

Sermon

"Yes There Is Groaning, but through Faith in Christ, Courage!"

(2nd Corinthians 5:1-10)

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Introduction: God compares our life here on earth to a tent!

- A. Tents can be fun, but they are *not* solid buildings!**
- B. My wife and I kid around about the various levels of "camping" we might do together as a family. Tents don't rank very high in her book!**
- C. I don't blame her. The Army left a sour taste in my mouth and I realize I am somewhat spoiled! But when you have to sleep in a tent that is shorter than the length of your body and only three feet high, your own bed back home starts to sound like paradise.**
- D. This we know about tents: they are temporary; we put them up, and we tear them down.**
- E. In this temporary stage of our lives, the LORD through St. Paul describes our time on earth as including two things since we live in an "earthly tent/home" (a metaphor for our lives here on earth), from verse 2:**
 - 1. We groan.**
 - 2. We long (we experience "longing").**
- F. This does not mean that Christians are to have a morbidity about them; nor does it mean we practice escapism. No, in fact we know that we have "fruitful labor" (Phil. 1) in this life. This life is extraordinarily important.**
- G. HOWEVER, we are caused here in this tent away from home – with all of its tent-like inconveniences – to groan and to long for something much better.**
- H. St. Paul shared about his own experience while he was here in his earthly tent at 2nd Corinthians 4:8ff (he is describing his experience along with the experience of his partners in ministry):**

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed..."
- I. Stating what is painfully obvious: life is hard! There are internal and external struggles that we all have. And these things have occurred because sin came into this world and we are daily dealing with the effects: within ourselves, in our relationships, and in the things around us in the world.**
- J. Tents can be fun, but they can also be reminders of a lot of problems...I remember the trench I had to dig around that little Army tent, and when the rain came down, it was pretty lonely and miserable in there.**
- K. We can feel the same way when confronted with the problems in life.**

Part I: But this is exactly why this Scripture is given to us in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5.

- A. Whereas chapter 5 brings out the fact that we “groan,” the preceding chapter at 4:1 and 4:16: “we do not lose heart.”
- B. Groaning and losing heart, these are the enemies of faith. These occur when you feel pain and frustration; they occur when you feel discouragement. When we groan and lose heart, the glass is never half full, but half empty; and things never look sunny, but green and yucky. But this is more than an attitude problem, it is a heart problem and it presses on our very soul.
- C. I have heard the pep talks from success seminar professionals. These are the settings in which you hear the inspirational music come on, like the Rocky hit “Eye of the Tiger,” and this is when you’re reminded of such observational patterns as this: people who are successful across the board in all vocations and careers have one thing in common: *perseverance!*
- D. That’s fine and dandy, but what happens when the weight of life is so strong that we have trouble even finding a reason for perseverance?!
- E. And this is why St. Paul is bold to go way beyond attitude adjustments, because when St. Paul speaks of “our earthly home,” it is everything in this realm...even the best things of this life, that turn to dust; even the most inspiring things in this world that break down.
- F. There has to be more; and thanks be to God there is!

Part II: The LORD puts before our eyes of faith what is unseen. So at 2nd Corinthians 5:7 says, “we walk by faith not by sight.”

- A. These words have a very specific referent. Faith is not invested in some pop positive thinking program, but faith in Christ is invested in what Christ has won for us: namely heaven.
- B. We are too complacent with the word “heaven”...but it is a word dear Christians that should THRILL us! It is what we have to look forward to; it is what Christ has won for us...and it means that for us the BEST IS YET TO COME!
- C. It is not merely being where God is or merely being in God’s presence...it is all of that, thanks be to God! But also more.
- D. It is a real place. Jesus was clear in His teaching at John chapter 14:
“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?” (verses 1-2)
- E. This is what St. Paul refers to in 2nd Cor. 5:1 as “a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”
- F. In this tent, we groan under the weight of sin, but we long for the heavenly building in which we will share in the weight of glory. Imagine that! The weight of sin that causes us to groan replaced by the weight of glory that causes us to rejoice more than ever before!

G. In that eternal house, we read of how glorious it will be:

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Revelation 7:16-17)

Part III: And notice that 2nd Cor. 5:1 states that this place is something (PRESENT tense): "we have"...

- A. This is yours dear Christian right now!**
- B. We don't see it right now, but it's yours RIGHT NOW!**
- C. And the faith that the writer to the Hebrews describes as "seeing" and "greeting" your heavenly home "from afar"! (Hebrews 11:13) has been given to you by the Holy Spirit who is the down payment for everything that God has promised you. In Holy Baptism, you received the Holy Spirit and the guarantee that HEAVEN is yours NOW! The LORD "has prepared for [you] a city." (Hebrews 11:16). This is your city...guaranteed!**
- D. This is a building and a city that is not built with hands; it cannot break down; it cannot wear out; this is a place that is built by God and its warranty is based on eternity...FOR YOU!**
- E. Claim it and rejoice in it dear Christian, esp. when you feel yourself groaning, and then cover the groaning with what St. Paul refers to at 2nd Cor. 5:6 & 8 as "courage"...we cover our groans with courage. Yes, the groans are still there, the cross is still there, but we do not face them in helplessness; we do not face them without power; but we face them with COURAGE, because nothing that causes you to groan can take away what Christ has won for you: your heavenly home, your eternal building, your glorious city...these are yours in Christ.**
- F. So make it dear Christian your preoccupation to please God while you are in this earthly tent. Make the most of your days for the One who shed His blood for you and rose victorious for you to give you the building from God, eternal in the heavens. Since God has given us all things and utterly wiped out our sins by His blood; removed them as far as the east is from the west, cast them into the depths of the sea...let us please Him with lives that at every turn we meet our groaning with courage since heaven – our eternal building – is yours!**