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2 Corinthians

...knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present *us* with you. 2 Corinthians 4:14

Paul has been speaking of the death which is manifested in him and the apostles. They died in their lives for the sake of those they minister to. Eventually, actual death would overtake them, but even in this there is a sure and firm hope. Death is of no true consequence to a believer and the apostles were completely certain of this, "...knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus."

As apostles, they had seen the risen Lord, they had seen His victory over death, and they knew that this too was promised to them. This is why they were so willing to die for Christ. Nothing could stop the inevitability of their resurrection, just as He was resurrected. The power of God raised Him up and that same power would also raise them up. This same sentiment is found in 1 Corinthians 6:14 -

"And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power."

But this promise was not just to those apostles who had first-hand knowledge of the Lord's work. It is true with all who believe. Together with the apostles, all who believe will be presented alive for all eternity by the power of God. Again, Paul writes of this in Romans 8:11 -

"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

This wondrous moment is described in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4. Take time today to read those passages and have confidence that they will be fulfilled exactly as written. Eternal life is guaranteed to all who have placed their trust in Christ Jesus!

Life application: What fear should you have about death? If you have called on Christ, then show that your faith is more than just a superficial proclamation. Instead, if you face even the prospect of death, let the world know that death has no permanent authority over you. Christ is risen; you are in Christ; you too shall rise to eternal life.

For all things *are* for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. 2 Corinthians 4:15

Paul's words here reflect the many trials that the apostles had faced and which he named in verses 7-12. All of these things, and in fact "all things," were for the sake of their hearers. The apostles worked in a unified way, forsaking their own selves in order to ensure that grace would abound to the many who received it.

In turn, and at the reception of such abundant grace, the many would then show forth thanksgiving "to the glory of God." The mental picture his words make shows heartfelt appreciation by Paul that all of the many ordeals he and the other apostles faced were worth the effort. When his hearers glorified God through thanksgiving, the feeling of death working in them was worth the life working in their hearers. The words of 1 Corinthians 3 may have been on his mind as he conveyed these thoughts in this second epistle -

"Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. ²³ And you *are* Christ's, and Christ *is* God's." 1 Corinthians 3:21-23

As a side note, there are numerous ways that translators have chosen to structure this verse. Is the word "abound" tied to "grace" or is it tied to "thanksgiving?" What tense should the "abound" be rendered? Each decision changes the meaning slightly. However, despite the disagreements, the general idea remains. The apostles worked for the sake of others, grace was involved and shared, it permeated to their hearers, and thanksgiving was the result which thus glorified God.

Life application: If you encounter difficulties in your life as you attempt to share the gospel, look at those trials as badges of merit when your efforts are successful. In the end, if a soul is saved and he in turn glorifies and thanks God for his salvation, then you have been a part of that. The final result is that all should be to the glory of God. As He is in control of all things, He has honored you with trials in order to perfect you while also bringing others to Himself in the process.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward *man* is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 2 Corinthians 4:16

Here Paul returns to the thought of the first verse of this chapter -

"Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart." 2 Corinthians 4:1

In the ministry they received mercy and in this they were able to remain steadfast. To continue with that thought after discussing the continuous challenge to their lives for the sake of that gospel ministry, he now says, "Even though our outward *man* is perishing..." This is what he has been alluding to, particularly in verses 7-

11. They had faced many trials and death was always at hand, and "yet the inward man is being renewed day by day."

The physical body was continuously degrading and would eventually end, but the spiritual man in them was growing more in the likeness of Christ with each passing day. And so it was understood that the daily death they lived was only a temporary thing which was ultimately leading to eternal life.

An analogy to hopefully make this understandable would be taking a massive amount of fill which contains precious ore and passing it through a purification process. As the fill (the outward man) is taken away, the ore (the inward man) is coming more and more into focus. At first there was tons of dirt. Eventually there is a pile of unrefined gold. From there, the gold is placed in a furnace and it melts. Eventually it is brought out and the impurities are skimmed off. This is repeated until there is only the purest of gold left.

Paul and the other apostles (and we who are in Christ) are being refined, even in a body which is impure and perishing with time. But inside of us, because of Christ, is something pure and wonderful. As we are renewed day by day we are molded more and more into His image until only that which is perfect is left.

Life application: Let us never tire of striving to learn about Christ, to pursue Christ, and to emulate Christ. In so doing, a marvelous change is taking place which will have an eternal glory associated with it.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, 2 Corinthians 4:17

Using language which is filled with beautiful expressions and contrasts, Paul now explains the words of the previous verse concerning the perishing outward man and the renewed inward man. He tells the Corinthians that "our light affliction" is "but for a moment." The idea of a light affliction is something that is troublesome

without being overly burdensome. He is shrugging off the life of death which they live with words that say, "Heck, this is just temporary and not that bad at all."

In support of such a thought he says that it "is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Not only was the current state temporary and merely a "light affliction," it was serving a good purpose towards a glorious end. In their trials they were heading towards a time of magnificent wonder. The words he uses for "far more exceeding" are *hyperbolen eis hyperbolen* - "in excess unto excess." It is a superlative way of saying that what is a trial now can't even compare to the glory which lies ahead.

It should be noted how Paul's words contrast in the two clauses - "moment" with "eternal," "light" with "weight," and "affliction" with "glory." Further, the word "glory" to the Hebrew mind of Paul would have a higher meaning. It comes from another word meaning "weightiness, and so he was most likely thinking of the surpassing glory which would make any weight in this life seem like nothing at all.

Paul's words of this verse are of comfort and reassurance in a world which is filled with trials and hardships. Despite what we often hear, Christians are not intended to be exempt from difficulties. We are not saved to "thrive" in any earthly sense. We are saved to continue on in this veil of trials and tears until the day we truly thrive in our new heavenly abode.

Life application: If the world seems to be over burdensome, remember that no matter what you face, it is incomprehensibly light in comparison to the majestic glory which lies ahead. Everything here is temporary and passing, but because of the promises of God in Christ we have a permanent and eternal joy set before us. Let us not be downhearted, but instead let us try to look for the gracious hand of God in all things, even the trials, which is directing us to that wondrous time ahead.

...while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which *are* not seen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:18

In his words, Paul is looking ahead to the "eternal weight of glory" which he mentioned in the preceding verse. The present light afflictions that they faced are not what he and the other apostles were focused on, but rather their eyes were steadily fixed on what lies ahead. These light afflictions and all of the rest of this temporary earthly life are the "things which are seen." In contrast to them are "the things which are not seen." The Pulpit commentary describes it this way -

"The negative is the subjective negative. It expresses not only the fact that now these things are not seen, but that it is their nature to be unseen by the bodily eyes."

In other words, what they are looking to is a complete state of hope which resides in their spiritual minds' eye. This is the same expression that is given as the very definition of faith in the book of Hebrews -

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1

Again, Paul's words reflect the same sentiment that he wrote to those in Rome -

"For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?" Romans 8:24

The "things which *are* seen" are those things which we encounter in this life. Be they good or be they evil, they are actually "temporary." And so Paul questions the logic of focusing on that which is passing away. Instead, he would have us

focus on "the things which *are* not seen." With our spiritual selves we should hope and even long for those things that Christ offers which are "eternal."

This is why we are to conduct ourselves in holiness, and why we refrain from worrying about pains, ills, or persecutions. All of these things will pass and there is a far greater reward which lies ahead of us. Let us focus on such things!

Life application: Right now, we don't actually see Jesus. And yet, the Bible asks us to "fix our eyes on Jesus" in the book of Hebrews. This means that we are to look to the reward which lies ahead and to study and cherish His word now because it reveals those things to us. Let us fix our thoughts, hearts, and minds on Jesus!

For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 Corinthians 5:1

In the last verse, which ended chapter 4, Paul spoke saying that "the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which *are* not seen are eternal." Building on that, he speaks words of absolute certainty. The hope of the resurrection isn't a "hoping hope" but rather a "certain hope." For this reason, he begins with "For we know..."

Paul isn't hoping that the things he is speaking of will come to pass. He has every certainty that they will. And that certain hope is concerning "our earthly house, *this* tent." This is in reference to the bodies we now possess. In other areas of the Bible, he equates them to "earthen vessels." Here he equates them to a "tent." Being a tent maker, his wording would be personal, both to him and to those who knew him.

But there is more than just Paul's words on this. The Bible is replete with the imagery of the tent being a picture of our present body. In John 1:14, it says -

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

The word "dwelt" is literally "tabernacled," as in a tent-dwelling. This stems from the Feast of Tabernacles of the Old Testament and points to the dwelling of Christ in human flesh as a "tent." Paul uses this same terminology to describe "our earthly house." In 1 Corinthians 15, particularly verses 35-54, he writes about our earthly bodies and our coming heavenly bodies. It is this same concept which he speaks of now, noting that if the earthly is destroyed, "we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The word used to describe our earthly body being destroyed is *katalythe*. It carries the literal idea of "...loosened down. Appropriate to taking down a tent" (Vincent's Word Studies). When our current "tent" is no longer acceptable for use (meaning at our death or at the rapture), God has an eternal house ready for us. It is wonderful news and it is a sure guarantee because it is a part of God's word.

Life application: We currently reside in temporary dwellings which break down, get old, and eventually come to an end, but God promises us bodies that will never wear out. We don't yet know what they will be like, but they are prepared by God to last forever, so they will be marvelously wonderful. In your times of sickness or sadness, don't lose hope! Something far better lies ahead.

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, 2 Corinthians 5:2

"For" builds upon verse 1 as Paul continues to show the state we are in now and the anticipation of what lies ahead. "In this" is speaking of the "earthly house" which he also calls a "tent." Our current bodies are temporary and earthly. Because of this, they are susceptible to corruption and decay. In this state "we groan." Paul uses this thought elsewhere, such as in Romans 8 -

"For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." Romans 8:22, 23

Our "eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" of Romans 8 is the same idea as "desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven" found here.

The "habitation" that he speaks of is the Greek word *ependuomai*. It is found only here and in verse 4 of this chapter and it indicates an outer covering. It is comparable to the *ependutes*, or "outer garment," found in John 21:7 -

"Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on *his* outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea."

The idea that we may draw from Paul's words is that our current "tent" is temporary and not what was originally intended for man. Instead, it is a part of the fallen creation and is actually in an unnatural state. Our true and intended state "is from heaven" and will be pure, eternal, and exceedingly glorious in comparison to what we now have.

It is significant that Peter's actions in John 21:7 come after the resurrection of Christ and they are specifically noted by John, thus indicating a picture for us to see. He was fishing in an "unclothed state" but when he heard it was the Lord waiting for them, he put on his outer garment that he might not be naked any longer. It is a connection that will continue to be seen in the verses ahead.

Life application: This body isn't how we are supposed to be. It is failing and temporary. Instead, we have a far better body awaiting us. As this is so, why should we degrade ourselves now with the temporary lusts of life when

everything connected to it will perish? Let us act in holiness now as we await that which is truly holy, and in which we will be clothed for eternity.

...if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 2 Corinthians 5:3

There are several things to consider here. Paul has been speaking of our "earthly house" which he calls a "tent." There is a time, except for those who are alive at the rapture, when we will die and that body will go into corruption. At that time, the soul will be "naked." In other words, it will still exist, but it will be without a body. This verse then implies that we were intended to be a soul/body unity. This is the doctrine of anthropological hylomorphism - man is a soul/body unity.

In Genesis 2:7, God created man out of the dust and breathed into him the breath of life. He is therefore matter (dust) and soul (the animated breath) combined. In the Bible, the soul can mean a person without a body. For example in Acts 2 we see this -

"Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹ he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption." Acts 2:30, 31

But the soul can also be speaking of a dead body, such as in Leviticus 22:4. If there was no soul/body unity, then the killing of a body (murder) wouldn't be wrong, but it is because when a man is murdered he is deprived of his physical being which is tied to his soul. And finally, the concept of a "resurrection" would be illogical if we were complete without a body. Instead, we would be "naked" as Paul's words imply here. This is why Paul so carefully describes our resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15.

Again, in Job 10, Job speaks of his soul as a body that is animated and he describes the various things which that imply. There and elsewhere in the Bible, we see that grief of the soul affects the body and that pains of the body distress the soul.

Also, as a precedent in the Bible for an interim spiritual state without a real body, you can go to 1 Samuel 28 and see that even though Samuel had an appearance and that he could speak and hear, he is clearly identified as a "spirit" in verse 28:13. In other words, he was a soul without a body despite having abilities such as hearing and speaking.

All these tie in with what Paul has been speaking about and what he will continue to describe. We have a body now which is temporary and there will be a time when that is set aside because of death. However, our soul will live on. At some point, that unnatural state will be corrected when we will have "been clothed." This is the new, glorified body that God has prepared for those who have received Jesus. At this time, "we shall not be found naked." In fact, in 1 John 3, we are told that we shall be like Christ Jesus -

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:2

Life application: Taken as a whole, the lesson of the Bible is that what we are now is temporary and that it will go into corruption at our death, but our soul will live on in an unintended state. However, God will give us an eternal body at some point. It will never wear out and it will be glorious. Don't let the pains of this life wear you out to hopelessness, and don't let the thought of death consume you with fear. Instead, know that God has everything under control and what He has planned for us will be glorious.

For we who are in *this* tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

2 Corinthians 5:4

Paul continues to expand upon the same thought which he has been speaking about since verse 1. "We who are in *this* tent" is speaking of all saved believers in Christ who are still alive. Those who have died have put off their current tent and are awaiting the call of the resurrection which is seen in 1 Thessalonians 4:16. There it says that "the dead in Christ will rise first." However, those who are still alive "groan, being burdened."

This is our current state. We have pains and trials and we know that because of Christ there is something far better which lies ahead. But this isn't just Christians. In Romans 8:22, Paul says -

"For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now."

However, though all creation groans, for the believer there is the sure hope of something better ahead. We look to the resurrection and we anticipate our time ahead when we shall also participate in it. Now, we struggle in this life because our body is temporary and corrupt. Again, Paul says in Romans 7:24 -

"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

Romans 7:24

Therefore, our groaning is in hope, "not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life." To be "unclothed" means to die and be rid of this corrupt body. Someone without the hope of Jesus may desire this state. For example, someone who commits suicide may simply want to be done with life. In ending their life, their groaning will hopefully end.

But in Christ, there is more than just the hope of ending pain. Rather, there is the hope of being "further clothed."

We look forward to a new life in a new body that is far better than what we now possess. Because Jesus has gone before us, and because we are promised to be like Him in His resurrection, then we desire that additional state rather than just to put off this mortal, corruptible body. This is the assured difference between those who do not know Christ and those who do. We have the solid hope "that mortality may be swallowed up by life." This corresponds perfectly with Paul's words of 1 Corinthians 15 -

"So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" 1 Corinthians 15:54

For Christians, the path doesn't end at death. Instead, it continues on with new and everlasting garments. And Paul's words here imply that he believed that he may actually be alive when the Lord returned. Two points to consider on that are:

- 1) even since the earliest times in the church, there was the eager anticipation of the Lord's return.
- 2) The concept of a "rapture" was understood, not misunderstood, by those who waited for their change. Paul's words clearly show that this event was expected by believers. Thus it was not a late "invention" which came through dispensational theologians.

As a final note, Paul's words here closely resemble the apocryphal writings of the Wisdom of Solomon -

"...for a perishable body weighs down the soul,
and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind." Wisdom of Solomon 9:15

It is believed by some that Apollos, Paul's friend mentioned in Acts, 1 Corinthians, and Titus may have been the author of this book.

Life application: We have a sure hope of a better, eternal body which is superior in all ways to the one we now have. Be content to live this life knowing that whatever you are facing in physical trials, you will never face them again when you are given your new and eternal home. God has lovingly prepared something wonderful for you.

Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 2 Corinthians 5:5

It's truly amazing how many believers in Christ, and unfortunately pastors and theologians in particular, can't simply read these words and accept them at face value. Because of this, there is much stress and anxiety among many who have received Christ as Lord and Savior. The reason for this will be detailed as we go along.

First however, we look to Paul's words, "Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God." This is speaking of what he said in the previous verse which spoke of our being clothed in our heavenly body "that mortality may be swallowed up by life." It is God who prepared this wondrous abode for each person who has called out to Jesus Christ in faith. And further, it is God "who has also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee."

It can't be certain what part of the word "guarantee" is misunderstood by so many, but apparently the word isn't clear enough to avoid confusion. The word translated here as "guarantee" is *arrabon* and is a transliteration from the Hebrew word *eravon* which is used three times in the Old Testament, all in Genesis 38.

The Greek word is found three times in the New Testament as well, all from Paul's hand - in 2 Corinthians 1:22, 2 Corinthians 5:5, and Ephesians 1:14. It means "an

earnest, earnest-money, a large part of the payment, given in advance as a security that the whole will be paid afterwards." More specifically HELPS Word Studies says it is "an installment; a deposit ("down-payment") which guarantees the balance (the full purchase-price)."

What Paul means in each instance of its use is that at the moment we receive Jesus Christ we are "sealed" with the Holy Spirit. It is a "guarantee" that we have been saved. Because of this, it is beyond the pale that many seminaries, churches, pastors, and teachers claim that a person can "lose" their salvation. If this is true, then the guarantee that was made wasn't worth the seal which accompanied it. In other words, it calls into question the very truthfulness of God.

The doctrine which teaches that a person can "lose" their salvation calls into question the reliability of God, the truthfulness of His word, and it completely diminishes the work which Christ wrought on behalf of those who have believed. Further, it is bondage to those who are held in this misguided belief because they can never know just how good they need to be in order to "remain saved." Thus their pastor can wield control over them as he practices his flawed theology, causing them unnecessary anxiety and harm.

Life application: Jesus Christ saves. When He saves, He is fully capable of ensuring we remain saved - despite ourselves. Don't call God's word into question because of your personal failings. He knew you would fail and counted that into the equation when He first saved you.

So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:6

Verse 6 is an unfinished sentence in the Greek. It picks up with the same verb (are confident) in verse 8 with its continuing thought while verse 7 is bracketed by the two. The Greek word for "are confident" shows the unswerving nature of those who have a firm hope in what lies ahead for the believer. Paul and the apostles

had such confidence and so they pressed on. He says, "...knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord."

In this statement he uses two words which are only found in this chapter -

- 1) *endémeó* - It is used three times in verses 6, 8, and 9 - It means "properly, be present (*at home*), as amongst one's own type of (kindred, related) people."
- 2) *ekdémeó* - It is also used three times in the same verses, 6, 8, and 9 - It means "being absent" and "portrays believers who are still alive as being 'away from home' (heaven), i.e. because still living in a *mortal, physical* body."

While we are in this body, we are not in our true homeland. With our calling on Jesus Christ, we became adopted sons of God and have a new, heavenly home which we belong to. However, until we die or are raptured up, we are living away from this true home, being "absent from the Lord." At some point, we will be reunited in our true home, but until then we are to be confident that we are where we should be. The Lord will determine when our homecoming will be.

Life application: Although we live in this world, we are not truly of this world. This is why Christians are often perceived as a threat or a nuisance. When we truly believe that this isn't our home and act accordingly, then we demonstrate that we are strangers to those around us. People generally shun strangers in one way or another. And as the world continues to push God out of their lives, we can only expect to be further alienated from those around us. Let us cling fast to the truth that we have a better, heavenly home which awaits us.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

The word "for" builds upon what was just said - "So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord." As we are "absent from the Lord" our walk is different than it would be if we were in His presence. The word "walk" denotes our conduct in this life. It is a metaphor used to indicate the things we do and how we do them.

This "walk" for the Christians is a walk of "faith." We have been saved by Christ and therefore, the conduct of our lives is to be for Him, emulating Him, telling others about Him, anticipating our being gathered to Him, etc. But as he said in the previous verse, at this time we are "absent from the Lord." Because of this, our walk is entirely one of faith, "not by sight."

The word "sight" doesn't mean the active sense of vision. Rather, it means "appearance." The word faith then is being contrasted with the time when we actually behold Jesus and our new heavenly home. We have never seen Him and we have never experienced heaven, and so our walk in this life is only in anticipation of those things. It is entirely a walk of faith. As the author of Hebrews says -

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
Hebrews 11:1

But in this walk of faith is a blessing in and of itself. In fact, the next verse in Hebrews says, "For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony" (Hebrews 11:2). We obtain a "good testimony" through walking in faith. Jesus confirmed this to the disciples when addressing Thomas after the resurrection -

"Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and yet have believed." John 20:29

Life application: Lots of people have claimed to have seen Jesus, and lots of people have claimed to have gone to heaven. This is contrary to what the Bible teaches. If someone has experienced one of these things, then their walk is no longer of faith. And so we must decide to either believe the Bible or believe them. Though many have seemed convincing about having experienced these things, it is better we reject their stories and accept that we do, in fact, live by faith and not by sight.