

2 Corinthians 5:1-5

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[0 : 00] 2 Corinthians chapter 5. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, our text this morning will be verses 1 through 5. So if you are physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask you if you would join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God found for us in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, starting in verse 1.

Paul, continuing his theme, which he picked up at the end of the second chapter and continues on to the first part of the seventh chapter, and that is our ministry, the ministry assignment that God has given us.

We'll put this in context in just a moment, but let's read the text and then we'll pray. For we know that if the earthly tent, which is our house, is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.

Now he who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the Spirit as a pledge. Let's pray. Lord God, we are so thankful for this day.

[1 : 18] We're thankful that we have the opportunity to gather together, to read the Word of God, to hear the Word of God, and to see the Word of God. Lord, we pray that now by the power and presence of your Spirit that you would speak to us through it.

Lord, that it would be the Word of God which captivates our mind, that grips our heart, that changes our lives and transforms us more and more into your image. We pray that the truth which we see in Scripture would take a direct impact upon our lives on a daily basis.

And we ask that it would be for your glory and your glory alone. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Paul has been referring to the ministry assignment which he has been given personally.

You remember Paul spoke of this ministry. He introduced it saying that he had been taken captive by Christ. He was a captive of Christ and he was being paraded not as the victor, but as the spoils of the victor.

Jesus is the victor. Don't lose that. Jesus is the one who's at the end of the parade, right? He is at the one that the laurel is on his head. He is the one who has won the battle. We have not won the battle, but he has won the battle.

[2 : 26] And he has taken captive a host of captives, the Word of God tells us. And Paul says, I'm one of those captives. Friend, if you're in Christ, you're one of those captives. You have been captivated by the victor, Jesus Christ.

And he is marching you through the world and putting you on display. And the way he marches us is by equipping us for a ministry assignment he has given us. Paul says that he is a fragrant aroma unto God of Jesus Christ amongst those who are perishing and amongst those who are being saved.

All of that at the end of the second chapter. And he begins to speak of the reference of his ministry. Over the last several weeks, while we were looking through this, we have seen that not only does Paul have a ministry, but so do we.

And our ministry assignment is just as divinely ordained as that of Paul himself. God has given us not all vocational ministries. Some of them are more private ministries.

God has called each and every one of us to a work. A God-glorifying and Christ-honoring work. And he has called us to live out that work. Paul says that we are to endure.

[3 : 30] We are to persevere. We are to move forward in the ministry. In the fourth chapter, Paul begins to speak of the things that he has experienced in the ministry. If we just look at a few words there and we pick them up in verse 7 where he speaks of being an earthen vessel.

Verse 8. This is in the fourth chapter. He says he's afflicted. He's crushed. He's perplexed. He's despairing. Or he's not despairing. He's persecuted. He is always struck down. He's always caring about in his body the brand marks and the dying of Jesus.

Doesn't sound like a very pleasant ordeal. But yet he closes the fourth chapter and speaks of the reality that though these things are happening, he does not lose heart.

He pushes on that though the outward man is decaying, the inner man is being renewed day by day. That he's looking forward to a longing and expectation of not when these things will end, but when the glorification will come.

And it is that glorification that he begins to reference in the fifth chapter. Second Corinthians chapter 5 is a glorious chapter. And when we get down into the sixth verse and we speak of the reality of longing to be with those but wanting to be with Christ and being pulled between a win-win situation.

[4 : 40] Do I want to stay here and be used or do I want to go there and be home and all of these things. But before we can get into the application, by the way, all of the rest of the fifth chapter is nothing but application.

It applies the truth that is dictated to us in the first five verses. Now I know I need to slow down a little bit. So therefore we need to understand the truth in the first five verses before we move to the application.

We are in a show me world, right? We want to know what difference does this make in my life. Give me the application, pastor. And every sermon ought to have an application.

But until you know the truth, you don't know what you're applying. And what good does it do us if we know the hope that we can have if we don't know the truth in which we're anchored. So before we get to the application, we need to see the truth that's contained in the first five verses.

I want you to see this morning the reality of life. The reality of life. Not just life as we know it, but the reality of life eternal.

[5 : 42] And the life which Paul is looking not around himself but towards. And the things which will come out of this reality. Since there is the reality of everlasting life, then he can do these things.

If you just peruse through the fifth chapter, you will see that in verse 6 it says, Therefore, you keep going down, it says in verse 9, Therefore. Verse 11 says, Therefore. Verse 16 says, Therefore.

Verse 20 says, Therefore. All of these things happen because of the reality of life. And as the one who ordained me into the ministry, licensed me into the ministry, ordained me into the ministry, and served this church as an interim pastor before I came, Brother Sidney Gibson used to say, When you see a therefore, you need to know what it's there for.

Right? Since there is an application, you need to know the truth that is connected to that application. And we see that truth this morning in verses 1 through 5, and it is the reality of life.

The first thing that I want you to notice is here is a truth that comforts us in every difficulty. Here is a truth which comforts us in every difficulty.

[6 : 54] The word of God says, For we know. You can just stop right there. For we know. Friend, the way you live out your ministry, your God calling in a world that is quite often God forsaking or God forgetting.

The way in which you live out the ministry assignment that you have been given, that God ordained for you before the foundations of the world were laying. The Bible says that if you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, that he has good works prepared for you.

The works which he prepared before, not only before you were born, but before he created the world. Works that you and you alone can walk in. And these works that you are called to accomplish, these works that you are called to fulfill, will only be built upon the truths that you hold.

Because we must move forward with a conviction of truth. The reason we have so much despair and so much falling away in our society is because we're not holding on to truth.

I read a short article this morning that spoke of well-being and wellness. It's astounding. And I know some of you are a lot more intelligent than me. And some of you are in the medical fields. And some of you are studying the brains.

[8 : 11] And there are seven interlocking things that have to do with wellness. I cannot remember all of them. I know there's a physical stability, health stability. I'll probably get my daughter will get to me later on this.

There's a financial stability. There's all these things that are connected. But in that, there's also the stability of knowing that you have a greater cause. That is, you have to have a purpose in life. And there is what they call the spiritual stability.

That is, that you are serving someone greater than you. That there is a purpose for your life. And that purpose is connected to something in someone greater than you. Christianity alone answers that.

Have you ever thought about that? Every other world religion is trying to appease an angry God. Or trying to win the favor of that God. And seeking to hope to have the approval of that God. So that maybe someday they can be accepted by that God.

Every other religion is doing that. Knowing that there is a greater being, or so they claim to be. That maybe is upset because the world does not seem right. Everything seems to be going on around them.

[9 : 09] So what must I do to appease him or to make him or her, lowercase g, God, happy so that they will accept me. Christianity is not such. Christianity is such that God, with a capital G, creator, God, created the world and all that is in it.

And declared that it was good. He put you in it and said you were very good. We messed up that creation. And rather than him sitting there waiting for us to appease him, he came to us, the Bible says, while we were yet sinners.

He died for us to redeem us and to renew us. He called us to himself to restore us back to the purpose he created us for. See, Christianity alone answers this reality.

That there is a higher being and that higher being has a purpose for your life. To serve the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your days. And that you may work hard and while you're doing it.

And he alone has redeemed you and purchased you so that you can do it. And this leads to the wellness of your life. These are truths which are anchors to every healthy life.

[10 : 06] But these are truths which must be held on to or we'll forget about them. Paul says, for we know. Friend, we talk about it all the time. There are major rock issues.

There are doctrines that you must know. Because if you don't know them, then you won't do them. There are matters that must be settled in your heart.

Things that must hold on to you by way of conviction. Not something that you are convinced of, but something that you are convicted about. These are matters that will shape and change your life.

Paul here alludes to his own trade. He says, for we know that if the earthly tent, what was Paul's trade? He was a tent maker, right? So here he goes on to the things that he knows. The truths that bring him comfort.

He realizes in his trade, his profession, his daily occupation when he was a tent maker. That what he was making was not being made to endure. Good business for him, right? As a businessman, I make you a tent.

[11 : 03] It's going to last a little while. You come back later. I'll make you another tent, right? Not too bad of a trade. He knew that what he was making was but temporary. This is why he had security in his job situation. He understood that.

But Paul says that this earthly tent, which is our house. Here is something that Paul knows. This body is not made to last forever. This is but a temporary structure.

This body is not the definition of our life. Our life inhabits this body. This does not constrain nor confine our life, but rather is occupied by our life.

He says it is but an earthly tent, which is our house. And if it is torn down, we have a building from God. Paul says that what we have in this world is but a tent, but what awaits us is a building.

I know I didn't finish that. I'll finish it in just a moment. He understood the reality that life is not restricted to the body we possess. But rather life is greater than this body.

[12 : 09] It is grander than this body. It is a reality and it is a truth which he held on to. And it is the truth of eternal life that God had set that in his heart, that he had set in his mind. We'll get to that in just a moment.

And these are matters which he knew. This is why Paul could say he has been beaten, but he's not crushed. He's being bruised. He's been forsaken, but he's not forgotten about.

People may do him harm. They may do his body harm. They may do to him what they want to, but they cannot destroy him. They may hurt his body. They may even kill his body, but they cannot touch him.

Because life is not confined nor constrained to the body we possess. We're not talking about some supernatural spiritual world. We're talking about the eternal. These are matters which he knew.

Friend, the realities which we hold on to. These things we call truths will dictate how we live out our missional activity. Paul says these things are temporary.

[13 : 09] When we were in Indianapolis, I was reminded that several years ago, I wasn't sure how many years ago, but I knew that it was there. So we always get there early. The pastor's conference starts on Sunday evening. We get there so that we can attend a church there in that city, whatever city that is the Southern Baptist Convention is in, on Sunday morning.

We want to go to church service, and then we want to go there. I knew when we were going to Indianapolis, I wanted to go to New Circle Church. New Circle Church is a church plant that Pastor Barry Rager pastors New Circle Church.

And the reason I knew it, and some of you here went, when Carrie and I were still working with the teenagers and the youth a number of years ago, we took a mission trip, and we took teenagers up there. I told some of you this.

It's the only mission field I've ever been where I heard gunshots go over my head and things of that nature. And we were there, and we were working with Pastor Barry in New Circle Church. It was a brand-new church plant at that time. He was actually just launching.

And part of what we were doing, it was right outside of downtown. It was in a very rough district in which we were to walk around, and well, actually, we were there to put a roof on a building.

[14 : 11] And the group we took down there, it only took us two days to do that. And they said, well, you're here for a week. Now we've got to find something else for you to do. The day we showed up, there was a police officer shot and killed in his patrol car on one of the streets.

And he said, what I want you to do is go door-to-door and do prayer walking. And it was on those same streets. Some of you had your kids with us.

And we were going around door-to-door knocking. He said, now when you go, tell them you're with New Circle Church. He said, God has given me favor with a particular individual who's a nonbeliever, who is the drug dealer, in the neighborhood.

And he's put the word on the street, nobody mess with Pastor Barry or anybody with his church. It's pretty amazing. So we did. We went door-to-door. Actually, some in our group ended up in the home of the young man who had shot that police officer.

And we were just going around praying. We were going around praying. And so when we went, I said, I want to go to New Circle Church. Well, we knew it was close. We found a church, and he had moved. He was in a school, and we were there. And we were driving around before the service.

[15 : 14] And your pastor's wife's got a great memory. And we were looking at the neighborhood, and we knew we were close. I'm not trying to be stereotypical, but we knew we were close to where we were walking around. You could tell. She said, I think it was either 20th or 30th Street.

And so we drove, and sure enough, we found it. And we found a spot. We ate lunch every day. It was called our Daily Bread Cafe. And it was vacant. We found out later the lady who owned it at that time had died.

But we looked to the right, and there was the building we had put the roof on. It was 10 years ago, because I talked to Pastor Barry. It was in 2014. And we had worked so hard to put a new roof on this building and clean that lot.

You couldn't even see the building anymore. It was overgrown. It was gone. You couldn't even tell there was a building there. And I asked Barry about it later, and he said, yeah, the city government came in and shut that down.

It was a community garden. He said, but we're here, and those raised beds you built are actually out behind the church. See, it's a really good reminder that everything in this world is temporary.

[16 : 19] That church is thriving. Multi-ethnic, multi-generational church. Doing wonderful work. He remembered me as soon as I walked in. I said, yeah, because I named like Billy Joe.

You don't really forget that, right? But it's thriving. The kingdom work that is going on there is enduring. That temporary work where we did there, we worked so hard on, we were so proud of, you can't see it anymore.

But that temporary was actually just an opportunity for Pastor and Barry and his other around him to do the eternal. See, we need to be reminded that there is this truth, that this life is not it.

There's a greater purpose and a greater calling. Paul says that this is but an earthly tent, and it is our house, and someday it will be torn down. This leads us to the second thing.

Here's a truth that comforts us in every difficulty. Here's a transformation to Christ-like likeness. A transformation to Christ-likeness. Look at what it says.

[17 : 21] He says, for we know that the earthly tent, which is our house, is torn down. We have a building from God, a house not made with hands. This is a wonderful thing. He says that what we receive from God will be a house not made with hands.

It's not a tent. It's not a temporary shelter. It is an eternal shelter, and it is a house not made with hands. Now, the reason we know that this is a transformation and makes us Christ-like is because when we open up the gospel according to Mark, and we turn to Mark chapter 14, I believe it is verse 58, says that when Christ was raised on that third day, when he came out of the tomb, that his body was a body not made with hands.

And then when we go to Acts chapter 7, and Paul is walking through the city of Athens there, and he sees all these temples, Paul goes up on, you remember, right, Mars Hill, and he talks to the people there, and he says, I want to tell you about a God who lives in a temple not made with hands.

And then when we get to the book of Hebrews, and we're in the book of Hebrews in the ninth chapter, it tells us that Jesus Christ has entered a temple to intercede for us. And he's entered a temple, what does it say? Not made with hands, which means that everything in glory is not made with hands.

And when it tells us that we will receive a house not made with hands, it says, as Paul would later say, we will be as he is, and we will see him as he is seen. We will behold him face to face because there is a transformation.

[18 : 39] In Christ, we will inhabit a body not made with hands, which is the same body type that Christ himself possesses at this moment because he's in the temple not made with hands.

Because of the God who dwells in the house not made with hands. And then one day, we'll walk in that same temple. We'll walk in that same house. We'll worship in that same type of body as we cast our crowns down at his three feet because we will say we inhabit a body not made with hands.

We will be transformed to be Christ-like one day. And that is a glorious truth. Paul says you can hurt this body. You can harm this life.

You can cause pain. But someday there's coming an eternal body. Someday there's coming an eternal place that I will inhabit. See, you don't kill my life. You don't take my life. There is a giver of life.

There is a sustainer of life. Jesus says don't fear him who can kill the body. But rather fear him who has both body and soul and spirit in his hand. Right? The giver of life.

[19 : 38] He said you can take my body. You can do whatever you want to with my body. But when this tent is gone, I get another body. I get a permanent house. I get a house not made with hands. Because the moment I accepted Jesus Christ, all of a sudden he has promised that one day I will be transformed to be as he is.

And we will live where he is. We'll have that glorified body. We'll have that magnified body. And we will be as our Savior is for the first time in all of creation.

We will hold on to what we have been intended to be from the very beginning. We'll get to that in just a moment. There is this glorious transformation. Because it says for indeed in this house we groan.

Longing to be clothed with the dwelling from heaven. See there are groanings in this world. For the unbeliever. Sometimes they groan because everything that they want in this world they cannot possess.

For the unbeliever. Their groanings are for what they can't get. For the unbeliever. Their groanings are for what they want to get. For the unbeliever. Their groanings are for what they lose. For the believer the groaning is for what we're going to have.

[20 : 44] We have a longing for something more. We don't have a despair for what we're leaving behind. We have a longing. A groaning for something more. The believer. The true believer in Jesus Christ.

Groans because he wants what he was created to be. He longs to be clothed. Not to be exposed. Not to be naked. Not to be living in a temporary shelter called a tent. The groaning of the believer.

Is a longing to be as he was intended. Or she was intended to be. It is to be transformed into a Christ-like state. It is to be moved to a position of Christ-likeness.

It is to inhabit the heavens that were made without hands. See the groaning of the believer is not the groaning of the world. Friend I want to ask you. What are you groaning over?

Does it concern you what you can't have, what you don't have and what you want to have? Or are you more concerned about what you're going to get? God I'm ready to cast it off.

[21 : 40] There's a truth that I'm holding on to. Oh I have a longing. Sure I need these things here. There are needs. There are provisions. There are things we must have. But if we're groaning more for the things we don't possess in this life.

Than we do for what's coming to us in the next life. Then we're groaning for the wrong thing. We have a longing for the things of this world greater than a longing for the things of that. Then I would say our allegiances are shifted.

Paul says for in this body we groan. Longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven. Inasmuch as we have put it on will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent we groan being burdened.

Because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed. So that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. In that one verse we see the surpassing greatness of eternal life.

In that moment it will be swallowed up. If the Lord tarries there will come a day where this tent is laid in the ground. If the Lord tarries there will come a day where tears may be shed.

[22 : 43] And I hope they do. If they're not it's okay. You can come up and give my body a high five if you want to. That's fine. You can laugh and have a good time. That's wonderful. That's okay. There will be a day where there will be mourning on this side of glory.

But I want you to know that in this life. My life for the first time in all of my existence would have been swallowed up by life. Out of cast out death. We are swallowed up.

The greatness of eternity is seen in how it overcomes what is mortal. Paul says we have a transformation to Christ's likeness that is awaiting us.

Number three and finally. Look at this testimony of the creator's purpose. Testimony of the creator's purpose. Verse five.

Now he who prepared us for these things or for this very purpose is God. Now he who prepared us for this very purpose is God.

[23 : 43] The word of God says that God created man as an eternal being. I cannot answer. Do animals live forever? I've been asked that question I don't know how many times.

I cannot answer all of these things. But I do know the word of God tells you with all truthfulness. That part of our God image that has been imparted to us is the eternity of our life.

The eternity of our being. We are not eternal in the aspect that God is eternal. He is eternal past, eternal present, eternal future. But from the moment of our birth we are eternal life.

So we have a beginning point but no ending point. Your life may be confined in this tent to a temporary state of existence. But your life is not confined.

It has a beginning but no ending. We've quoted it over and over and over again. The book of Ecclesiastes said that God has set eternity in the heart of every man. That man has a longing for eternity.

[24 : 41] God created us as eternal beings. This is why we see such great pursuit. Such great ambition for things greater than us and grander than us. These are why we look to things that we cannot understand. This is the thing that promotes man.

That man always is advancing himself and promoting himself and pushing himself. Trying to seek more, to learn more, to grow more, to do more. Because man knows there's got to be more. That very eternal existence that God has created in us.

It is from God. But then Paul says that the moment we come to Christ, something changes. The moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and we surrender to him, then God begins to prepare us for something else.

He equips us to do the ministry assignment we have been given in this life. But he has prepared us for the life to come. He sets in our heart a matter of eternal weight.

That is, we realize, as the old hymns say, we're just strangers passing through. That this world is not our home. All of a sudden, there's this new reality that fashions in our hearts.

[25 : 46] That we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. And God begins to show us truths which we never held on to. That what we were seeking and striving so much to hold on to now becomes of little value.

Sure, we may still have the same occupation. We may still have the same concerns and the worldly desires around us. But deep within our heart, there's something. There's a longing for more. There's a longing for what it ought to be. There's a desire to be eternally with him.

Because God is creating in us this longing for the ending of this step into the next step. It says that he prepares us for this very purpose. This is the purpose of the creator.

He created us to live in fellowship with him eternally. Man was set in the garden to live eternally in fellowship with a holy God. Holy man and holy God in eternal fellowship with one another.

Death was introduced because of the fall and the sin of man. When we come to Christ, that bridge has been built. The chasm has been spanned.

[26 : 44] And now God prepares us once again to live eternally with him. And then he does something. He doesn't just tell us the truth. He imparts the truth. He says he gave us the spirit as a pledge.

That is, the Holy Spirit is the down payment of what God is going to do. We realize that when we come to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Now I'm speaking to the believers.

If you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you do not comprehend these things. These are spiritual matters. These are not matters that you can claim. But for those of us who have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

The Bible says in that moment we are sealed with the spirit. That is, he makes us secure. Then it says that he imparts to us the spirit. And Jesus says the spirit has but one longing.

That is, the things of heaven. He wants to use you on the earth. But the longing he has is for the things of heaven. There is an ongoing eternal fellowship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[27 : 43] And it is that fellowship that will continue eternally. And that abode within you, that abiding presence of the spirit, has a longing not to fellowship with this world, but a longing to fellowship with those in the other world.

It is a longing of spiritual matters. That God not only told us a truth that we could think intellectually about, but he has imparted a spirit who is part of the truth inside of us so that it can move us.

That it can bring conviction. So that it can bring confidence and comfort. So that it could be there a very present help in every day of trouble. See, it is our pledge. It is our guarantee that God is going to fulfill these things.

These are the realities of life. That God has not called us just to live in this life alone, but there is a greater life that awaits us. And it is that reality of life that enables us to labor in this life.

It is that reality that empowers us to be used of him. Friend, if all you're working for in this world is this life, not to be despairing, but to reference Paul once again, we are of all men most to be pitied.

[28 : 55] Because all of our hard work will soon be overgrown, overrun, much like that building we were so proud of we left just 10 years ago. Now it's no longer there.

This life really has nothing that endures, but the reality of life that is imparted to us enables us to labor in this life, knowing that we're laboring for a greater one.

We're laboring for a place of eternal rewards and of eternal praise where we will stand before our Savior as he is face to face to declare his worthiness and his glory and his position.

Here is the reality of life that motivates us and keeps us going in every season of ministry. Let's pray. God, we thank you so much.

God, we're so thankful. We're thankful for the day you've given us. We're thankful for the word you declare to us. Lord, we pray that our lives would be conformed to it.

[29 : 57] Speak to us now, oh God. Father, we ask that we as your children would hear a clear word from you, that you would speak to our hearts and minds. Lord, if there's any here who do not know you as our Lord and Savior, who cannot claim these realities, we pray that by the power and presence of your Spirit that you would show them that, that they would speak to someone, they would talk to someone, they would fall on their faces unashamed before you.

Just be glorified in this moment. We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[32 : 57] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.