 15 in that extended treatment of resurrection he went on to say I tell you this brothers flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable he's saying here 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 dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed that's we who are left alive in the world at the coming of

Christ for this perishable and notice how like it is to 2nd Corinthians 5 this perishable body must put on the imperishable same language as he's using here we unclothe but put on this resurrection body and in 1st Corinthians 15 he goes on so when this perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality then shall come to pass the saying that is written death is swallowed up in victory oh death where is your victory oh grave where is your sting and the sting of death is sin the power of sin is the law but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ friends you know yourselves death is something we're also familiar with we very often gather in this building and in the past at least still thankfully are able to gather for services relating to someone's passing someone's death someone leaving the tent of this world to go into eternity but death is not natural in the sense in which it was not in human life or in a human person as we were created death is the unnatural in that sense in the way in which death has come into our experience it's the unnatural invader into human life it's the consequence of sin it's something we brought about ourselves and are responsible for but it tears the person of a human being apart because

God created us soul and body together in one person and it's in the consequence of sin that that's torn apart as at death the soul leaves the body and the body returns to the dust now Paul is not writing this because he's afraid of death he's not writing this because of a dread of having to die prior to Christ's coming or the resurrection that follows he's made it very obvious in Philippians for example chapter 1 verse 23 that he has a very strong desire to depart and to be with Christ and in fact you could say you could take verses 6 to 8 here in the same way where he speaks about being at home in the body that's this present life we are away from the Lord for we walk by faith not by sight he's longing to be with the Lord bodily as well so that he can see the

[25 : 20] Lord in that complete sense yes we are of good courage yes we would rather be away from the body and be at home with the of course that's why in Philippians 3 verse 11 a long string there of clauses of reasons that he gives as to why he now considers everything that was once valuable to him to be just as worthless rubbish so that he might win Christ so that I might be found in Christ and so it goes on until he comes to the final verse in that section where he says so that

I is possible attain to the resurrection from the dead that is especially what he sets his mind on so here is Paul telling us here's this certain hope this assured hope and this active longing that's part of that and it may make us ourselves feel very small and very insignificant you may look at yourself tonight as I may look at myself and say well I'm so far short of that I just can't come near to matching the mind of the apostle the intense desire of the apostle but you have it in principle don't you you can say in your heart of hearts you can say with assurance that what awaits you as being in Christ beyond this world is something far better than you have in this world to depart and to be with

Christ even without the body is far better but you can also say that you wholeheartedly look forward to the resurrection glory that God has prepared so what are the practical applications that we give to this passage first of all it's important to give us a biblical understanding of such matters as these because they're really so much a part of the fabric of our redemption of our salvation that's what I'm saying first Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 12 where the apostle was obviously addressing a problem or a defect in the thinking of the Corinthians now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead and for the apostle it was so critically important to have a biblical understanding of the resurrection the doctrine of the resurrection of

Christ and then of his people united to him because secondly it's from that that we come to have a proper assurance or comfort in this life itself let me remind you of the way he wrote to the Thessalonians in chapter four and again how he was addressing their query in the mind of the Thessalonians as to what had happened to those who had died who had come to know Christ in this world but had left this world where they're going to miss out on the return of Jesus some of them are a bit perplexed about that obviously so he's addressing that issue in verses 13 following

but he says chapter four verse 13 of first Thessalonians we do not want you to be uninformed brothers about those who are asleep in other words he's saying you've got to have a proper knowledge of this if you're really going to take that understanding into your present life into the application of your faith and hope in

Christ and he goes on to talk there about how the Lord's return will involve a command the dead in with the Lord in the air and we will always be with the Lord then he finishes you see in that such a practical note all this wonderful heavy theology you might say in some way and as always in the Bible is addressed to our practical requirements and our practical needs there he says therefore encourage one another with these words in other words he's saying when you're talking together of what a Christian life is about when you actually have fellowship with one another and discussing the things of the gospel encourage one another with such teachings speak about the resurrection he's saying have this understanding of what's involved and disseminate that among yourselves for your comfort for your assurance for further comfort in this life and it's also to give us courage or confidence that's what he has here in chapter 5 of 2

[30 : 49] Corinthians and these verses 6 and 8 we are of good courage we are always of good courage go back to chapter 4 verse 16 so we do not lose heart so there you have it there's the the string of teaching that's there from chapter 4 into chapter 5 and yet it's all directed to our life here and now how we view this present life in Jesus how we view our service for Jesus how we view the life to come how it's not something uncertain for Christians how it has this wonderful certainty of a dwelling place that's already prepared and an assured hope as we look toward it and an active longing here as we wait during this present life and consider us he wrote to the Romans that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us amen may

God bless these words to us we're going to sing in conclusion in psalm 73 this time in the Scottish Psalter psalm 73 and at page 316 nevertheless continually O Lord I am with thee thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me thou with thy counsel while I live wilt me conduct and guide and to thy glory afterward receive me to abide to the end of verse 26 there these four stanzas nevertheless continually O Lord I am with thee nevertheless continually O Lord I am with thee thou dost me hold thy right hand have still afforded me lo with thy hand thou hast my lift wilt me come back and guide and to thy glory after work receive me to apply to my God Lord glory man and in the house for may die handing This I feel every time My flesh and heart The faint and chill But don't fail me never But of my heart God is the same And through this time I am The love of God the Father And the communion of the Holy Spirit The sacrifice of Through this one The flesh and heart Shall I leave your life He will give up Of your strength Let the next one Thomas Jesus is the Meprese