

HOPE ETERNAL

Lesson Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10

Focus Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10

Key Verse: If the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 Corinthians 5:1 (NRSV)

2 CORINTHIANS 4:16–5:10 (NRSV)

16 So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

17 For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure,

18 because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

5:1 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling—

3 if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked.

4 For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

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

6 So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord—

7 for we walk by faith, not by sight.

8 Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

10 For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:16–5:10 (KJV)

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

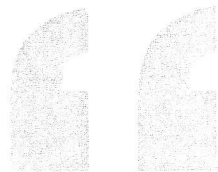
10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

INTRODUCTION

Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die. (Author Unknown)

From time to time, we meet ordinary people who have a profound impact on our lives. For me, one such person was “Mother” (that is what everyone in the church called her). She was one of the sweetest souls you could ever meet. She seemed to be in her 70s, retired, and a faithful member with a deep love for the Lord. Everyone at the church (children and adults) loved to be around “Mother.” She was just pleasant to talk to and very accommodating.

Once I heard “Mother” give a short testimony. She said she had done her best to raise her children, did what she had to do in life, and was just waiting for the Lord to call her home. Did “Mother” wish to die? No, Far from it! But she thought she had fulfilled her work on earth and was therefore ready to go and meet her Savior. She appeared at peace with the world and herself. I never forgot that testimony.



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If an attitude can show how mature a believer is, it is the person's attitude to death. And on that issue, as Apostle Paul pointed out in the text, there is a little paradox. It is natural for us to want to live as long as possible. That is the instinct of life that runs through all our veins. Yet, persons who know the Lord wonder what it will be like to meet the Lord after death. Facing death is like standing before a

strange, locked door in an unfamiliar building. Out of curiosity, we want to know what is behind the door. However, our survival instincts tell us to proceed with caution. And the most concerning thing is we have to open the door by ourselves, and without any weapons to use if an emergency arises. No one can look

behind death's door and tell us for sure what is behind it. That is the reason why opening such a door can be scary.

In such situations, what options do we have? Our best option is to go with what scriptures and the Holy Spirit tell us. If we are firm in our faith In Christ, we know that behind the transition door of life, are

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mansions for those who have maintained their faith in Christ. For others, it must be a horrifying thought. Unless you adopt the attitude of, "Whatever will be, will be." The problem with that attitude is that many people can say it, but only a few can believe it.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

In the text, Paul called on the believers to sort out the priorities of life. In sorting out these priorities, believers could emphasize earthly matters, which were temporary in nature. But the wiser alternative was to concentrate on heavenly issues that had eternal consequences. Therefore, the best way to get over their earthly struggles was to keep a focus on eternity with Christ. That is still great advice for today.

Paul expanded on the idea of the temporary versus the permanent with references to the human body. Our earthly bodies are temporary and will in time decay after physical death. Such is

the nature of humanity. But that is okay, since at the resurrection, we will not need those bodies. Instead, we will get new bodies that are permanent, indestructible, and celestial.

Therefore, believers can look forward to a glorious future, as the scriptures show that God promised believers such a destiny (see Philippians 3:21 and 2:13).

While on earth, believers get the assurance of this glorious eternity through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's reference to God's judgment seat (verse 10) highlighted one of the reoccurring themes of scripture. Every person must eventually give an account for what they did in life. God will grant

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rewards accordingly. Good works earn glorious rewards. Bad works bring eternal damnation. Elsewhere Paul compared the judgment seat to the judge booth at the Olympic Games. God's reward system works just like how athletes are rewarded for performances in Olympic events. (Compare 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 4:4 and Romans 14:10-12.)

SANKOFA

When Christians face life-threatening situations, their responses show the strength of their relationship with God. An adventure in the life of Sarah Corson shows this truth.

Mrs. Corson had a mission to carry the love of Jesus to the native people of Bolivia. In 1980 she, along with a small team of missionaries, went on an expedition to those people. To reach the targeted persons, the team traveled along roads that exposed them to many dangers.

Along the way, the missionaries ran into local security forces. Because of what was happening in the country then, the soldiers were suspicious of American missionaries. The situation became very tense. Sara Corson knew this was a volatile situation. However, she also sensed the presence of God in the confrontation with the military. This gave her courage to engage the soldiers about Christ and God's love for them. She

seemed to ignore that the soldiers' guns were at the ready and aimed at them.

Sarah's boldness to engage the soldiers about Christ took them by surprise. After a while, the soldiers released the team. The team had risked everything to carry out the mission. And God came through for them when they needed his protection. As someone wisely said, we

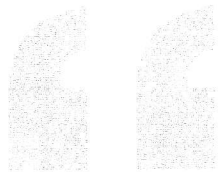
are not ready to live for a mission, until we are ready to die for it. Sarah believed in her mission and was ready to die for it.

This is one of the adventures given in the Sarah Corson book, *Risking Everything*.

CASE STUDY

There is much speculation on how Christians (especially those directly involved in ministry) face death. The stories we know about deathbed conversations stir our

thoughts about Apostle Paul's attitude towards his death. For Paul, "To die is Christ and to live is gain." Here is an



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example of this attitude made public in September 2017.

Below is reportedly the last prayer (made public) of Christian apologist Nabeel Qureshi before transitioning from earthly life. Nabeel was 34 years of age and battled stomach cancer. He was married and had a daughter. In his final recorded message, Mr. Qureshi asked his well-wishers to pray for his healing. Then he added the prayer.

“Father, we come before you, trusting you even now for a miracle,” he said. “We know that John 11 uses those exact words – even now, you can do a miracle. We saw him raise Lazarus from the dead, we see the Lord in Genesis 22, rescue Isaac at the very last second. We see the dead girl raised from the dead. Luke 7, we see a boy raised from the dead. So, God is able, he is more than able. I’m just going to rest in that as best I can.”

Then he added, “Lord, we know you are able. Please heal, please come

through, but if it shouldn’t be your will, your sovereign will at the end of the day, then I trust you, and I love you anyway. We praise you, Lord. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

That is a beautiful attitude. He asked God for healing but recognized the sovereignty of God. In the final analysis, the outcome depended on the divine will

of God. And he was open to whatever that was. That is a beautiful place to be at the time of death.

LIFE APPLICATION

In the lesson, you saw how Paul urged the Corinthians to eternal life issues, rather than earthly concerns. Likewise, we encourage you to take time out to consider

the extent to which you do this. As you gather more experience in life, the easier it becomes not to sweat the small stuff. If you do such assessments often, it will help you to decide on the level of attention you should give to life concerns.

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mercy we serve is also a God of justice and judgment. You may want to check Psalms 89:14 to see how this balance works with God. As you assess events in your life and the lives of loved ones, ensure you keep this balance. Do not make the mistake many believers often make. They emphasize God's love and mercy and ignore the attributes relating to Judgement. God assesses us on all scores. Yes, rewards and punishments flow from the same throne.

In this series of lessons, we examined many aspects of faith. Yet, we have not covered several areas concerning belief in God. Indeed, no one can discuss all facets of faith, as some parts are still mysteries to us.

Even the most respected theologians must admit they cannot explain many features of faith. Those parts of the mystery may remain baffling until we meet God in eternity.

As you examine your faith in Christ, accept those unknown elements. Work with what you understand. Trust God to

take you over the mystery bridges that your wisdom cannot explain.

And when sickness or disease comes, prayerfully ask God for healing. But accept that the recovery may not come on your timetable. When this happens, wrap yourself in the comfort that God loves you and will do the best for you. Further, remind yourself that, in eternity, you will get a body that will defy sickness and last forever.

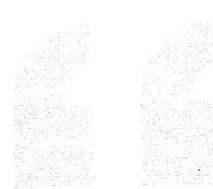
Questions:

1. As you grow older, what things that mattered seem to matter less? Why do you think this is so?
2. As you face your mortality, how has your faith and outlook on life changed?
3. In what ways do you think one can develop a growing trust in God's promise of eternal life through faith?

CLOSING DEVOTION

Closing Song: "O Jesus, I Have Promised," AMEC Hymn #280

Closing Prayer: Dear Father, help me



Trust God to take
you over the mystery
bridges that your
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keep faith in your promises of a glorious end. In Jesus' name. Amen.
eternal life for all who serve you to the

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

August 23-August 29

Monday	1 Corinthians 15:16-23 (From Death to Life in Christ)
Tuesday	Ephesians 3:14-21 (Strengthening the Inner Being)
Wednesday	Ecclesiastes 12:9-14 (Every Deed, Good or Evil, Judges)
Thursday	Romans 2:4b-11 (God's Judgment of Human Behavior Impartial)
Friday	2 Corinthians 4:1-6 (Paul, Confident in the Ministry)
Saturday	2 Corinthians 4:7-15 (Entering the Presence of Jesus)
Sunday	2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10 (Live the Faith with Confidence)