

Sermon on 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 prepared by Jonathan Shradar

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That makes sense across the board doesn't it? Future outcomes motivate present actions. It is how we live, it steers the choices we make. Expected results become fuel for action. No matter who you are.

But here we have a letter to the church, to remind Christians where they are to find the motivation for living the life of faith. Radically different from the prevailing culture around them. Attempting to bring renewal wherever they are.

We have been moving slowly through this Epistle, taking it in chunks that allow us to draw out its fullness. The first church would have done the same, in fact that's why we have the letter still today. They would have received it, read it through altogether, and spent days, weeks, even years chewing on the exhortation from the apostolic father that Paul was for the church in Corinth. In the first few readings of the whole letter, surely they would have recognized what Paul was building toward.

The larger context of 2 Corinthians is that Paul is gearing up the church for its mission - not to be flashy and temporary but to be a body of believers that has lasting power, formed by the Spirit of God, for mission. Sprinkled throughout but vividly clear in chapter 5.

Here laid before us are two more blocks of motivation, things that stir us with a purpose for Kingdom work.

Today we will grab ahold of these two motivators and see if they take us anywhere. Both future-oriented and positively for Christians. That **there is more than this,** and **Jesus will judge.**

1) There is More Than This

“Perspective is never just what you see. Perspective is how you view what you see.” Tony Evans

Scripture is inviting us to see rightly. We saw this last week with the call not to dwell on things seen (temporary) but unseen (spiritual, eternal reality). Easier said than done for sure. But the invitation rolls on and here Paul gets at the tension of our temporary current experience. “Human life is indeed like a tent, being both temporary and vulnerable.”

Affliction now is light and momentary compared to coming glory... and even if we die, we fear not because we have a permanent, eternal place with God.

The church lives flourishing in the present when she has a clear idea of what is to come. Not obsessing on “hand-made” temporal things.

COVID-19 is not the end. Government restriction is not the end. The loss of a job is not the end. The return of the economy is not the end. There is more than this...

This is set before us to give us vision for something more - where the deep formation we long to experience leads, the destination for those united with Christ in faith.

Vision is important.

Proverbs 29:18 “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.” (ESV)

The longer I pastor in this context the more convinced I have become that clear vision is indispensable, in fact it acts as our motivation for life together. My vision, as best as I can discern it following the Lord’s desire, is to forge a community of believers hungry for personal, real, and consistent experience with Jesus, relentless about consuming the word, unashamed about pursuing the power of the Holy Spirit, and passionate about living to see others meet Jesus.

Quick to set aside our own preference to replicate and extend our participation in the Kingdom's expansion.

Aching for a pouring out of the presence of God in our day.

What we envision is what we go after... "What we value is what we pursue." PJ Smyth

This is what Paul dangles in view of the church. Look around, see your life, see what everyone values and enjoys, see brokenness, see evil, see even the good that exists in the midst of it all, and know, In Christ, there is more than this.

If you think this life is all there is, you are inclined to either live a laissez fair attitude of indifference or aggressively attempt to control everything within your realm.

But **truth** moves us into either despair or settled hope (courage for life).

Remember Paul is still thinking about our future resurrection. So just to bring us all up to speed, for those that have faith in Jesus for salvation, the Bible teaches that we too will experience a resurrection like that of our Savior. We have been raised to new life spiritually and we will be raised to new life for eternity as we are brought into the glorification we are promised. The upgrade that brings us back to our original, undefiled design.

With hope in that then we do life, ministry, hopeful existence, living forward toward the more.

Stirred by longing or groaning for new "clothing." When what is "mortal may be swallowed by life." Paul's confidence in the future resurrection expressed itself in deep, longing, anticipatory groans.

Because we were made for something more, we ache for it. Longing for the gathered church is reflective of our longing to go home to the Lord.

That we would be newly clothed in restoration, righteousness, and have that new person glow! We don't want to be found naked...

"It isn't just 'shame', in the sense of modesty, though that's part of it. It certainly isn't 'shame' in the sense of 'guilt', though there are some cultures that have felt ashamed, in that sense, of the human body. No: if Paul is right, there is something deep down within every human being which knows that we are made for more than this. Clothes are an anticipation of our resurrection bodies. The reason we take trouble over them, insofar as we do, is not just pride or a desire to show off, though of course that may come into it as well. At a deeper level than that, it is because we know that we are, in the present, a shadow of the self God wants and intends us to be. Wearing clothes is a sign of that 'something more', that fuller existence which we glimpse but cannot, in this life, grasp and possess."
NT Wright

Groaning with creation. Groaning that doesn't express dissatisfaction with our present existence (which there certainly may be) but a profound longing to be 'overcoated' with all the blessings God has for us in the new age.

This adds adornment to the good news. In Christ you receive forgiveness, transformation, eternity... and resurrected bodies!

The anticipation of this positions us to live by faith. "To believe that God's permanent, death-defeating promise is more defining than our momentary experiences is to walk by faith, not by sight."

Trusting in the providence of God, in his purpose of the church, and living for his glory.

Pursuing the presence of God, spiritual formation, the renewing of our minds, loving and obeying as a sacrifice of worship.

2 Peter 3:13–14 "But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. [14] Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace." (ESV)

That there is more than this, that you are destined for a resurrection, motivates us for the mission of the church, the “making Jesus known” bit. **It motivates us to truly live.**

But there is another motivator.

2) Jesus will Judge

While we could dig into thoughts about the intermediate state (where you go when you die before the new earth arrives) - it's Paul's point of gearing them up for mission that seems to matter.

Living the life of faith to please Him - Jesus. Because we will appear before his judgment seat.

Jesus will judge. Apart from him this is fearful (this is the despair awareness of the future can hold for those that reject Jesus.) Because before his judgment-seat it is all on you, your ability, your perfection, which you lack.

But in Jesus, for those made righteous by faith, there is no condemnation so it bolsters us for the life of faith. Yes Jesus will judge you and if you are his it does not make you quake but desire to please him. Forgiveness does not mean moral indifference.

"When Paul says that 'there is no condemnation for those in the Messiah' (Romans 8.1), he at once explains that this is because (a) God has condemned sin in the Messiah, so ultimate condemnation is impossible for those who are 'in him', and (b) God has given his spirit to the Messiah's people, and the spirit will enable them to become, in their moral behavior, the people he has already declared them to be in justification." NT Wright

“Faith that justifies is expressed by love and obedience...” saved not by good works but for good works.

Sobering to realize that we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. **We don't know exactly what this looks like** (how rewards will be distributed) but we know it matters.

Receiving what is due for all we have done in the body whether good or evil. May it be good. The ultimate good, of living as agents of renewal, agents of reconciliation between God and our neighbors.

Living our trust openly, noticeable, rejecting idolatry, misplaced values, and surrendering again to Jesus that someone will notice and want to know our Savior.

Longing for home, preparing to stand before Jesus, motivated by it, **but not alone.**

2 Corinthians 5:5–7 “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 of good courage. 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.” (ESV)

Spirit-given courage for life, all of it. Invigorated for the mission we are called to. Comforted in the affliction. Given the words to say. Granted boldness to declare.

Not left to our own devices but enthused by the Spirit - and oh we need it - and its promised to us.

“We groan for that day when we will be delivered from nakedness, the judgment upon Adam. Our longing is sweetened by the Spirit’s wedding ring, his distinctive work in our souls. Thus we are of good courage.” **Hughes**

We are going to be just fine... and that moves us forward to the new.

The anticipation of our future motivates the life of faith. Will you let it motivate you?

When Spain had extended her conquests to the ends of the then-known world and controlled both sides of the Mediterranean at the Straits of Gibraltar (the fabled Pillars of Hercules), her coins proudly pictured the Pillars framing a scroll inscribed with the Latin words *Ne Plus Ultra* - “No More Beyond.” The Pillars gated the end of the earth. But in “In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue” and discovered the New World. The proud nation then admitted her ignorance and struck the negative *Ne* from her coinage, leaving the words *Plus Ultra* - “More Beyond.”

The change from the myopic “No More Beyond” to the expansive “More Beyond” effected a revolution in the world culture, global economy, and geopolitics. The change also serves as a handy example of what is needed in the spiritual geography of the church. That we would be motivated by and advance toward the “more beyond!”

Be acquainted with your groaning - don’t stifle it, but recognize that it is an ache for your eternal home that shapes your present. Trust Jesus, seek him and his Spirit for all of life.

Live the life of faith in community - we are meant for each other and meant for mission. We cover each other, challenge each other, and make Jesus known with each other. Don’t forsake the body of believers... it's too easy and we miss out. *It looks different now, but we can be up to the challenge.*

We are headed home, not quite yet, and that longing, being before Jesus motivates our very real lives right now. Let’s be about it. There is more beyond!