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Tents & Buildings

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Series: Where Glory Dwells  
2 Corinthians 5:1-10

**BIG IDEA – WE LIVE IN A TENT, BUT WE LONG FOR A BUILDING**

Can you believe it has been five months since we've been in this building? If you're new, we got into this building on December 17 of last year, the week before Christmas, so we've been in here now for five months. We would summarize it like this: this building has been a huge blessing.

When it comes to buildings, I'm an Old Testament guy. I love the tabernacle, I love the tent, and I see how God uses buildings. We finally have enough space for everybody, and we have the kids' ministry that we need, and we can now say we have a seat for you, but we struggle to say we have a parking spot for you.

We officially have 475 parking spots on this campus, and from day one we found out that was a problem. If you were here the first weekend, our service times were 9:15 and 11:00, and we moved them immediately to 9:00 and 11:00. I'm so grateful, because I was talking to a guy who was part of a large church that was growing fast, and they struggled with finding enough parking spots for nine years.

Well, by the grace of God, when we bought this property, we also bought three acres across the street right over there on the other side of Patterson. We need more parking, and guess what? We're going to have more parking. Amen? They're starting it this month. It's going to be done, Lord willing, by August. We're going to have 220 brand-new parking spots, which increases our parking by about 46 percent, so we're going to be able to say we have a seat for you and a parking spot for you.

By the way, if you're new and you're here, I just want you to know this. You are sitting in the seat of another person's sacrifice. Somebody else paid for the parking lot and parking spot you parked in. Somebody paid for this building. Someone paid for your seat. So, I just want to take a moment, as we celebrate this parking lot that

we're going to be excited about, because we're anticipating so much this fall... I just want to thank you for your consistent generosity.

My parents were in town not that long ago, and I took them over to the three-acre lot next door. It needs a lot of work and everything. I said, "Guys, we're going to put a brand-new parking lot here." My dad is a business guy. He said, "Are you going to have to do another initiative for that parking lot?" I was like, "No. We're paying cash." Doesn't that feel good to say? Yeah!

Thank you for your consistent generosity. When you're consistently generous, we're able to act. We're able to make the most of the moment. So, here's what I want to do, if you're new, or maybe you've been coming around for a while. Look. I'm unashamed about this. I want to invite you to invest in Two Cities Church. I want to invite you to invest in the kingdom of God through our church.

Here's what I believe. Please hear this charitably and humbly from me. I believe that investing in Two Cities Church today is like buying IBM stock in 1980. Some of you are like, "I missed out." Don't miss out again. Here's what I don't want to happen. This will happen to some of you, unfortunately. Twenty years will pass, and so much ministry, mission, and mercy will happen in the city, and you're going to have to look at your wife and say, "We were not a part of it."

See, here's how God designed generosity. This is so cool. God designed the very thing that takes the mission the farthest to also take the Christian the deepest. How cool is that? What takes the mission the farthest? The generosity of God's people. What will take you the deepest? When you surrender your time, your talent, and your treasure to God and realize everything is from him and everything is for him. Let's pray, and then we have to dive into a very interesting part of Scripture this morning.

Lord, thank you for the generosity of our church. We've actually been working on this parking lot for months. Thank you that everything is permitted. We're ready to move, and we're going to begin work on that parking lot. It may seem like a simple thing, Lord, but it's something that we believe you're going to use to create more space so more people can hear about Jesus, become Christians, and be made into his disciples.

Thank you for the generosity of our church, people who put the church first in their finances, and thank you that, because of that, we were able to act in a moment. We are so expectant of what you're going to do in and through our church this fall. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

What iPhone version do you have? (Sorry, Android users. I don't want to offend you, although you've been offending us with your green bubbles for years now.) I'm one version back on the iPhone. I have the iPhone 14. I don't have the iPhone 15.

Nowadays, it's not that big of a difference. Right? They come out. You're like, "I don't know that I need a new iPhone. It's just a little better camera. I'm not sure I'm going to invest in that."

But do you remember...? It wasn't that long ago. Do you remember in 2007 when Steve Jobs...the late, great Steve Jobs...got onstage like only he could and basically said, "Behold, the iPhone"? We didn't even know what it was. Do you remember that? If you watch the video (and you should at some point), they don't even care that the Internet is on the phone.

There was no App Store. There was none of that kind of stuff back then. It was like, "Wait a second. This is a touch screen." What we were really excited about (some of you won't even know what this was) was that the phone and the iPod were coming together. We were going to be able to have music on our phone. A couple of you are clapping about that. Yes, it was exciting.

Do you remember when you first saw it? I remember seeing it, looking at my Motorola flip phone, and being like, "I can't use this sundial. What *is* this? I can't make a phone call with *this*." Guys, we love those things that are new and improved. If you'll type to or swipe to or scroll to 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, Paul is going to talk about getting something new and improved today. We love that.

Men, have you ever been driving your F-150 truck, or, moms, your Honda Odyssey...? It's okay until you see the newer version of it. Right? You're like, "Wait a second. The new version is a little rounder in the front" or "I just have Bluetooth, and it has Apple CarPlay" or "I have heated seats and it has heated and cooled seats."

Well, today, Paul is going to talk about getting a new home. By the way, this is not John, chapter 14. In John 14, Jesus says, "I'm going to prepare a place for you. In my Father's home there are many rooms." Jesus, in John 14, talks about heaven as our home. That's actually not what Paul is going to talk about today. Paul is going to talk about our new body, the new body we long for, and the home that it will be.

## **01 WE LIVE IN A TENT...THAT WILL BE TORN DOWN**

All right. Let me show you this...2 Corinthians 5. We're going to spend time in just 10 verses today. When I think of preparing a sermon, I always think of two things. I want you to have two experiences. One is "I didn't know that," and the other is "I need to do that." This will be a little bit less of "I need to do that" today and, I think, for many of you, a little bit more of "I didn't know that."

I'll show you this. Second Corinthians 5: **"For we know that if the tent..."** Paul is going to talk about your body as a tent. In fact, the big idea is *we live in a tent, but we long for a building*. So, Paul is going to talk about tents. We'll get there. **"...that is our earthly home..."** That's our body.

**"...is destroyed, we have a building from God..."** That's a future body. We'll talk about that. **"...a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent..."** He mentions it again. What's the experience of living in a tent? **"...we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked."**

Here it is again. **"For while we are still in this tent..."** He repeats himself. What's the one thing we do in a 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."**

Paul is just realistic. Paul says your body is a tent. Now, why would Paul say it's a tent? Well, if you don't know this about Paul, he was a tentmaker. That's what he did on the side so he wouldn't have to raise support and he could make some extra money. So, I wonder (I don't know this for sure) if when Paul is making these tents he starts to think, "Wait a second. This feels a lot like the human body. It's temporary. It's taken down. It doesn't do well in the elements."

Listen. Your body is a tent. It's not a castle, and it's not a fortress. Let me show you. I did some research on tents this week. Here's the thing. Depending on how healthy we are, depending on how young we are, and depending on how good our genetics are, we're all living in different tents.

Some of you are living in *this* tent. Let me show you this. This is the most expensive tent I could find. I did not buy it. It is a \$5,000 tent. If you look at it, it has a place for you to put a chimney in it. This thing is bug repellant. It's fire repellant. It's water repellant. When you're young and doing CrossFit, *this* is what you live in, but once you hit midlife, *this* is what you live in. I don't care how much kale you eat. It's \$39.98, sleeps one.

Here's the thing, guys. We all live in tents. On a serious note, here's the problem with tents. Tents get sick, and tents need surgery. Sometimes, when tents get really old, they get dementia, and tents get type 2 diabetes, and tents occasionally have to have dialysis several times a week. Paul says we live in a tent, but we long for a home.

We're all at different ages and stages in here, but we all have that moment where we want our starter home. We've been living in an apartment or something. Maybe that's

where you are right now, and you long for... "Can we just have a starter home?" Then, once you have your starter home... What's that phrase I hear everyone talking about as their kids are getting older? "I need a forever home."

A *forever home* is a home where you're like, "I could have teenagers in this." Every once in a while you have to go, "Okay. I can't afford our forever home." Have you ever been on Zillow, like me? You put in your requirements. You're like, "There's nothing. There's nothing. I can't afford anything." So, then you start watching Chip and Joanna Gaines. You're like, "All right. Honey, get some shiplap. We're going to fix this."

We live in tents. I'm going to say something. I know occasionally up here I say some controversial things. This may be the most controversial thing I've ever said, and I may lose some of you because of this. I'm okay with that. I hate camping. Okay? There it was. I said it out loud.

Listen. My wife is great. She wants us to have all of these experiences of family, so she says, "Let's go camping." I don't want to go camping, but I'm a good dad, I'm a good husband, so we went camping. We did Fisher-Price camping. You know, you go to this little area, and they give it to you. The bathroom is 100 yards away.

Tents don't do well in the elements. Right? They don't do well in the heat. They don't do well in the cold. So, of course, the one night... We just did one night of camping. We're sleeping on the ground, you know, all this kind of stuff. It rains. Do you know what happens when it rains when you're camping? You have to pack up your wet tent, then you have to unpack your wet tent when you get home and let it dry, and then you have to repack it up again.

I'm not sleeping while we're camping, because I'm in this tent with five of us, and I'm thinking to myself, "Didn't my ancestors serve and sacrifice and suffer so that I don't have to do this?" Right? Someone pulls up in their RV. You're like, "Oh, I forgot what I was missing: my portable house."

Well, I want you to see this. Paul says we live in a tent. He's confident. Look at verse 1. This is where I want to get serious with you for a second. ***"For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God..."*** Paul says, "I know what happens when we die."

Why did Paul write this? Why are we going to spend the rest of our morning looking at this? We'll come back here at the end. Paul wants you, Christian, to be able to face death with confidence. Notice that Paul says, "We know." He doesn't say, "We cross our fingers" or "We speculate" or "We hope" or "We have a vague feeling." We say here all the time, "If you don't have God's revelation, then all you're left with is speculation." Paul says, "I know what happens when you die."

We all ask this question. Every 4-year-old or 5-year-old begins to ask this question. "Where's Grandma? What happens when we die?" I don't know who first said this. Someone said that when the dead body in the casket... Have you ever done that? Have you ever been to a funeral...? You see Grandma or Grandpa or somebody, and you look at the casket and think, "That's them, but that's not them." Somebody said the dead body in the casket is the beginning of all superstition. "Where are they?"

There are only three options for when you die. We're going to zoom in on the biblical option, but, basically, at the end of the day, there are three options. Option one is the option of the Darwinian, atheistic, materialistic worldview that so many today believe, which is, "You came from nowhere, you're here for no purpose, and when you die you disappear."

I don't know if you've ever heard of Christopher Hitchens. He was one of what was called the *four horsemen of atheism*. I watched some interviews, because he got stage 4 cancer and was dying. Of course, when an outspoken, aggressive atheist is dying of stage 4 cancer, the media is interested to ask some questions. They asked, "Are you afraid of death?" Do you know what he said? He said, "I'm not."

Here's what he said. This is the view of the atheistic, Darwinian, materialistic view. He said, "I don't *have* a body; I *am* a body. That's all that I am, so when I die, I disappear." I was on a plane with a guy. This was years ago. I was sharing the gospel with him. You know, he was stuck next to me for a couple of hours on a plane, and we started talking. I can't remember how old he was. He was in his 30s, and we started to talk about heaven and hell and death and sin.

I remember he said this to me. He said, "You know, I used to be afraid of dying, and then I remembered that there was a long time that I didn't exist, and it didn't bother me, and there will be a long time that I won't exist again, and it won't bother me." I thought, "What a sad view of life," and I thought, "I don't believe you," because the Bible says God wrote eternity on our hearts.

So, option one is we die and disappear. Not very hopeful. Option two is reincarnation. I know most in America don't believe this, although with the New Age spirituality and the influences... Just so you know, reincarnation is the main belief of many world religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism. Think of it this way. If atheistic, Darwinian evolution emphasizes the body, reincarnation emphasizes the soul.

It says all you really are is a soul, and the soul lives on forever, but you're not really a body, because your soul, depending on how you live, will have many rebirths and many different bodies. The whole caste system in India is based on this idea. "Oh, if you're in a lower caste, it's because you didn't live a good life in your last life, and your soul has been reborn in a lower caste system."

The third is that there is an afterlife, that we go somewhere else when we die. What's interesting is all of the studies say that, still to this day, most Americans believe in an afterlife. What I want to talk to you about today is a distinctly Christian view of the afterlife, which says that in the afterlife we are not just a soul, but we will be a soul again in a brand-new body.

Let me show you this. Follow along. Let's go back to verse 1. "**For we know...**" Paul is confident in what's going to happen. "**...that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God...**" "Paul, hold on." There's nobody who's more direct in teaching than the apostle Paul. Paul says the hard thing. Paul is not afraid. Paul doesn't pull any punches.

So then, why would Paul say, "*If our tent is destroyed...*"? I've told you this before, but a good Bible reader is a confused Bible reader. It's like, "Paul, just say it. Just say, 'When our tent is destroyed...' Why would you say *if*? The mortality rate is right at 100 percent. We're all going to die. Everyone's tent is going to be torn down. Why would you say, '*If our tent is torn down*'?"

Here's why, and maybe this is a thought you've never had. Paul always left the option out there that Jesus Christ could return before he died. So, here's what Paul says. This is taught in 1 Corinthians 15, which I'll show you in a second. The last generation of Christians on earth don't die. There were many reasons Paul wanted Jesus to come back. One of the reasons was Paul didn't want to be without his body.

Let me show you what 1 Corinthians 15:51 says. This is the same author in a different place. He says, "**Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed...**" By the way, we're considering that as the theme verse over the nursery. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Some of you will get that on the way home. That's not what that verse is about.

*Sleep* is a euphemism for dying. Paul says we will not all die, but we will all be changed. Well, how, Paul? Look here. Verse 52: "**...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.**" This is the return of Christ. "**For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body [this tent] must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.**"

What I love about Paul is Paul looks at death right in the face. We're afraid to do that today. I'm not saying this is wrong, but we have taken death and dying and put it somewhere else. Back in the day, people died in their homes, in their beds, surrounded by their family.

Today, people die in hospice. They die in the assisted living or the nursing home. For the longest time, every church had a graveyard. I can't tell you what that does to you, psychologically and spiritually, where every time you go to church you pass your grandfather's grave. We've taken death and dying and removed it.

## 02 THE EXPERIENCE IN A TENT IS GROANING

Well, Paul wants to talk to us for a little bit about what it's like to live in the tent. I read this to you earlier, but let's go back. Here's what Paul says about living in a tent. **"For in this tent [our body] we groan..."** That means to sigh with longing. Like, "I want more." **"...longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked."** Paul is transitioning from language of housing to language of clothing.

**"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."** Paul says the experience of living in a tent, especially as you suffer persecution and age, is groaning.

By the way, we're not the only ones who groan. If you go to Romans 8, Paul says the entire creation groans as in the pains of childbirth. If you've ever wondered, "Why are there earthquakes? Why are there volcanoes? Did God create wind to create tornadoes? Why are there hurricanes? Why are there tsunamis?" let me give you the biblical answer. It is the earth groaning in the pains of childbirth.

Now look. I know, as a man, I'm not allowed to talk about childbirth, but I have been there for the labor and delivery of all three of my kids. Every husband, and certainly every wife, will tell you there is a lot of groaning, but on the other end of all of the groaning is life. That's what Paul wants us to understand here.

We groan in the tent for three reasons. The first reason we groan in our tent is because we're suffering. It's why young people, especially, don't groan a ton, but the more people who are in heaven whom you love, the more you'll groan here. The more you have physical ailments... Go somewhere in the third world. The more you're persecuted for your faith and suffering, the more you'll grow.

But here's what I want to tell you. That's actually not the number-one reason Paul says he groans. Paul does groan because he's suffering, but he's willing to suffer. The other reason we groan is because we sin. Paul groans other places that he wants to be free from his body of sin.



See, here's what happens. Language is not comprehensive enough to get at what I'm trying to say here, but, basically, here's what I'm trying to say. When you become a Christian, your soul is made new, but your body is not yet made new. It's still old. Paul calls it the *body of sin*. Listen. I've not read this book. I'm not recommending this book. I just know it's a popular book right now.

There's a very popular book, especially popular with women, called *The Body Keeps the Score*. It's a *New York Times* bestseller. What it's about, from what I could read from some of the reviews and stuff, is how your body remembers things that you've maybe suppressed or are deep in your subconscious or happened to you when you were a kid or trauma and PTSD. The whole idea is your body remembers things.

Well, that's a very Christian understanding of the body, because every once in a while you're like, "Wait a second. I'm a believer." Yeah, but your body remembers what it's like to be a drunk. Your body remembers the past sexual acts you did. So, people will be like, "My soul is made new, but I'm in this body of sin." Paul says, "I want to be released from it. I don't want to be in a body anymore that's given over to sin and temptation."

But there's a third reason Paul groans. So, we groan because we suffer, and that's going to happen to you. You've seen that happen to older saints we love. They have type 2 diabetes, and they're in a wheelchair. They're 94 years old, they can't see very well, and they want to go to heaven. They want to leave their tent.

Here's another big one. We groan because we're separated from Jesus. We'll get here in a few minutes, but Paul says to be at home in the body is to be away from the Lord. At some level, Paul is saying, "The only thing that's keeping me back from fully enjoying Jesus and being in his presence is this body."

That's why he's going to wrestle with being in the body versus being martyred and giving his life and going to be with Jesus. He's going to wrestle with all of this. It's like being engaged. The best way to think about your relationship with Jesus, if you're a Christian, is long-distance engagement. By the way, that's why heaven starts with a wedding feast, because the marriage begins.

If you've ever seen a couple that is long distance... They have to text. They have to call. They see each other once in a while, and they're always trying to FaceTime. They're like, "I'm ready to just be together." That's what Paul is saying, but then this is really interesting. Look at verse 5. **"He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee."**

Here's what he's saying. God is preparing us. Preparing us for what? Well, in the context, preparing us to leave our tent, go to heaven, and eventually get a new body.

Here's what it's saying. When we think of the Holy Spirit, we tend to think, "Oh, here's what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit writes the Bible." Thank goodness. "The Holy Spirit illuminates the Bible so I can understand it." Very good.

"The Holy Spirit convicts me of sin." Okay, that's true. We might go, "The Holy Spirit leads me. I'm filled with the Holy Spirit." Yes, but according to this passage, the Holy Spirit is going to help you die well. By the way, why is this message so important? This message is important because we're all going to die one day. Now, for most of us, that feels like it's a long way away.

When Jon Tyson was here, we did a Q&A with him afterward onstage, and we talked about entering midlife. He said one of the things about midlife that's so hard is you're helping your children become adults, and you're helping your parents die. You get into your 50s, and you realize, "Wow! This is real." It's hard to watch your parents get old. It's very hard. You go, "I want to help them trust God to the end."

By the way, this is why you need the local church. This is why you can't just be in some college ministry, isolated from the local church. Why? Because you need to see people die well and trust God to the end. How does the Holy Spirit help us die? I'll give you a couple of ways he does it.

First, the Holy Spirit helps us die well by often allowing it to happen very slowly. If you're awake, you can see it happening. You're like, "I'm getting old." It happens slowly. I know every once in a while there are accidents or someone dies in their sleep overnight. A lot of times, there's a lot of grace, because you get the diagnosis, and you realize, "Okay. I have five to seven years." That's a grace from God.

God helps us die well by also giving us examples. I remember I was in my first year or two pastoring. We were still at Goler. This lady came up to me. Her daughter was in our church. She was visiting. She said, "I'm visiting." She was at our evening service. She said, "I'm visiting because my friend is at Wake Forest Baptist hospital. She has some kind of horrible type of cancer, and she's dying. Will you go see her?" I was like, "Oh, man. Yeah, of course."

Some of you are in medicine. You know this better than I do, but when you go see people who are really sick and dying, they give you all of these warnings. They're like, "All right. She's going to have this massive tumor on her neck. I just want you to know her teenage boys will be in the room with her, and I want to let you know they've tried everything. She's a Christian, and she just wants to talk to a pastor."

So, here I am, 33 years old. I'm like, "Oh, man." I walk up there. I sit with her. We just talk about heaven for 30 minutes. She talks about her fears. She talks about how

much she's going to miss her kids. She talks about how she's praying for healing still. This lady was probably in her mid- to late-40s. I saw a lady trusting God.

About three or four days later, I got a text from that lady who asked me to go visit her, telling me that she had passed. What we need... The older generation is wondering sometimes. It's like, "What's my role?" There are many roles. There's deeply investing in us, there's being great-grandparents, and there's dying well, trusting Christ.

The greatest way God helps us to die well is going before us. Christianity is the only faith that can say, "Actually, God went before us." If you're heading toward death soon, Jesus can say, "I've been where you're going." Jesus has died so we can have confidence as we face death.

### **03 GOOD, BETTER, BEST (NOT NAKED)**

Now, in the meantime, Paul thinks about his life. He thinks about, "What happens if I die versus what happens if I stay?" This might be the most interesting "I didn't know that" part of the sermon. Paul says that for the Christian, there are three different states the Christian can find themselves in. Look at verse 6. ***"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."***

So, the first state a Christian can find themselves in is to be at home in the body but away from the Lord. You'll see the other two states in a second. Basically, Paul says this is the worst state a Christian can be in. The next two states are better. In fact, Paul is going to go, "Good, better, best."

He's going to say, "If I'm at home in the body, that means I'm away from the Lord." Then he says this. I love this. He says, "This is what that means: I walk by faith, not by sight." So, how does Paul describe being in the body and away from the Lord? He talks about it as a life of faith.

I love what he says there. He says we *walk* by faith. What is walking? It's something most humans are able to do. It's something that's simple. It's something that's slow. It's something that's basic. It's something that you take one step at a time. See, what it means to be in the body but away from the Lord is to live by faith.

I don't know this for sure. I think when the angels look in on us Christians they are amazed, because they've never had to live by faith. I think they're amazed when a Christian loves, serves, sacrifices, worships, and gives his or her life to a God they've

never seen. Let me show you this. I'm going to go to a couple of other places because I want you to see this.

In Philippians 1:21, Paul says, **"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me."** So, what does it mean to be in the body? Fruitful labor. **"Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better."** That's option *B*. Option *B* is to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Look at what Paul says in verse 24. **"But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account."** If you're still in the body... Or, as we sang in that one song, if you're not dead, God is not done. God has a purpose for you. In fact, one of the things we have to understand here is the goodness of the human body. I'll get there in a second. Let me show you the second option here. We're just following the passage.

Verse 8: **"Yes, we are of good courage..."** Paul said, "Good courage," and now he says, "Good courage" again. Why? **"...and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord."** Now, this is the part Christians don't normally think about. What happens when you die? Your body goes into the ground. I mean, we saw it or we will see it. It goes into the casket.

What can you say about the Christian? What can you say for certain? There's a lot of mystery. I'm not going to go beyond Scripture. What can you say when somebody who knows and loves the Lord dies? You can say they're at home with the Lord. You can say they're in the very presence of the Lord.

Here's what I'm trying to say is not true. There's no such thing as purgatory. As somebody who grew up as a nominal Roman Catholic, I was taught purgatory. Purgatory is not true. You don't need to go somewhere and pay off your karmic debt. You don't need to go to spiritual detention for a decade or two to pay it off.

There's also not soul sleep. I don't know if you've ever heard of that. Some people say, "Here's what happens when you die." They say this because the Bible says, "Those who have fallen asleep..." That's a euphemism for death. In other words, some people say, "Here's what happens when you die. You go into an unconscious state, like you've been put under some deep anesthesia, and you're in that state until Jesus Christ returns."

That's not scriptural, because Paul says, "I want to be away from the body; I want to be at home with the Lord." Or he says, "To be away from the body and be with Christ is far better." When the Bible says we go to sleep, what it's talking about is our body, not our soul. That's exactly what happens when the body dies. That's what it looks

like. When you see a dead body, it looks like it's sleeping. That's exactly what it does. The soul goes right into the presence of the Lord.

Now, here's what this means. I'm not going to go beyond Scripture, but I want you to know this. If you die before Jesus Christ returns, you go into the presence of the Lord, but you don't have a body yet. The Bible says you're at home with the Lord, and it's actually better than being at home in the body and away from the Lord, but the best is to be at home in the body and with the Lord. Look. Verse 1: ***"For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God..."***

Here's what I want to talk about for a minute, why this is so practical. Christians love our bodies, and we should. Back in the day, there was something called *dualism* and *gnosticism*. Basically, there was in philosophy a thinking that said, "The body is a bad thing. The body is a prison from which we need to be released." That's not what Paul says.

I thought about this today. How, today, are we confused about the body? Maybe there are some of you who are in here who struggle with this. The whole transgender movement is a misunderstanding (I want to say this compassionately, not with judgment) of the goodness of the human body as God gave it. In fact, Paul says, "What I want at the end of time is to be with the Lord in my new body."

So, from Scripture, here's what I think happens. I'm planning on living in Winston the rest of my life, Lord willing, so when I die, I'm planning on being buried here whenever that is. So, here's what I believe happens according to Scripture. At the end of time, when Jesus Christ returns, I'll be with him. When I die, I go to be with him.

I don't know how all this works, but God can do everything. He's going to stop in Winston-Salem, raise my body from the dead, and unite my soul with my new body. When you say it out loud, it sounds kind of crazy, but just so you know, that is the historic Christian belief.

Let me make this really practical for you. This is why we care about the body so much. Why in the military will we send living men to go get a dead body? At great cost, we will go find that body, we will put it on a plane, and we will fly it back. Why have Christians been very, very, very slow to adopt something like cremation, which is becoming more and more popular?

I'm not here to beat anyone up if you did that for Grandma. I understand it's the affordable option, and I'm not worried. God is going to be able to raise that body from the dead as well, because Christians have been burned at the stake and all that. What I'm saying is you have to understand how much theology (which we've forgotten)

goes into "Put that casket in the ground, like a seed planted, because it will rise again." That's the theology of putting a body in the ground.

#### 04 WHAT IS THIS NEW BODY LIKE?

So then there are some questions, like, "Well, then, what's our new body like?" I don't want to go beyond Scripture, but it's called a *building*. Let me just show you this. In verse 1, he says, **"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..."** Why would he say, "A house not made with hands"? That's strange. Because it's what Jesus says.

Mark 14:58. When they're accusing Jesus, they're quoting him. **"We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'"** Here's all we know. We know our body is going to be like the Lord Jesus' resurrected body, which means there will be continuity and discontinuity.

How do I know that? Because there are times, if you go to the end of the Gospels, where Jesus says to Thomas, "Look at my scars. Come here. It's me." He still has the scars...continuity. At the same time...go ahead and read the gospel accounts...nobody notices him at first. Mary is like, "It's the gardener." He's like, "It's me." As soon as he says, "It's me," they're like, "Oh, yeah, it *is* you."

It would be like seeing somebody you were best friends with when they were 10 years old, and you haven't seen them in 35 years. It takes you a moment. You're like, "It's you." You're going to be in the healthiest, holiest, happiest, most vibrant state, but you'll be you. We'll have our bodies forever, just a perfected, resurrected version of it.

#### 05 WE THINK OF HEAVEN AND WORK HARD HERE

So, now I want to get really practical. I told you this sermon was "I didn't know that," but Paul doesn't want you to just go, "I didn't know that." Paul wants you to say, "I need to do something about that." Look at verses 9 and 10. This is where we'll close with our time left. Paul is like, "I don't care." Look. **"So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him."**

Paul says, "There's something about thinking about heaven that makes me work hard here on earth." C.S. Lewis (I quote him all the time), that great Christian author, that

great professor who was an atheist become Christian, said the reason most Christians have become so ineffective in this world is we have forgotten to think about the next.

It's not a dark thought. The more you think about your own death, which is certain, the more you think about the shortness of your life. The average person lives 28,000 days. As soon as you start thinking about heaven, your time feels very valuable and very short here. As soon as you start thinking about heaven, your problems are still problems, but they're problems with a perspective.

As soon as you start thinking about heaven, you start having the right priorities. In the college ministry I was a part of for years, they used to say... At the beginning of the fall semester, we'd all be going out to meet a bunch of freshmen, and they would say, "Hey, guys, just remember three things last forever: God, his Word, and the souls of men. Live accordingly."

Paul says, "When I think about heaven, I make it my aim to please him." Literally, it's the Greek word meaning ambition. Paul only uses this Greek word for ambition twice: here, and in Romans 15:20, Paul says, "I make it my ambition to preach Christ where he has not yet been named."

Here's my question: Why is the world more ambitious than us? When I watch a Mark Cuban interview... He's also from Pittsburgh originally. This billionaire on *Shark Tank* owns the Dallas Mavericks. People ask him how, and his answer is, "I've always been ambitious. I've been ambitious my whole life." I'm like, "Man, we need to redeem some ambition in the church."

I was with a pastor of this unbelievable church. He's a little bit older than me, and he had on his arm... I can't remember the number. This was a couple of years ago. Let's call it 305. It was something like that. He had a number tattooed on his arm. It was kind of a random number. I thought, "Is this an area code?" I'm like, "Do you love where you're from?"

So, I was like, "Hey, man, what does 305 mean?" He said, "There are 305 US military bases in the world. Our church is going to plant a church next to every one of them." I was like, "Oh, wow." I was like, "Why does this guy have more vision for the church than I have for the church?" That was really clear.

They've realized it can't be done in one lifetime...305 military bases. Do you know all that you have to do? Do you know how hard it is to plant a church near the military? Do you know how many times they move? Do you know how many people you have to raise up to do that? I'm like, "That's ambition."

In the church today, we've lost ambition. If you don't know this, ladies, if your husband or boyfriend didn't tell you, basically, Jon Tyson came to talk to us about a lack of godly ambition. He talked to us about apathy. He was like, "Guys, especially young men, we need you to be ambitious. We need you to say, 'I need to make a ton of money so I can give it away.'"

I'm serious. Some of you need ambition. "I need to find a woman. I need to raise a family. I need to have a calling. I need to have a career. I need to make an impact. I need to make a difference." Paul says if you think about heaven and about how short your life is, it's going to give you ambition.

## **06 WE GIVE AN ACCOUNT FOR HOW WE LIVED IN OUR TENTS**

He says two things. First, because you're going to die, have ambition. Secondly, because you're going to die, know that you're going to be held accountable. Second Corinthians 5:10: ***"For we must all appear..."*** That word *appear* in the Greek means be laid bare and open. ***"For we must all appear..."*** There are no exceptions. You don't die and stand before a mirror.

***"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."*** It says in Hebrews 9:27, "It's appointed for each man to die once and then face judgment." A lot of times, when you talk to Christians about being judged by God, they get really scared. They're like, "Wait a second. Didn't Jesus die on the cross? Aren't all of my sins forgiven?" Absolutely. You are saved by grace, but you are evaluated by works.

I'm trying to tell you this today because God is a part of everybody's future, whether you know this or not. This is so amazing. One of the ways God is going to honor you... You're like, "Does my life matter?" Oh my gosh! Does your life matter? God is going to talk to you about everything you've ever done. Wow!

Here's what I want you to know, though: there's no punishment. Think of a good dad with his kids. There's no punishment. The punishment is taken on Christ. I don't have time to get into it. Read 1 Corinthians 3 and other places. The final judgment has to do with reward or lack of reward.

My pastor growing up, Andy Davis (he'll be here in a few weeks)... I remember I was with him one time. He memorized the whole New Testament. Think about that. He's a deep guy. I said, "Andy, what's the final judgment going to be like?" He said, "Kyle, it's going to be very, very hard." I said, "No, I'm talking about for the Christian." He said, "I know. It's going to be very, very hard, and then it's going to be over."



He said, "In the book of Revelation, when it says God wipes away all of our tears, I think many of those tears are from going through our own final judgment." We just sit there, and we say, "Why didn't I do more? Why didn't I trust you more?" If you look closely, it says we will be judged for everything done in the body.

Here's what I want you to know: there are certain things you can only do in this body. There are certain things you can only do while you're in a tent. You can't live by faith in heaven. There *is* no faith in heaven. It's all sight. You can't suffer well in heaven. You can only do that in the tent. You can't trust God in heaven. You'll see him. It's obvious. You can only trust God *here*. You can't tell others about Jesus anywhere else than *here* while you're in this tent.

I just want us to think about this for a moment. The Bible says this. I'm just setting up the meeting. I can't do anything. The Holy Spirit has to work. The Bible says people die two ways. The Bible says people die in the Lord. In fact, Revelation 14 says, "Blessed is everyone who dies in the Lord." The Bible says people die in their sins. Jesus talked about that. Those who will not repent will die in their sins.

If you've never trusted Christ, I want to give you an opportunity to do that right now. Jesus Christ died to defeat death. Jesus Christ died so you could face death with confidence. If you're here today and have never trusted Jesus Christ, I just want to give you... It's not a magic formula. I just want to give you the words to say.

You say, "Jesus Christ, I am a sinner. I'm not a mistaker. I know I have sinned against you and, ultimately, you only. I know that I need to be forgiven. I trust that what Jesus Christ did, dying on the cross 2,000 years ago, counts for me." The way you become a Christian is you transfer trust from yourself to Jesus. If you did that, you will no longer die in your sins, but when that day comes, you will die in the Lord.

Lord, for the rest of us, would you help us to live lives of godly ambition, knowing, as Paul said, that one day our tent will be torn down and our time here will be over? We pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.