

“A Reality to Clasp”

2 Corinthians 5:1-8

INTRO:

“One day the silver chord will break/ and I no more as now shall sing./ But oh the joy when I awake /within the palace of the King.” We sing Fanny Crosby’s great hymn with gusto, but do we believe it? This week, I comforted a family at the hospital whose love one had just passed away in the night. I did my best, but I do not know for certain they had the knowledge that Fanny Crosby spoke about in her hymn.

Tonight I want to focus on the unseen reality. The prologue to this passage is the last three verses of **2 Corinthians 4**. In **vs. 16**, Paul tells us God’s plan for this age. **“Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.”** Verse **17** is God’s Promise to us: **“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”** Finally, **vs. 18** tells us to look through God Perspective: **“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.”** What are these unseen realities that Paul is focused on in his life? We are going to discover the unseen realities tonight in our text, **2 Corinthians 5:1-8**.

I. Our Hope (v.1-4)

II. Our Guarantee (v. 5)

III. Our Current Condition (v.6-8)

I. Our Hope (v.1-4)

A. The unseen reality that Paul saw with the eyes of his faith is in **vs. 1-4**;

“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. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 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.”

First, this hope involves a new, eternal body.

1. Our current body is temporary because our present state is only for a time. I love the picture of a tent. When I was a boy, I used to go camping with my family. My job when the tent was put up was to crawl inside the tent and put the center pole into its hole. We camped in a tent because we were not in that place permanently. We were only there for a time. Our bodies are temporary because we also are only here for a time.

2. Someday, when the silver chord shall break, God will fold up our tents. He will set it aside and we shall bury it in a hole in the ground for a while. But He will give us a body not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

B. Second, this hope is centered in our desire for mortality, death, being swallowed up in life. The idea here is **not** that we shall die, but that we shall be alive. Do you remember the Apostle Paul's triumph in **1 Corinthians 15:50-58**?

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴So 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.' ⁵⁵'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?' ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

At that moment our translation from the kingdom of death to the kingdom of life will be complete.

II. Our Guarantee (v. 5)

A. These realities are wonderful. But how do we know that they are going to happen? For this twofold hope, Paul gives a two part guarantee.

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

The first guarantee is God's overall purpose in creating us. God created us with the goal of spending eternity with us. That is why He sent His Son into the world. Matthew reminds us of this fact in **Matthew 1:23**.

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call his name Immanuel,' which translated means, 'God with us.'"

God sent His Son to pay for our sins that we might always be with Him. This will be accomplished when our tent is taken down and we are with the Lord.

B. The second guarantee is the Holy Spirit given to us as an earnest or a pledge. God's promise will happen because He has given to us the Holy Spirit in salvation and He will never take Him back. How do we know whether we have the Holy Spirit in our lives?

Galatians 5:22-23,

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."

Are we sure that we possess the earnest?

III. Our Current Condition (v.6-8)

A. But we are not in glory yet. Our glorified bodies are not our possession now. So, what do we do?

“6So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”

We have courage to face the trials that we endure because we have our eyes focused on the unseen reality. We are clasping this reality in our hand and holding tight. First, is our present condition. We know that we are right now not at home with the Lord. He knew he lived in a tent. Enduring the troubles he faced in chapter four were normal and passing away. Yes, the tent could spring leaks and the canvass would rot. But this was not his permanent home. He knew *“this world was not his home he was just passing through.”*

B. He turned the coin over in **verse 8**.

“8We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”

Second, our future is secure. Paul drew great courage from this reality that was coming. Two examples:

1. Remember when Paul came to Miletus to say goodbye to the Ephesian Elders? He said this to them:

“And see, now I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” Acts 20:22-24.

B. Because Paul clasped this reality in his hand he could truthfully say to the Philippians in **Philippians 1:21**;

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

C. Meanwhile, we must practice **verse 7**. We must walk looking at the unseen reality. We must walk depending on what we know to be true because of our faith and not according to the evidence that we see in our lives.

Are we doing this? Are we living on this reality?