

In the previous chapter Paul gave us a perspective on life that is very different from that of the world. He tells us we are like fragile clay vessels with a treasure inside: the new covenant in Christ Jesus. Even though life can be very difficult at times, God sees us through and causes the world to see Jesus in us. We are always dying with Jesus on the cross so others might see His life in us (4:10<sup>i</sup>). We have the promise of rising together from our graves as our new heavenly bodies meet our spirits in the air. What we will experience then is so glorious it makes our trials in this life light by comparison. That is why we are to focus on what is eternal and not this temporal passing world.

*<sup>1</sup> 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.* 2 Corinthians 5:1 This verse is telling us that our bodies will perish, but instead of a new tent, we will be given a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Home, brothers and sisters, home at last, never to move again. Home, where my neighbors are all loved ones, many of whom I had the pleasure of worshiping with in this life. We will all be complete, in the same image as Jesus (1 John 3:2<sup>ii</sup>). Who would you want in your heavenly neighborhood? Even if there is someone not on your list, he or she will be like Jesus! Could you ask for better neighbors?

The best part of being home is that the Lord Jesus is the head of the household, our groom, and with our forever building we will get to serve him. When I am a good husband (and I have a lot of room for improvement) I show my wife my love for her by doing little things like bringing her tea in the morning, turning down her bed at night, and starting the evening fire in the winter. But she way out serves me. When we are home with Jesus, we will be the bride (John 3:29<sup>iii</sup>), and the joy of serving the One we love will be unspeakable and overflowing with glory. I cannot express how much I long for that day. Paul's expression in Philippians is "that is far better" will have to suffice (Philippians 1:23<sup>iv</sup>). The more I get to know Jesus, the more I want to be there before His glorified presence, and to be in a body unhindered by the old nature. Our new dwelling will have eyes that can see the fullness of His glory, ears that are willing to hear the depth of every Word He speaks with a mind that can fully comprehend it all, and a heart that is pure and ready to receive every Word.

God's grace allowed me to live in one of the most beautiful places in the world, to travel to see much of this world, and explored the wonders of the oceans. He gave me a ministry of preaching the Word, perhaps the greatest privilege a person could have. All that He has given me while knowing how undeserving I am. But all this goodness is only a shadow compared to the reality He has awaiting us. Eye has not seen, nor ear heard neither has it entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love Him. But He has revealed these things to us by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9,10<sup>v</sup>).

Our eternal home was not made with hands, it was made by the Word of the Lord. It is eternal. We will never have to move again. Only then will we truly know what it means to be at home.

*<sup>2</sup> For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, <sup>3</sup> if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked.* 2 Corinthians 5:2,3 The tent of this body is fearfully and wonderfully made, and yet it wears out (Psalm 139:14<sup>vi</sup>). Men dream of making machines as efficient as those that make up our human bodies. As great a design

as the human body is, this fallen world wears it down. Part of aging is to help us let go of these bodies we are so attached to. The older we get, the more we groan as joints do not work like they once did, and fat develops despite our careful diet, and skin tone loses its youthful luster. We are not as fast as we once were physically and mentally. The aches and pains and disappointments cause us to moan. We long for our heavenly dwelling.

When we are in Christ, there is also the longing of putting off the sin nature once and for all. We grow tired of the constant battle with our old nature. Our desire is to be done with it once and for all so that we can worship undistracted and with nothing held back. And yet that present battle keeps us in prayer and depending on the Lord.

By writing “not being found naked” Paul is alluding to the Garden of Eden. Remember that the Hebrews see the physical as a picture of spiritual things. What he is saying is that we will no longer be found to be sinful creatures. You will recall that after the first couple sinned, they realized they were naked (Genesis 3:19<sup>vii</sup>). Before that, they were clothed with glory. They suddenly realized it was gone and they were naked, sinful beings that needed to cover their nakedness. Man has been trying ever since to cover himself so that God does not see our vile nature. We do it with good deeds or with religious rules represented by fig leaves in the Garden (Genesis 3:7<sup>viii</sup>). But God had to provide the covering, and that is the message of the gospel (Genesis 3:21<sup>ix</sup>). The lamb had to be slain to make a garment to cover our nakedness. Paul is saying that we long for the day when we no longer need a temporal covering, for we will sin no more.

*<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.* 2 Corinthians 5:4 While in these fallen bodies we do not just want to die and be a bodiless spirit, but we want a real covering. We want our mortal bodies overwhelmed, swallowed up, by life. We want to be Christlike at all times. He is life (John 14:6<sup>x</sup>). Knowing Him is life eternal (John 17:3<sup>xi</sup>). When He is reigning in us, we are experiencing eternal life. Paul is speaking of the day when the work in us is complete, when we see Him as He is. Our sinful nature will be gone and only victory over the old will remain (1 Corinthians 15:54<sup>xii</sup>). We experience that to a degree even now when we yield ourselves completely to Him. That is why Paul tells us to cloth ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:14<sup>xiii</sup>). We join Paul in the longing for the day when we are unburdened of these failing bodies by the permanent clothing swallowing up the old with our new Christlike body (Philippians 3:21<sup>xiv</sup>). In Romans 8:23<sup>xv</sup> Paul calls it the redemption of our bodies. When I was a child, I would collect glass bottles and redeem them at the supermarket for money, from trash to cash. One day Jesus will redeem these tents for an eternal dwelling fit for the wonders of heaven.

*<sup>5</sup> He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.* 2 Corinthians 5:5 God prepared us for this transformation by sending His Son to take away our sin. He is our covering. But He also prepares us through suffering (Romans 8:17<sup>xvi</sup>). The Spirit we experience is a guarantee because He will not inhabit that which is unclean (2 Corinthians 1:22<sup>xvii</sup>). We were made clean by the work of Christ on the cross. That is why the presence of the Spirit in our lives assures us that we have been accepted by God. The immortal will be swallowed up by immortality. That does not mean we will not die, but it does mean that when we die our spirit will go to be with the Lord, and at His coming we will receive a new immortal dwelling.

How do you experience the Holy Spirit's presence in you, the guarantee? Your desires have changed. Your flesh may still crave an old pleasure, but you do not want to go there. You have a new hunger for God's Word. People notice a change in your speech and actions. You love talking to God in prayer. You begin to enjoy the company of godly people. There is a newfound joy and peace. Those are some of the signs you have the guarantee of what is to come (2 Corinthians 5:17<sup>xviii</sup>).

*<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,* 2 Corinthians 5:6 If you are assured of your salvation and the promises of what is to come, you can always be of good courage. This is a step beyond not losing heart mentioned twice in the previous chapter (4:1<sup>xix</sup>, 16<sup>xx</sup>). Like the Bible psalmist, as he writes he expresses increasing faith, from not losing heart to always being of good courage. Reviewing the promises of God and the outcome of our faith can do the same for us. Paul is encouraging them and being encouraged at the same time. That is often the case. We think things are going badly and then we come across someone in need of comfort and find our words of encouragement to them encourage us even more. That is because of the law of sowing and reaping (Galatians 6:7<sup>xxi</sup>). Give and it shall be given unto you (Luke 6:38<sup>xxii</sup>).

“At home in the body” is referring to this present life as described in verses 1 and 8. Why would Paul write that we are away from the Lord? He has told us that the life of Christ is in us. He expresses that life through us. But our sight is filled with the things of the world. It is by faith that we experience Jesus' presence in us. The Holy Spirit assures us that we are children of God, but we cannot see it with our eyes other than the fruit in our lives (Matthew 7:20<sup>xxiii</sup>).

The expression “away from the Lord” means that we are away from the manifest presence of Christ. Paul experienced that manifest presence on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-5<sup>xxiv</sup>). He experienced it when he was caught up to the third heaven (12:2<sup>xxv</sup>). And later he will experience it one night at sea in a raging storm. In the letter to the Philippians, he wrote that he desired to depart and be with Christ (Philippians 1:23<sup>xxvi</sup>). That tells us that our experience of the manifest presence of Jesus will be much greater for it is then that our faith will be made sight. It will be perfect communion with Him.

Jesus told the disciples that it was better to have the Holy Spirit than for Him to remain on the earth (John 14:28<sup>xxvii</sup> 16:7<sup>xxviii</sup>). What we need in this earthly life is that constant instruction and guidance of the Spirit for ministry. But when we graduate from this life, while we do serve in heaven, the focus will be worship (Revelation 22:3<sup>xxix</sup> note that serve and worship can be the same word in Greek). Seeing Jesus in His glorified state like Paul did at his conversion will fill us to overflowing with adoration and praise. That is where Paul longed to be. It should be where every Christian longs to be. It is the reason that at memorial services we celebrate the life of the believers who have passed on instead focusing on mourning their departure.

*<sup>7</sup> for we walk by faith, not by sight.* 2 Corinthians 5:7 While we are in our earthly tents, we see what Paul described at the end of the last chapter as that which is transient (4:18<sup>xxx</sup>). Our hearts are to be fixed on the eternal. But that is where our struggle comes in. The things of the world take our attention away from the eternal. We must constantly refocus and see the physical from a spiritual perspective. That, by the way, is why Hebrews see all physical things as representing a spiritual reality (Romans 1:20<sup>xxxi</sup>), and why Jesus spoke in parables involving nature. Eyes of faith see the spiritual parallels in

nature and interpret the experiences of everyday life from an eternal perspective. Being born-again includes eyes that see differently from the world (Ephesians 1:18<sup>xxxii</sup>). But if we do not feed our faith with the Word of God and constant use, we allow the fleshly perspective to take over. That is why our minds must be continually renewed with the Word of God (Romans 12:2<sup>xxxiii</sup>). Faith pleases God (Hebrews 11:6<sup>xxxiv</sup>). But faith must be exercised like a muscle needs exercise to stay toned and fit for serving the body.

Walking (or living) by faith means that the normal Christian life should be one of seeing the world from a Biblical perspective. It is to see God at work in the world around us and to join Him in that work at His direction. It is usually upside-down from the world's perspective. Already in this letter Paul has made the case that God works through fragile humanity who know that they are poor in spirit, not the cunning and assertive powerful of this world. He has shown us that suffering can produce dependence on God and build our character, thus being a blessing in disguise (Romans 5:3,4<sup>xxxv</sup>). In this passage he is telling us that when we die the believer is swallowed up by life. Do you see how the Word of God remolds our thinking so that it is conformed to heaven's perspective? The world glorifies youth and beauty, but Paul is saying that is soon to pass away, but the person in Christ can grow in grace and in spiritual insight as they age. Our most useful years can be in our old age as we deepen our walk of faith. This is walking by faith and 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.* 2 Corinthians 5:8 Paul repeats the point of the verses we are studying today. This is one of those eternal truths that we would do well to memorize. It helps us adjust our focus and put on the glasses of heaven's perspective. It is also a check to see if we are walking by faith or by sight. Are you discouraged? Then your vision is clouded by the transient. Do you want to live in this world for another hundred years? Then you are focused on the world and its pleasures and have not yet experienced the love and joy of Jesus in intimate fellowship with Him.

I am not describing this to discourage you but to challenge you that there is so much more. Get alone with the Lord. Turn your phone off. Sit in silence and cry out to the Lord to show you how loved you are. Have your Bible with you because He often speaks through the written Word. Clear your schedule and clear your mind and say with Samuel, "*Speak Lord, your servant is listening*" (1 Samuel 3:10<sup>xxxvi</sup>).

One of the most common questions I hear is this: how can you tell the difference between your mind and the Lord? What God speaks will always be Scriptural. That means you need to be familiar with God's Word. If you are not sure, ask a mature believer if what you hear is Scriptural. Do not worry if you have difficult time at first; it takes time to distinguish the difference. But the more you pray and listen, the sooner you will discern the difference.

A safe way to hear from the Lord is when you read the Bible take a verse that is speaking to you and take time to think about what it is saying to you. The Bible is God's love letter to you. Hear it as His voice speaking to you. When it becomes personal, your love for Jesus will deepen and you will begin to long to be in His manifest presence.

*<sup>9</sup> So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.* 2 Corinthians 5:9 Our aim in this life and the next is to please our Lord and Savior. Obedience is the expression of faith, and faith pleases the Lord. In Ephesians 5:32<sup>xxxvii</sup>, Paul tells us that marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. We desire to please our

spouse because we love them. It is the same in this life and in heaven. We just want to please the One who loved us to the extent of suffering the wrath of God so that we would not have to. *How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure, that He would send His only Son, to make us wretches His treasure!* We love Him because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19 (KJV). That is one reason Jesus told us to regularly experience communion. It reminds us how much He sacrificed for us.

At this time of year, we can meditate on the fact that Jesus left the glory of heaven and chose to come into this fallen world and experience humanity so that He could be our perfect high priest. The high priest of Israel was to be of the people of Israel so he could understand what they experienced. That is one reason Jesus was tempted in every way that we are and yet was without sin (Hebrews 4:15<sup>xxxviii</sup>). He can perfectly relate to whatever you are experiencing and guide you in the right response.

*<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.* 2 Corinthians 5:10 The reason we want to serve Him is love, but it also helps to know that we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For us who are in Christ, we will be rewarded for faithful obedience. Our sins, all the evil we have committed, are covered and paid for by the blood of Christ. So, what remains is reward for service rendered that remains after the testing by fire (1 Corinthians 3:12-15<sup>xxxix</sup>). It was Jesus' life in us and the power of the Holy Spirit that accomplished anything of lasting value, and yet we cooperated and will be rewarded. Jesus called it laying up your treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:20<sup>xl</sup>). Paul wrote that it is owed (due) to us. How gracious of God to repay us with heavenly rewards for what He did in us. That seems too generous, like the parable of the laborers who were hired at the last hour and yet received a day's wages (Matthew 20:15<sup>xli</sup>). Is the cross not the most generous thing that has ever been in the history of this world?

Our passage for today is challenging us to have the mindset of the kingdom of God. It promises us an eternal home in heaven that is far superior to our earthly tent of these bodies. It promises that our sinful nature will be gone, once and for all. We will not be found naked. In other words, we will be reconstructed in perfection, swallowed up in life! We will be in the presence of the glorified Christ and not be blinded like Paul was on the road to Damascus, for our new eyes will be able to see the fullness of Jesus' glory. It challenges us to please Him in all we do and to long for eternity in His presence. And finally, it reminds us that our generous Lord will reward us for all He does through us while we are in these earthly bodies. What a gracious and loving God we serve! He alone is worthy of our all, *<sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.* Romans 11:36

Questions:

- 1 Review the previous passage.
- 2 What is the contrast in the first verse?
- 3 What is "found naked" referring to?
- 4 What is the longing in verse 4?
- 5 Why are we always of good courage?
- 6 What does "absent from the Lord" mean?
- 7 How do we walk by faith?
- 8 Would you prefer to be home with the Lord?
- 9 Why do believers go to the Christ's judgment seat?
- 10 Review Paul's challenges in this chapter.

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<sup>i</sup> **2 Corinthians 4:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

<sup>ii</sup> **1 John 3:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

<sup>iii</sup> **John 3:29 (ESV)**

<sup>29</sup> The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.

<sup>iv</sup> **Philippians 1:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

<sup>v</sup> **1 Corinthians 2:9-10 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—<sup>10</sup> these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

<sup>vi</sup> **Psalms 139:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

<sup>vii</sup> **Genesis 3:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

<sup>viii</sup> **Genesis 3:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

<sup>ix</sup> **Genesis 3:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

<sup>x</sup> **John 14:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

<sup>xi</sup> **John 17:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

<sup>xii</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:54 (ESV)**

<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: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

<sup>xiii</sup> **Romans 13:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

<sup>xiv</sup> **Philippians 3:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

<sup>xv</sup> **Romans 8:23 (ESV)**

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

<sup>xvi</sup> **Romans 8:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

<sup>xvii</sup> **2 Corinthians 1:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

<sup>xviii</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

<sup>xix</sup> **2 Corinthians 4:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.

<sup>xx</sup> **2 Corinthians 4:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

<sup>xxi</sup> **Galatians 6:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

<sup>xxii</sup> **Luke 6:38 (ESV)**

<sup>38</sup> give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

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<sup>xxiii</sup> **Matthew 7:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

<sup>xxiv</sup> **Acts 9:3-5 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. <sup>4</sup> And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” <sup>5</sup> And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

<sup>xxv</sup> **2 Corinthians 12:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows.

<sup>xxvi</sup> **Philippians 1:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

<sup>xxvii</sup> **John 14:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

<sup>xxviii</sup> **John 16:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

<sup>xxix</sup> **Revelation 22:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

<sup>xxx</sup> **2 Corinthians 4:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>xxxi</sup> **Romans 1:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

<sup>xxxii</sup> **Ephesians 1:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

<sup>xxxiii</sup> **Romans 12:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> **Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

<sup>xxxv</sup> **Romans 5:3-4 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

<sup>xxxvi</sup> **1 Samuel 3:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant hears.”

<sup>xxxvii</sup> **Ephesians 5:32 (ESV)**

<sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> **Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

<sup>xxxix</sup> **1 Corinthians 3:12-15 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— <sup>13</sup> each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. <sup>14</sup> If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

<sup>xl</sup> **Matthew 6:20 (ESV)** <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

<sup>xli</sup> **Matthew 20:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’