

## 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

### The Great Exchange

5 For we know that if (A)the tent that is (B)our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, (C)a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this tent (D)we groan, longing to (E)put on our heavenly dwelling, 3 if indeed by putting it on[a] we may not be found naked. 4 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 (E)may be swallowed up by life. 5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, (G)who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

6 So we are always of good courage. We know that (H)while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for (I)we walk by faith, not (J)by sight. 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we (K)would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to (L)please him. 10 For (M)we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, (N)so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

**I. We live now in our earthly tents.**

**II. We long to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.**

**III. Pleasing Christ is our goal – whether here or there.**

The judgment seat of Christ is a motivation to please him.

Intro

2 Cor. 4:7-18 - 7 But we have this treasure in (A)jars of clay, (B)to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

Previous context – these frail and failing bodies carry the treasure of Christ’s presence in our hearts which imparts life to those we share the gospel with. So that the effectiveness of our ministry is not lessened by our diminishing physical strength, our bodies which are wasting away, as Paul’s was from overwork, or as is all our cases, from the aging process. It is the life of Christ within us, not these jars of clay, which makes our lives and service a glory to Christ and brings his light to others.

Since Paul’s on the subject of these “jars of clay,” these weak, frail human bodies, he naturally slips into discussing some more things about these “jars of clay.”

In these next 10 verses he answers these kinds of questions:

What is the nature of these earthly bodies?

- they are temporary
- they are mortal (subject to death)

What will happen to these earthly bodies?

- the are bound for destruction
- they will be replaced with better, permanent bodies

Main Idea – although we live now in our earthly bodies as we await being clothed upon with our heavenly bodies, we do not lessen our efforts to please the Lord with our lives. We know we will reach the culmination of our salvation because we have already received the HS as our guarantee. In addition, knowing we will come before Christ's judgment seat, we strive to serve the Lord faithfully so we will not be lacking in reward.

We long to be clothed with our R'n bodies, and although we have not reached the culmination of our salvation, we still strive to please the Lord with our lives, confident that we shall attain to the resurrection of the dead.

**v. 1 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.**

**I. We live now in our earthly tents.**

**"For we know"** – this is by divine revelation. Most other people in the world do not know this. Hundreds of millions of Hindus and Buddhists have no hope of a resurrection body in which God's people will live forever in person-to-person fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ourselves only know this because God has graciously brought the Gospel to us and enabled us to behold the living Christ and turn to him in faith and repentance from sin.

**...that if the tent that is our earthly home...**

This tent metaphor, the picture of a tent, referring to our human bodies, is related to Israel's history, to their wilderness wanderings after God delivered them from Egyptian slavery and they wandered in tents for 40 years in the wilderness, being punished for their unbelief.

Peter calls the Christians to whom he was writing "sojourners and exiles" – they have no permanent home here.

The thing about a tent is that it is temporary. It is not a permanent dwelling place, it is not a building, a house. Even the ark of the covenant with the accompanying special presence of Yahweh, was housed in a tent for many years until the temple was built in Jerusalem by David's son King Solomon.

**...is destroyed, we have a building from God, (c) a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.**

**...is destroyed...** -well, we know it will be destroyed. Illness or disease will get us, or old age, or accident or war – but this earthly tent will be dismantled, it will be taken down in death.

That is the nature of these mortal bodies. “Mortal” means “subject to death.” We are mortal creatures. Our stay on earth is only temporary.

God has given us bodies as a vital part of our human personhood. Without a body we would not be a person. This is why in the marriage relationship the Apostle Paul tells husbands and wives not to defraud one another of their bodies. Among other things the marriage relationship is a physical relationship and not really a marriage unless the bodies of the partners are involved.

So our bodies are vital to our personhood. But alas! - one day they'll be destroyed. Some people and groups teach that at death the human personhood ceases to exist altogether. They believe in “soul sleep.” But that the Bible teaches that we live on after death. Yes, our spirits are separated from our bodies for a time and so we enter into a sort of un-human state – we are alive, but without our bodies. Jesus made this point when he told the Sadducees one day, who didn't believe in the R'n of the body, that God told Moses that he is “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” Jesus was showing that these three patriarchs, though they had died, were still in a personal relationship with God. Yahweh was their God and they were his people.

Our bodies die – but our spirits or souls live on in the realm of the dead awaiting the return of Christ and the accompanying R'n of the dead. As the old spiritual song says, “Oh, what a great *gett'n up morning* that will be.”

But the destruction, the death of our bodies, is not the end of our existence. The text goes on:

**...we have a building from God, (2) a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.**

What is the nature of this new “building,” this “house,” as Paul calls it, that we will receive. He is describing these new bodies using the metaphor, the picture of a building. He describes it as “not made with hands.” This means that God himself will make and give us these new bodies.

When Brother Wayne and I have been traveling in other countries, we have noted that often the houses are of a more durable construction than our American houses. In Europe they're often built with stone, and look like they could last hundreds of years. Here in America they are usually built using wood framing, 2 X 4's – and the houses look like they wouldn't even last 100 years.

But Paul in verse 2 calls these “buildings,” these permanent bodies that God will give his people, as “eternal.” Now this is amazing. Look at your own body. If you have

several decades under you belt like me, you know your body is getting weaker and it is wearing out.

In 1 Corinthians 15:53-54 Paul describes these new bodies that God is preparing for us: - <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and <sup>(A)</sup>this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: <sup>(B)</sup>“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

Isn't this amazing? These are some of our most precious words that we often read at the funeral of a Christian.

Paul not only calls our present bodies as mortal, subject to inevitable death, but as perishable. Just like milk that gets too old begins to sour in the refrigerator or that sack of potatoes in the pantry begins to stink because the potatoes are beginning to rot, so our own bodies are corruptible.

We try to delay aging and death as much as we can. We fight against it tooth and nail. We can perhaps put it off a while, but it always wins in the end. Death comes, and if our bodies are buried, the corrupting process is speeded up as we return to the dust from which we came.

Paul goes on in verse 2:

**2 For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling,**

Here is the second major Idea I want us to see in this passage:

## **II. We long to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.**

The word “groan” here in verse 2 does not mean we are groaning with pain, but we are longing, we are expressing deep emotion, strong desire – strong desire to put aside these mortal, perishable, corruptible bodies and exchange them for our heavenly bodies. We are anxious to make the “great exchange.” Who would not want to exchange what is weak and wearing out and dying for what is new and fresh and strong and never-ending. These will be our “heavenly dwellings,” the permanent buildings of our new bodies.

In Romans 8:23 Paul uses similar language when he writes:

<sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have <sup>(A)</sup>the firstfruits of the Spirit, <sup>(B)</sup>groan inwardly as <sup>(C)</sup>we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, <sup>(D)</sup>the redemption of our bodies.

Paul calls it “groaning inwardly.” He himself had seen with his own eyes the resurrected Son of God stand before him. He knew what a glorious, mighty, resurrection body Christ had. And as Paul looked at his own body, worn out from strenuous service to Christ, wounded from beatings, he longed for the strong, healthy resurrection body that would be similar to Christ's own body.

In these bodies our souls, our spirits, will be joined together with our resurrection bodies to form our whole persons once again at the return of Christ. 1 Thess. 4:16-17 tells us:

**16** For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord

This is the destiny of the Christian. It is to be with the Lord Jesus and to be with him in our resurrection bodies that will be given us at his return. It is at the return of Christ that the “great exchange” will take place.

Paul may have been frustrated at the weakness of his aging, failing body. We know he had a problem with one or both eyes. He longed for the time to come when his weak physical condition would no longer hamper his service to Christ. He longed for the boundless energy that would be granted him in being clothed upon with his R'n body.

These bodies that God has given us are wonderful creations. They are meant to be a permanent part of our human personhood. But they've been corrupted by sin and all of its devastating effects on the mind, emotions, and body.

As Paul also says in Romans 8:19:

**19** *For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.*

In other words, the whole creation is groaning. It is longing for the return of Christ. It is longing for the resurrection of God's people. Then not only humanity will be cleansed of all sin forever and given glorified, resurrected bodies, but even the entire universe will also be cleansed of sin's curse and be renewed as a perfect creation, untainted, and uninhibited by the effects of Adam's sin, and the sins of all other people down through the ages.

Paul goes on in verse 3:

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

The reference to “found naked” here is probably a reference to some Greek and Hebrew thought that the disembodied spirits of those who had died were roaming around under the earth and incapable of joining in to life anywhere else.

We will certainly not be like that, disembodied spirits, ghosts. What makes Christianity unique among the world religions is its fundamental declaration of the return of Christ that will usher in the R'n of the bodies of God's people so that the great promise of the scriptures will be fulfilled in a literal way, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

We see the culmination, the fulfillment of that hope and promise in Revelation 21:3:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “**Behold**, the dwelling place of **God** is with man. He **will** dwell with them, and they **will be** his people, and **God** himself **will be** with them as **their God**.”

Let’s look at verse 4:

**4 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 (E) may be swallowed up by life.**

Here again we see Paul using this term “groan” – describing it as a great burden that needs to be lifted. What is the burden? It is the weakness, the corruptibility, the dying of our human bodies.

It is a burden to us, is it not? Maybe if you’re young it hasn’t hit you yet, but it will. Paul describes our present bodily existence as being “unclothed.” By comparison with the eternal, resurrection bodies to come, these present bodies are like being “unclothed.”

Here he describes the receiving of our resurrection bodies as being “clothed upon.” Like if I was to go to the men’s clothing store and put on a new sport coat because my old coat is wearing out. The sleeves are unraveling and the elbows are getting thin. But the new coat is fresh and vibrant and new and I’d be proud to wear it.

These new resurrection bodies that we’ll receive at Christ’s return will not be subject to sin or sickness or pain or death. In these bodies, as whole persons, we will worship and serve the Lord Jesus Christ for all eternity, beholding his glory and beauty, and evermore growing in the wondering knowledge of him and his greatness. And all God’s people will be joined in this blessed fellowship – people from every nations, tribe and tongue and from every generation. This is the good news of the Gospel of Christ. God has sent his Son to rescue and redeem a people for his own name’s sake to be with him in bodied, physical existence for all eternity future.

Paul describes the great exchange that is coming, the trading in of the old corruptible bodies for the new incorruptible, resurrection body, as being “swallowed up.” The old, weak, decaying bodies will be “swallowed up” by the greater-by-far R’n bodies to come. Just as a bird would lean its head back and swallow up a worm and it’s gone forever, so our old weak earthy bodies will be swallowed up by our new resurrection bodies. They’re gone forever, the new has come. Paul describes this “great exchange” later in this chapter:

1 Cor. 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the **new** has come.

Paul goes on in verse 5:

**5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, (G)who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.**

Who can do such a great thing as this? Who can change a person's body from a mortal, perishable creation, to an immortal, imperishable creation? Can man do this? No, he is totally dependent on God for every breath he takes. Col. 1:17 says that in Christ "all things hold together." In God the creator, "we live and move and have our being."

It is God, and God alone who has prepared us for the great R'n to come. How do we know it will happen? We know it will happen, first of all, because Christ rose from the dead and he is the first fruit of the harvest to come of all his people. He is the forerunner who has gone into heaven before us and for us. He is the anchor who is firmly fixed in heaven who will pull us into heavenly glories with himself.

How do we know all this will happen?

- 1) Because Christ rose from the dead
- 2) We have received the Holy Spirit as a guarantee, a down payment, of our future resurrection to come.

2 Cor. 1:22 - 22 and who has also (A)put his seal on us and (B)given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.[a]

Eph. 1:13 - 3 In him you also, when you heard (A)the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, (B)were sealed with the (C)promised Holy Spirit,

Eph. 4:30 - 30 And (A)do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, (B)by whom you were sealed for the day of (C)redemption.

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

Phil. 1:23 - 23 (A)I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is (B)to depart and (C)be with Christ, for that is far better.

**9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to (L)please him.**

Col 1:10 - 10 so as (A)to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, (B)fully pleasing to him: (C)bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

1 Thess. 4:9 - Finally, then, brothers,[a] we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you (A)received from us (B)how you ought to walk and (C)to please God, just as you are doing, that you (D)do so more and more.

Rom. 14:8 - 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, (A)whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

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

Matt. 25:31-32 - 31 (A)“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, (B)then he will sit on his glorious throne.32 Before him (C)will be gathered (D)all the nations, and (E)he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates (E)the sheep from the goats.

Rom. 14:10 - For (A)we will all stand before (B)the judgment seat of God;

Acts 10:42 - 42 And (A)he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify (B)that he is the one appointed by God to be judge (C)of the living and the dead.

**Psa. 62:12** - and that to you, O Lord, (A)belongs steadfast love.

For you will (B)render to a man  
according to his work.

Summary of the three points:

**I. We live now in our earthly tents.**

**II. We long to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.**

**III. Pleasing Christ is our goal – whether here or there.**

Closing prayer...

by Jeff Gregory, pastor  
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08-30-20