

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 “By Faith, Not by Sight: Why Does the Body Matter?” April 3, 2016  
1 Kings 8  
Psalm 62

In recent weeks we’ve been talking about the relationship  
between the glory of Moses and the glory of Jesus.

Think about Solomon’s words at the dedication of the temple:  
“The LORD has said that he would dwell in thick darkness.  
I have indeed built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever.”

From the days of Moses to the days of David  
the ark of the covenant dwelt in a tent.  
The law of God – the 10 commandments – had resided in a tabernacle.  
(Yes, you could say that the word became stone “tabernacled” among them!)

But now – in Solomon’s day – at the dedication of the temple,  
the glory of the Lord (the same glory that had been reflected in Moses’ face)  
filled the house of the Lord.

From a tent to a house.  
In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul will use the same image when speaking of the Christian.  
What is it about this picture that made Paul think of this in 2 Corinthians 3-6?

Well, if you go back and look at the architectural description of the building of the temple,  
you find that the same words are used to describe the building of the temple  
that had been used in the creation of Eve in Genesis 2.  
When God took Eve from Adam’s “side” –  
that word is used to describe the sides of the temple.  
Further, the word that is used to speak of the *making* of Eve  
is the architectural term, “to build.”

The LORD *built* Eve from the side of Adam.

And after taking a rib, the Lord closed up the flesh “underneath” –  
the word used in 1 Kings 6:6 to refer to the “lower” story of the temple.

It’s no accident that the creation of Eve and the building of the temple use the same language.  
This fits neatly with the way that Paul talks about the church as the bride of Christ,  
and the temple of the living God.

Our Psalm of response is Psalm 62 –  
a psalm that starts with an emphasis on how we *wait* upon the LORD –  
because the LORD is my rock and my salvation.  
If *God* does not act, then I have no hope!  
But Psalm 62 also says that God will “render to a man according to his work.”

How do you hold those two things together?

Precisely the way that Psalm 62 does!

“For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.”

Only God can save.

Or as Paul says in Philippians 2 –

“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling –

because it is God who is at work in you both to will and to do for his good pleasure”

Sing Psalm 62

Read 2 Cor 4:7-5:10

Eight days after the resurrection – on the first day of the *following* week –

Jesus appeared to his disciples, and particularly to *Thomas*.

And he showed Thomas his hands and his side,

urging Thomas to *touch* him –

proving to Thomas that he had *bodily* been raised from the dead.

So it is fitting that on the Sunday after Easter,

we should take up the question:

“Why does the body matter?”

Where is Jesus’ body?

The body that lay in the tomb on Holy Saturday

is the same body that was raised from the dead,

and is the same body that ascended into heaven.

His body was *glorified* – transformed – in his ascension:

“further clothed” to use the language of verse 4.

But the flesh and blood in which he walked the earth

was not “left behind.”

In the same way, your body will not be abandoned to the grave.

*Your body* will be raised up at the final day.

As our shorter catechism (37) puts it so well:

“The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness

and do immediately pass into glory,

and their bodies, being still united to Christ,

do rest in their graves until the resurrection.”

So yes, death is the separation between your body and your soul –

there is an “intermediate state.”

But that is *not* the Christian’s hope!

The Christian hope is not a disembodied existence –

not a form of “ghostly fluttering among the clouds” (Guthrie, 291).

The Christian’s only hope and comfort is that you belong, with body and soul,  
both in life and in death, to your faithful savior, Jesus Christ,  
who freely paid for all your sins.

And so in the resurrection, body and soul are reunited –  
and your body will be transformed – glorified –  
to be like Jesus’ glorious body.

*Your* body – *that* body – will be raised up at the final day.  
*Your* body – *that* body – is united to Christ –  
and will remain united to Christ until it is raised up from the dust.

Now, I realize that people have all sorts of questions here:

In the resurrection, what age will I be?

What will that mean for those who die in infancy?

What about those with Down’s Syndrome – or a traumatic brain injury?

What about people with disfiguring injuries?

God has not given us detailed answers to these questions.

But there are two things I can say:

first, the *whole* person is regenerated and glorified –

so the whole of your life and experience will be part of who you are;

and second, it’s good – beautiful – and amazing!

Your disabilities will be glorified!

Jesus’ hands still have the holes.

But they do not disfigure his body.

They are not “blemishes”!

They are taken up in his glorification and made beautiful.

Why do we struggle with this?

I think that this is closely related to the problems in our society with “body image.”

How do you think about your body?

Do you think “I’m fat” – “I’m ugly” – “I don’t measure up”?

How do you think about other people’s bodies?

What is the standard by which you judge the body –

whether your own – or others?

In 1 Corinthians 3:16, speaking of the church in Corinth as a whole, Paul had said,

“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”

Then in chapter 6:18-20, when talking about sexual immorality, Paul added,

“Flee from sexual immorality.

Every other sin a person commits is outside the body,

but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.  
Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you,  
whom you have from God?  
You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.  
So glorify God in your body.”

Our society has given us a hyper-sexualized, pornographic view of the body.  
Paul gives us a very different way of looking at the body!

But Paul has already taught the Corinthians repeatedly about the importance  
of seeing *their bodies* as a temple of the Holy Spirit –  
and that *together* as a body – they are a temple of the Holy Spirit.

God the Holy Spirit dwells in each believer.  
And God the Holy Spirit dwells in the body of believers together.

How does that affect how you look at each other?  
How does that affect how you look at yourself?  
Well, your body belongs to Jesus –  
the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us.

Your body is a place where the glory of God dwells –  
just like the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle of old!

But now, in 2 Cor 5, Paul wants us to see that the present body is to the resurrection body  
what the tabernacle was to the temple!

**1. From Tabernacle to Temple: The Temple as Paradigm for the Christian (v1-5)**  
**a. The Earthly Tent and the Heavenly Dwelling (v1-2)**

*For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God,  
a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup> For in this tent we groan, longing to put  
on our heavenly dwelling,*

The language of verse 1 is closely connected with the accusations against Jesus in Mark 14:58 –  
“We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands,  
and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’”  
The accusers plainly misunderstood what Jesus meant –  
but John tells us that “he was speaking about the temple of his body” (2:21).

As John tells us earlier, “The Word became flesh and *tabernacled* among us.” (1:14)  
Jesus came in the flesh and dwelt in our earthly tent,  
so that he might establish a heavenly dwelling for us.

The whole Old Testament story – from Moses’ Tabernacle to Solomon’s Temple –  
was designed as a paradigm for the Christian life.

Now, we walk by faith – not by sight.  
Now, we live in the tent – not the house.  
But the house already exists!

Notice that in verse 1, Paul says that “if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed  
*we have* a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Your glorified body *in one sense* already exists!

In Jesus.

In *his* resurrection – Christ, the firstfruits, already has the glorified body.

Therefore, the glorified body already exists.

And because you have been united to Christ by faith –

Paul can speak of this as a present reality.

(think of how Paul says in Romans 8:30

“those he justified he also glorified” – as though glorification  
is already as much a past event as justification!)

So how does your glorified body already exist?

By faith.

Not yet by sight.

What do you see right now?

Suffering, affliction, persecution, perplexity.

That’s why Paul says “For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling...”

**b. Unclothed and Further Clothed – Our Groaning and the Resurrection (v2-4)**

<sup>3</sup> *if indeed by putting it on<sup>[a]</sup> we may not be found naked.* <sup>4</sup> *For 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.*

“While we are in this tent, we groan.”

Why do we groan?

Some people think that the body is the cause of our groaning –  
if only we could get rid of the body – we’d be fine!

Sometimes the modern “modesty movement” can sound that way.

If women would just stop dressing provocatively – then men would be fine!

You do know that conservative Islam has tried that – it’s called the burqa.

And it doesn’t work!

Because the body *isn’t* the problem!

Augustine responds well to this:

“On the one hand, our corruptible body may be a burden on our soul;

on the other hand, the cause of this encumbrance

is not in the nature and substance of the body.

Therefore...we do not desire to be divested of the body  
but rather to be clothed with its immortality.  
In immortal life we shall have a body, but it will no longer be a burden  
since it will no longer be corruptible.” (City of God, 14.3)

The problem is not the *body* – the problem is *sin* and corruption.

After all, look at how Paul explains our reasons for groaning.

Paul gives two reasons.

One in verse 2 and the other in verse 4.

We groan (verse 2) *longing to put on our heavenly dwelling*.  
And we groan (verse 4) *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.

Notice that our groaning is not a pity party!  
Our groaning is not “Woe is me, I am so miserable!”

Our groaning is an *eschatological* groaning!

“Eschatology” has to do with the study of the last days.

When something is “eschatological” it means that it is oriented towards the last days.

Our groaning is a groaning that is oriented towards the resurrection.

We are *longing* – we are being *burdened* –

not so that we can escape the body and its troubles –

but so that we might put on the heavenly dwelling –

so that what is mortal might be swallowed up by life.

Now it’s true that the miseries of this life can *prompt* this groaning!

Think back to what Paul said in chapter 4, verse 8:

“We are afflicted in every way, but not restricted” –

we are not prevented from doing what God calls us to do.

And Paul told us that our daily suffering is a participation in Christ’s suffering –

particularly as we suffer *unjustly* –

as we *bear the cross* – as we carry in our bodies the dying of Jesus,

so that the life of Jesus might also be manifested in our mortal flesh.

These afflictions prompt our groanings.

Because Paul says we are *afflicted* in every way (verse 8).

And then he gives three examples:

perplexed – persecuted – struck down.

I was talking with some parents about their parenting struggles this week.

They were *perplexed*.

It's true that the "persecuted" and "struck down" refers mostly to unbelievers.  
But Paul was 'perplexed' by how to deal with the *church* in Corinth.

There are times when you are perplexed by your husband –  
baffled by your children –  
wondering what to do and how to do it!

Some people struggle with finances and debt and spending –  
and they grumble and moan about the difficulties of life.

But there is a difference between grumbling about your situation  
and the sort of *groaning* that Paul talks about.

And this is why I used the word "eschatological."

Grumbling is *not* eschatological!

Grumbling does have a future-orientation –

but the only future that the grumbler sees is in this life.

The grumbler doesn't like his situation and mopes and whines about his troubles,  
wanting *someone* to come along and fix it.

But Paul says that *we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling.*

Our groaning is *eschatological* –

as we see, by faith,

that these sufferings are the means that God is using to bring us to glory!

But our groaning continues – because we do not expect these troubles to go away  
*until* the resurrection glory!

Last time we heard Paul say that we do not lose heart –

we do not burn out – we do not give up –

because the resurrection life of Jesus

is beginning to be manifested in our mortal bodies,

*through* our afflictions and sufferings.

"This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory..."

In chapter 11 Paul will detail his "light momentary afflictions"!

In 11:24-28 Paul describes it this way:

<sup>24</sup> Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. <sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; <sup>26</sup> on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; <sup>27</sup> in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, <sup>[b]</sup> in cold and exposure. <sup>28</sup> And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

But Paul calls this the "light momentary affliction"

that is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory!

What Paul is saying is that you have to be okay with the thought  
that things may not be made right in this life!

It's okay to seek justice – after all, Paul is writing to the Corinthians  
in order to seek the *just* and right restoration of their relationship! –  
but your groaning reaches up to God –  
and reaches out beyond the end of the age –  
so that your groaning touches the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting!

Because what you are longing for is *nothing less* than a new creation!  
Not that you would be “unclothed” – not that you would be “rid” of the body.  
But that you would be “further clothed” – that the mortal would put on immortality.

After all, as Paul had said in 1 Corinthians 15,  
“flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”  
Our mortal bodies cannot live forever.  
Our bodies are corrupted by sin – we are not the way we should be!  
If I were to be transported forward in time to the new creation,  
I would not be able to survive!  
It would be like a fish trying to breathe air!

My body is not capable of living a new creation life!  
And so I groan for a body that *is* capable!  
I long for the day – that eschatological day –  
that resurrection Day – when God will make all things right!

The *eternal* weight of glory (4:17) and the *eternal* dwelling in the heavens (5:1)  
are ours only because God himself has prepared us for this very thing.

### **c. The Gift of the Spirit as the Guarantee of Resurrection Life (v4-5)**

<sup>5</sup> *He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.*

Right now, we do not have a glorified body.  
But we *do have* the Spirit as a guarantee of that heavenly dwelling!

The word “guarantee” is the word “arrabon” –  
the same word Paul uses in Ephesians 1:14 to speak of the Spirit  
as the guarantee of our inheritance.  
Paul used the same word earlier in 2 Cor 1:22 to speak of how God  
“has given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”

This is a legal term used in ancient Greek contracts to refer to a down payment,  
or some other pledge  
(for instance, it is like an engagement ring –  
whereby a man promises to marry a woman).



Paul says that the *Spirit* is the guarantee of resurrection life.

The same Spirit who came upon Jesus at his baptism  
is the same Spirit whom Jesus poured out upon the church at Pentecost.  
As Peter said in Acts 2:38,

“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ,  
for the forgiveness of your sins,  
and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus promised, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

But Jesus ascended bodily and now sits at the right hand of the Father in glory.  
How can the resurrected Jesus be present with his people?

Think back to chapter 3 – and how Paul spoke of the “fading glory”  
on the face of Moses.

In the OT the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle – and later the temple.  
Why didn’t the glory of the LORD fill the people of God?!

To put it simply,

because the Word had not yet become flesh and tabernacled among us!

Humanity was not yet a fit container for God’s glory.

Wood and stone could be consecrated – set apart as holy to God –  
but only the blood of Jesus –  
only the blood of the perfect sacrifice –

could cleanse *us* and make us a worthy dwelling place for God.

As Paul will say at the end of chapter 5, verse 21:

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin,  
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

And thus we become the temple of the living God (as Paul says in 6:16).

For this reason, Paul says twice in verses 6-8 that we are of “good courage.”

When you understand that you are the temple of the living God –  
that you are embodying the dying of Jesus,  
so that you might also embody his resurrection life –  
that changes the way you approach life!

It means that you must look at all other people as *image-bearers* –  
who (if they are believers) *are* temples of the living God,  
or (if they are unbelievers) are *potentially* temples of the living God!

At the *very least* – as image bearers – they are fit to be a dwelling place for God himself!

So men, what do you do when an attractive woman walks by?

If you ignore her – or if you look the other way –  
then you are implicitly accepting our culture’s sexual redefinition of her.

What do you do?

You think to yourself – “there is the image of God –  
and if she is a fellow-believer, then she is the temple of the living God” –  
(which, by the way, is exactly what you should be thinking  
about *every* human being you encounter!)

And so, you work steadily to re-program yourself  
away from the sexualized perversion of our culture,  
and toward the biblical standard that Jesus has given us.

Because after all, when you think this way,  
you start to see all the trials of this life as a temporary inconvenience.

## **2. At Home or Away – between Death and Resurrection (v6-8)**

<sup>6</sup> *So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord,* <sup>7</sup> *for we walk by faith, not by sight.* <sup>8</sup> *Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*

Where is your home?

At the moment we are “at home in the body” –  
but that means that we are “away from the Lord.”

Yes, that’s what Paul says.

We are away from the Lord!

Christ *is* present – by his Holy Spirit – by faith.

But we do *not* see him with our eyes!

2 Cor 5:7 is one of the best statements of Paul’s doctrine of salvation in all his epistles!

We walk by faith, not by sight.

The experience of the believer *in this age* is characterized by *faith* – not by sight.

Think back to what Paul said at the end of chapter 3, verse 18:

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,  
are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.

For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

Yes, we behold the glory of the Lord – by faith, not by sight!

Israel saw the glory reflected on Moses’ face – by sight.

But *seeing* is NOT believing!

They *saw* with their eyes – but lacked faith –

and so they perished in the wilderness!

And yes, as Paul says in verse 8,

“we are of good courage,

and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

When you die, your soul and your body will be temporarily pulled apart.  
When you die, your body and your soul are separated.  
This is sometimes called “the intermediate state.”

When a Christian dies, your body is buried in the ground,  
and your soul goes to be with Christ.

Now, let me make something clear!  
God did not create body and soul as two entirely separate entities.  
Body and soul were *designed* to be inseparable.  
In fact, what we call “death” is the *abnormal* and *unnatural* condition  
of the separation of body and soul!

Death, after all, is our entrance into the realm of God’s wrath and curse –  
where we are disintegrating – body and soul are being torn apart!

God did not create us for the purpose of *death*.

So the “intermediate state” is not what we long for.  
Notice that Paul says that *compared to this life* – we would rather be away from the body  
and at home with the Lord –  
but what we really long for is “to put on our heavenly dwelling”!

What we long for is *not* “life after death,”  
but we long for the life that is *after* “life after death”!

Being present with Jesus is better than what I have now –  
but I’m not groaning for the intermediate state!  
I’m groaning – longing – for the resurrection of the body!

But this longing is based upon the *presence* of the Holy Spirit within me.  
(As Paul says in Romans 8:23,  
“we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,  
groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons,  
the redemption of our bodies.”)  
Because we have received the Spirit – we groan.  
Indeed, the Spirit himself groans for us!

And therefore because we have received the Spirit,  
we have great confidence in this life to walk by faith and not by sight.

And so, Paul says (verse 9):

**3. The Judgment Seat of Christ: So We Make It Our Aim to Please Him (v9-10)**

<sup>9</sup>*So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.*

Notice the order here:

because of what God has done –  
because *God* has prepared all this –  
and because *God* has given us his Spirit as a guarantee of the inheritance –  
we make it our aim to please him.

There is no hint here of a sort of “works-righteousness.”

We are not trying to placate an angry God!

There is no hint of fear on Paul’s side regarding the verdict that God will render!

But verse 10 very clearly says that we will be judged *according* to our works:

<sup>10</sup> *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

Notice how Paul connects this theme of *clothing* with our appearance before Christ the Judge.

Many have noticed the parallel with Jesus story of the wedding guest  
who was “improperly dressed” – and thus was thrown out of the wedding hall.  
(Matthew 22:11-14)

But even more closely related is Revelation 19:6-8 –

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his Bride has made herself ready;

it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure’

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”

Scripture regularly speaks of a judgment according to works.

We sang about that from Psalm 62 – and Jesus and the apostles say this over and over.

But scripture also says that we are justified by faith – and *not* by works of the law!

In other words, your works do *not* contribute to your justification!

You are justified by the grace of God – you are justified by the work of Christ.

There is *nothing* that you can do to turn aside the wrath of God.

Only Jesus has turned aside the wrath of God

(as we see at the end of chapter 5, verse 21 –

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin,

so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”)

So, if you are justified by faith alone,

then why does Paul say that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ

so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body,

whether good or evil”?

Because at the final day, we must all give an account for the stewardship that Jesus gave us.

I will have to give an account to Jesus for my shepherding of you – and of my family.

You will have to give an account for what you have done in the body.

The question for the Christian at the final judgment is not “heaven or hell” –  
that question was decided by the triune God –  
as the Father elected us in Christ before the foundation of the world,  
as the Son came in our flesh and paid the penalty for our sin,  
and as the Spirit was poured out upon us to unite us to Jesus.

Rather, the question for the Christian at the final day  
is how well we have accomplished our aim of pleasing him.  
After all, the one who is in Christ – the one who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit –  
will bear the fruits of the Spirit.

Yes, we walk by *faith* – not by sight –  
but on that final day, what is *now* only seen by faith, will be seen by everyone!

Right now, when you walk down the street, you cannot tell with your physical eyes  
who is justified and who is not!  
But on that final day, what is now only visible by faith will become visible to sight.

John Calvin has a beautiful way of saying this:  
God “receives his own into life by his mercy alone.  
Yet, since he leads us into possession of it through the race of good works  
in order to fulfill his own work in us  
according to the order that he has laid down,  
it is no wonder if we are said to be crowned according to our own works,  
by which we are doubtless prepared  
to receive the crown of immortality.” (Institutes III.xviii.1)

Good works cannot get you into heaven.  
But good works are the *path* – the *way* – that the Christian walks in this life.  
And along this way, it is worth pointing out that good works are *not* optional!  
Hebrews 12:14 puts it this way:  
“Strive for peace with everyone,  
and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”

Those who belong to Jesus *will* do good works.

We thank you, heavenly Father, that you have delivered us from the dominion of sin and death  
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son; and we pray that, as by his death he has recalled us  
to life, so by his love he may raise us to eternal joys; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity  
of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Collect for Easter Saturday, BCP