

2 Cor. 5:1-10

Dear Friends in Christ,

It seems to me that with age, packing your bags to take a trip becomes more challenging. Do you know what I mean? You need one suitcase for your belongings and a second, maybe even larger, for all your pills and the stuff that will keep your decaying body looking and smelling reasonably acceptable. Talk about a trip!!

Of course, there's another trip we're going to make - the big one - that requires even more careful packing. It's the wondrous trip we will make into eternal life. So, here we go. Some things to consider . . .

WHILE WE'RE PACKING

I. Remember the Temporary. The Groaning.

In our text Paul starts with this:

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. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling...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. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (vss 1,2,4 & 5)

Our earthly bodies comprise a tent; a temporary dwelling. Again, Paul says "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 (our bodies) may be swallowed up by life." (v. 5)

The words, "He who prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee," refers to the Holy Spirit Who has worked faith in us to trust Christ for forgiveness and eternal life. It is exactly as Peter said: "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." (Acts 2:28) It is the Holy Spirit who protects our faith, guides and comforts us through the written Word and the Word made visible; namely our Baptisms and the Lord's Supper.

So, while we're packing we remember that the packing we do for our journey into eternal life is the most important and must be a constant process.

II. See the Reality of the Groaning and Walking.

But maybe the word that jumps at us is the word "groan" as in "For in this tent we groan...". And the groaning is connected to these words of our text:

So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (vv. 6-9)

Groaning and walking. They are part of the packing. Groaning over what this world is and the constant struggles it presents. Walking with the Lord above all things because, as our text says, "we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

Do you agree? “We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” Do you agree? The Bible we love says this! It doesn’t make one microscopic bit of difference if you’re a little child, a teen, or an adult running in the fast track of life or standing in the “15 items or less” check-out lane. It makes no difference. Absolutely none!! Are you packing your suitcase? Ready to go? Eager? Paul writes, “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth...And not only the creation, but we ourselves...as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (Rom. 8:22,23) And this, “My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.” (Phil. 1:23) I’ll tell us this, my dear friends, running with and after this world just isn’t worth it!! And here’s the reason...

III. Keep In Mind The Appearance.

...we make it our aim to please him. 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. (vv. 9b-10)

We are all judged right now. This is the private judgment. But there is one final appearance that must be kept in mind. Paul’s statement, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,” is the public judgment. Nothing will be hidden. The question, of course, is “What is meant by, “so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done” - while on earth? Does this mean, after all, that works will win God’s love and heaven? The answer is an emphatic “no”!

I find R. C. H. Lenski’s commentary on this most significant and important for our hearing:

“All the saving power of faith in Christ will appear (at the public judgement), all the damning power of refusal to trust Christ (will also appear). No balance will be struck for the believer between the sins he committed and the good works he did as though the (good works) offset the (sin he committed). All his sins will be utterly wiped out by the blood of Christ, removed as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12), cast into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19), blotted out...as a thick cloud (Isa. 43:25; 44:22), not to be found forever. All the imperfections of his good works will also be removed forever. No inquisition will or can be made into any believer’s sins. In their place will be found only Christ’s blood and righteousness.

“But in the case of the unbeliever everything, even what the world was pleased to call good, will be marked by unbelief and insult to Christ.” (R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of I And II Corinthians, Augsburg Publishing House, 1963, p. 1016.)

We should also note that John is instructed to write, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. ‘Blessed indeed,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!’” (Rev. 14:13) As is always emphasized, for those in Christ, works do not pay for sin or earn heaven. The Holy Spirit says, “for their deeds follow them.” **Follow!** They are the result of being saved by grace through faith. Works are the **evidence of the faith we profess**.

And, as has also been noted in the past, in one of those moments when a crowd sought Jesus, Jesus said, “you are seeking me...because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life...”. (Jn. 6:26-27) As a result, the crowd asked, “What must we do (we do!), to be doing the works of God?” (Jn. 6:28) And here’s Jesus’ answer: “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” (Jn. 6:29) Believe!

Again and again, dear brothers and sisters, we are saved through faith alone! Not by our works! We have received the miracle of faith. As Scriptures say . . .

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked... But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved... And this is not your doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph. 2:1,4, 8)

My friends, there is every reason for us to live each day with the understanding that this day could very well be the day of Christ's sudden return - or the day when we are individually called out of this world. The very words of Jesus must guide our state of awareness and preparedness for that moment: "...stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming...for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Matt. 24:42,44) And, then, the words of the Holy Spirit through Paul: "...the day of the Lord will come like a thief in night. While people are saying, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them... But we are not in darkness...you are all children of the day...For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that...we might live with him." (I Thess. 5:2-10, portions)

Tell me little ones, young ones, adults, tell me: What is more important for each day's agenda than our packing for the trip?

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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II Corinthians 5:1-10:

“While We’re Packing”

- I. Remember the Temporary. The Groaning.*
- II. See the Reality of the Groaning and Walking.*
- III. Keep in Mind the Appearance.*

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