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II Corinthians 5:1-8 "Knowing the Future, We Are Not Dismayed" April 7, 2019

Let's open our Bibles this morning to II Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 1.

This morning we picked a happy subject, one that you might not think about too often. We are going to talk about your death.

Paul has been sharing with the Corinthians about how he has not grown weary in ministry, though it has been a tough road for him, because he knew that any work that was going to get accomplished of any significance has to be God's work; that it wasn't him, but the Lord in him. He realized that he was in a warfare for the souls of men, that he had an enemy, the devil, who was very interested in blinding the hearts of people against the love of Jesus. And so Paul saw himself, as we read, as a clay pot. I have this great treasure within, the gospel of Jesus, that can give eternal life to those who hear it, but I'm carrying it around in this very weak vessel. Paul talked a lot about his suffering, the ups and downs that he had faced. He said in verse 1 and in verse 16 of the last chapter, "But here's some of the reasons I don't lose heart, because even though I know that my outward man is just showing the wear of it all, in every trial that I face, every difficulty, my inward man is becoming stronger. I'm becoming more convinced of the marks that the Lord has left and promises that He has fulfilled." And so Paul ended up the chapter by saying that everything he was facing now was a light affliction compared to what was coming. And we talked about how interesting it would be for us to try to put ourselves in Paul's shoes, that he could call the kind of life that he led light affliction. He ended by saying last week, "I'm living my life in a way that causes me to not look at the things I can see, not with my eyes, because those are all temporal things, but I want to spend my life looking at what I cannot see, and those things are eternal."

This morning in Chapter 5 we are going to look at the

first eight verses, as Paul continues the idea of looking beyond what we're facing, the trials and the difficulties, to find strength now because of what we know happens then.

Paul's life is not at all like yours and mine. Oh, he suffered for being a believer. Maybe you do as well, but I doubt that many of you are seriously worried about your life because of your faith. I don't know how many people are chasing you down to kill you. We have had on occasion here death threats because we're on the radio. I guess you're supposed to take them seriously. I don't very much. I just figure when the Lord's done, He's done, but until then, I'm fine. But it's not exactly persecution; right? Put yourself in Paul's shoes. Every living, waking moment he suffered the real potential of someone taking him out physically because of the message that he was preaching. How do you live like that? He says in Chapter 6, the one we're going to be getting to soon enough, that he's dying and yet he lives. He says in Chapter 11, "I'm often in death." He wrote in Chapter 1, when we started, verse 8, "I want you to know about the burdens we were facing, how that we carried this death in ourselves, and how God continues to deliver us from these great death threats."

Paul was a guy that understood what it meant to put his life on the line, and so from that standpoint I guess it is hard to relate to what he has to say. But on the other standpoint, we're supposed to be giving our lives for the sake of the gospel as well. The cost is much less. Maybe someone doesn't like us, maybe they say the wrong things about us, and maybe they don't want to be our friend anymore. They unfriend us on Facebook. Oh, not that. Dear God, please. As a young Christian there was a question that circulated by an evangelist actually, who came up with the little phrase, but he said, "If being a Christian was a crime, would there be enough evidence in your life to convict you?" And that always bothered me. I want there to be enough evidence.

For Paul there was plenty of evidence; right? His faithfulness did not cause him to tone down the message, even though it was frightening what was waiting for him, and it didn't take him down a less confrontive path. He didn't waiver. He was courageous in his testimony to proclaim the truth. In fact, he'll say in verse 8, "Hey, if that gets me killed, fine, but I can't change the

message nor the obligation." But how do you stay the course like that? And the answer that Paul came up with and that I want to give you today is if you have a proper view of dying, you'll be a lot bolder. And certainly, that was the case for Paul. Even though we know it, and probably will not face that kind of opposition.

We had a friend three weeks ago in Rwanda that was murdered for his testimony. He had a wife and three children. He'd been there 19 years. He knew what he was getting into. He loved the people he served. And one Saturday afternoon they came and they killed him. Now, we don't face that kind of threat, or most of us don't. You can certainly be in a country that you may do that. But at the same time, that's Paul's position that drives this theology, if you will, and he sets it before us.

We do a lot of funerals here. This week we had a mom die who was in her 80s, well known in our church. We had a father die in whose house I got saved, also in his 80s. And people always say the same thing: Oh, they died too young. I'm thinking 80-something is probably not too young. But if you love someone, it's always one day too soon, isn't it? Just one more day, one more week, one more hour, one more month, one more year. But yet, from a Bible standpoint, we read in Psalm 116, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." From a Bible point of view, there's no downside to you dying. For you, at all, it is only upside. You're going to be happier, you're going to be better off, you're going to be at peace. The struggles of this life are going to be gone. The enemy is going to have no place left to bother you. You are going to be in God's presence. It's going to be great. Not so for us, but for you. And the biblical facts about dying are good.

Paul would rather have been with the Lord than be here. He'll say that this morning, and he'll say in the weeks to come. He would take the rapture first, and death second, and staying here with us third; in that order. But Paul doesn't fear death. In fact, notice in verse 6 he says, we're confident. He says in verse 8, we're confident. It's a word that means just that, I am bold. And on the heels of last week's verses where Paul saw his body dying and his soul thriving, he's glad that there's coming a day when suffering will stop and life will begin for him in a real way with the Lord.

Death for all of us comes as kind of an utterly unsympathetic landlord with an eviction notice, but the believer at best, or simply, is just released from a kind of wretched earthly neighborhood to go into a glorious one in Heaven. Now, if you know all of that and you're free from the fear of death, it will stir a hunger for you not only for Heaven, but it will give you boldness while you wait. You'll have a desire like a prisoner who wants to be free, or a sick man wants to be well, or a thirsty man wants a drink, or a poor man wants a payday, or a soldier wants peace.

This morning out of these eight verses, let me give you four things that you can take away to face death more confidently, and I'll give them to you, like I said, every week early so in case you can't hang around, if you're suffering too much. But here's the four points: 1. The next body is the best one, 2. The next life is perfect, 3. Your next place of residency will fulfill God's purposes, and 4. Your next dwelling place will be with the Lord.

Verse 1, **The next body is the best**. "For we know," Paul says, "that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building with God, a house not made with hands, that is in eternal in the heavens." Part of Paul's eternal weight of glory from verse 17 in the last chapter was this comfort of knowing that a new body waited for him. I mean, we've mentioned it several times, that Paul's body had been mercilessly battered, ravaged by illness, the hardships of travel, the rigors of his schedule, the hatefulness of men. I suspect that the new body idea thrilled him. If you're 18 years old today, it may not thrill you, but just wait a few years, because it gets more thrilling the older you get.

Notice Paul's assertion, and it's an important one. He said we know. We know. I like the fact that Paul's declarations of facts kind of fill this book. If you were to go through just an outline of the book, and if you're not teaching it on a regular basis you probably wouldn't do that, but you will find this constant we know, we have, we groan, we walk, we're confident, we make it our aim, we're persuaded, we have confidence. He uses the terms constantly. There are a lot of things that Paul knows, and knowing them changes the way he lives. And maybe my question to you is, what do you know for sure, sure enough to change the way you live? Not

your head full of information, but so at your fingertips that you live it out. Paul was willing to minister even in this very violent and possibly deadly environment, because he was sure that he knew what would happen next, and so he doesn't lose heart. Kill me, I'll just keep preaching. How do you stop a guy like that? You don't. He would write to the Romans in Chapter 8, "I figure that this present suffering is nothing, no worthiness to be compared to the glory that's coming later. But until then we groan in this body, looking for the redemption of our bodies." That's what we're looking forward to. Paul was glad to entertain the thought of what was coming next.

Now, that didn't mean that Paul thought his death was inevitable. Notice in verse 1 he writes the word "if." We know, we're confident that "if". Because he leaves open the door that he will speak about in II Corinthians, to the Thessalonians, I Corinthians as well, he talked about the rapture. There's a possibility, and Paul left open the possibility, that the Lord could come in his generation; that the Lord would catch him up. "We shall not all sleep," he'll write, "but we'll all be changed, in a twinkling of an eye." Paul had that as a hope. We should have that as a hope. The Lord might come for you and I today. I'd like us all to get on the bus together. Wouldn't you? I'd like that trumpet to sound, and we could just disappear. That would be just fine with me. It would save a lot of heartache for all of us, and missing each other, and grief, and getting older and hobbling along. Just come, Lord. It would be awesome.

And Paul left that open as a possibility in his life, but he said if this earthly house or this tent is destroyed. Paul as a tent maker by trade probably loved the biblical illustration that our current bodies were like tents, temporary structures. When Isaiah wrote in Chapter 38 about his life, he wrote, "My life span is gone, you've taken me down like a shepherd's tent; you've cut my life from the weaver. You've cut me off from the loom; from day unto night you're making an end of me." Or literally, this body is wearing out. It's not going to be able to continue. Temporary structures over time weaken. They're good for a while, they serve for a time. They're never meant to be your eternal home, or your permanent home. If you go back to John's gospel in Chapter 1, where he writes of Jesus that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, he uses the word for tent. He

set up a tent. The Old Testament tabernacle, in the wandering of the Children of Israel, was a temporary dwelling place. It was picked up and moved every time they moved. It was finally given a more permanent place once the Children of Israel were in the land that God promised to them.

In fact, this Old Testament mosaic tabernacle is a pretty good example of your body, because if you've read about it in Exodus and all, and Leviticus, and sometimes those are tedious verses and you want to skip over them, there's a pretty interesting description of the tabernacle which tells us that most of the outside of it was covered with seal skins and badger skins. In other words, didn't look very good. Inside they were ornate and beautiful, gold and linen. Kind of like us. We don't look so good. We're in these bodies that are kind of slowly wearing themselves out. But inwardly, you're a jewel in God's eyes. Jesus is glorified and is glorious, but he hid himself in an earthly body. Outwardly your tent isn't looking any better, but inwardly this living soul that belongs to the Lord is looking better every day. You didn't have any life in this body until the Lord breathed life into dust. We're spirits that live in a temporary housing. We're camping. Some of you like camping. I don't get it. I can't see working your whole year, hard work, to then try to go out and pretend you're homeless.

Solomon described it in Chapter 12. We read it this morning. This body's getting old, man. The legs shake, the teeth fall out, the eyes don't work. Everything bothers you. You wake up when a bird sings. You're afraid of everything. You fall down. The heights are too high. It's a pretty accurate description. And it's not going to get any better.

But I know that if this tent, this temporary dwelling place is destroyed, I'm going to have an eternal home. I'm going to have a building. And by the way, the word for building there is the word for permanent address. It is a fixed place. Paul said he is bold and without fear, because he knows if this one ends, he's got another one, and it's going to be the best one. Jesus said in John chapter 14, "Don't let your heart be troubled." Don't be afraid. "You believe in God, you can believe also in Me. In My Father's house there are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place

for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, then I'll come again, I'll receive you to Myself; so that where I am, you may be also. You know the way. You know where I'm going. I'm coming back to get you." One day this body made of dust will die or be raptured, and our heavenly body will be available, a body made without hands that's eternal in the heavens.

For Christians, dying isn't dead, it's just moving. I always thought a great inscription on a tombstone would just have the word "moved," and then maybe a second line, "Check Bible for address." That would be good.

Well, that was Paul's reality. Notice he said we know. This is what keeps us. Our body's temporary. One day it is going to be destroyed. The word is for dissolved, demolished, or overthrown. And that's going to happen to your body, the one that you're living in now. It's going to go down by disease, or by decay, or by accident, or by violence, or just by old age. God will decide how. But going you will. And then Heaven, and a new body. The best one you'll ever have. Unstoppable, Paul was, because he knew what awaited him, and so he uses this word building, a permanent home is waiting for me. Paul's body ravaged by travel and persecution and pressure, he longed for this.

Folks get older, and they'll tell you sometimes, and maybe if you're younger you shake your head, but they go, "Man, I'm ready to go." It's hard to get up in the morning. It's hard to walk across the street. It's hard to go up the stairs. At some point you just go, I got to go. I've run my race. I'm not running anymore. And Paul knew that to be so.

By the way, the phrase right here "made without hands" sometimes confuses people. It's a metaphorical definition, if you will. But it is defined in Hebrews Chapter 9 verse 11 where we read that we're getting a body, a tabernacle not made with hands, "not of this creation." So when you read not made with hands, it literally says it's nothing we know here. It's nothing that's been designed here. It doesn't relate to here. It is a godly work. It's heavenly work. What we're going to be getting is going to be not of this creation. It's going to be eternal. In fact, if you read I Corinthians, especially chapter 15 towards the end, the last 20 or 30 verses, Paul goes out of his way to make

the connection between an old body, the one you have now, and the new one that God is preparing for you. And it is the most detailed description in the Bible for your resurrection body, but Paul uses nature as an example and he says, it's hard to extrapolate the glory of what you're getting with what you have. And he says it's kind of like a beautiful plant or a flower. You plant a bulb in the ground. It's an ugly looking thing, but you can't even make the connection between it and what grows because of it. And so Paul goes out of his way to say that to us, this body is perishable and sinful and weak, but the one we're getting, it'll never perish. It is free from sin. It is totally strong. It is fit for Heaven. It'll be a body like Jesus'.

Paul wrote in Philippians chapter 3 to the saints, our citizenship is in Heaven. We're eagerly looking there for our Savior and Lord Jesus, who's going to transform our lowly bodies, conform it to His glorious body, according to the power that works in Him, is to subdue all things to Himself.

John was in his 90s, and I'm thinking was really looking forward to a new body, when he wrote in Chapter 3 of I John, "Beloved, we are the children of God; it doesn't yet appear what we shall be, but we know when He's revealed, we'll be like Him, we'll see Him as He is." So this next body is going to be perfect, and it kept Paul going. It kept him strong.

Second of all: **The next life that you're going to be given is perfect as well.** Verse 2, "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we are in this tent when we're groaning, burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but we'd like to be further clothed, so that this mortality can be swallowed up by life." The next life is going to be a perfect life. Paul didn't have a morbid desire to die, but he certainly enjoyed thinking about how glorious it was going to be when there was going to be no more tears and no more sorrow. I think all of you like that idea. It's not death you're worried about, it's dying, isn't it? I'd like to go to sleep and wake up dead, most people say that. It's like they go to bed and wake up in Heaven. Well, sure. Who wouldn't? It's why that rapture I think is so appealing. You don't have to die. We all just go. There we are.

Perfect. I can handle that.

Paul had already tasted what Heaven was like. We'll get to Chapter 12 of this book, and he'll describe what happened to him in Lystra, Acts 14, when he was dragged out of town, left for dead, stoned by the people. And apparently he died, and he went up into the third Heaven, and he'll write in Chapter 12, "I can't even begin to describe to you what I saw. It would be a sin to try to put it into words." So he already had a taste. He said to the Philippians, "I'm kind of stuck between two desires. On the one hand, I want to go to Heaven and I want to be with Him. I'm hard-pressed. To depart from here to there is much better for me. To stay here might be better for you." But he goes, "I don't know what I'd like to do better." He said to the Philippians, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

So Paul was groaning, verse 2. He was groaning in this body. By the way, groaning is an interesting Greek word, because you hear groaning and you think stuff you can hear, but the word groaning by itself means you can't hear it. It literally means a sound that's internal. Kind of "ahhh." Nobody hears it, but you inside are groaning; right? And the older you get and the slower you get, the more groaning goes. I want the newer model. My model is going to have hair, and a lot of it. When Peter was facing inevitable death, he wrote in his two letters that he got off before he died, "It is important to me that I keep reminding you of the truths which I've taught you, even though I know that you presently are hanging onto them, because while I'm in this tent, I want to stir you up to remember those things, and I know that shortly the Lord has told me I have to put this tent off. I'm running out of days. I'm running out of time." Paul said this in verse 4: I want mortality, all of those things that say I can't live here forever, to be swallowed up by life. That's our future hope, that corruption may put on incorruption, that we'll be able to say, oh, death, where is your sting? Or oh, grave, where is your victory? And Paul lived that way and it gave him tremendous confidence, as he realized the next body would be the best one, and that the next life would be perfect.

Both I Corinthians 15 and I Thessalonians 4 talk about the rapture of the church. Paul believed it with all of his heart. Not everyone's going to die. There's going to be at least one generation alive when Jesus comes for

the church. The dead in Christ shall rise first. That's what we read; right? And then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up. So the dead in Christ rise first. They get a six-foot head start. You die now, you're absent from the body, but you're present with the Lord. But one day you're going to get a body, and according to the scriptures all New Testament saints -- we don't have time to do all the theology today, but let me just say it to you anyway -- only the church is going to get their bodies at the rapture. The Old Testament saints God deals in a different way. You're a unique work of God. So when the Lord comes for the church, the dead in Christ will rise first. They'll be changed. And so will you that are alive, and you'll be caught up so will you ever be with the Lord.

So Paul assures the Corinthians that there was a permanent habitation coming for their spirits, he doesn't want to be unclothed, but he wants to be further clothed. He wants to get rid of this body and get one that will last forever.

By the way, your body is the last, or the only unredeemed part of you. If you've been saved, your spirit is saved, your soul is in the process of being sanctified, but the body will have to either be changed or die to be redeemed. This is the old man -- this is the old -- you now, not the old nature, but the old flesh. So you either got to die or the Lord's got to come and change you, but one way or the other, that's how you get your new body.

Paul says, "I don't want to be unclothed." And the reason he says that, and maybe it makes less sense to you just reading it, but the Greek philosophy of paganism was that for a person to be truly free, he had to get rid of his body. And Paul said, I don't want to get rid of my body. I want a better one. I want an improved model. I want one that has hair. That's exactly what that means in the Greek. Right now we're absent from the body, we're present with the Lord. But the rapture hasn't happened yet, so there's plenty of people present with the Lord, waiting for the redemption of their bodies, the last work that God will do on their behalf.

Second life, the next life is perfect. No. 3, The next life will fulfill God's purposes, verse 5. "Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has also

given us His Spirit as a guarantee." God's plan and method of salvation assures you of what He would ultimately like to do, because God's plan is more than just sanctifying you or setting you apart. His ultimate plan is getting you to where He is. The ultimate goal of God is glorification, to glorify you, so that you can be where He is. That's why He made you, though He knew He would have to pay for you down the road, and that's why He paid for you, because His desire is that you would be with Him. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints," because when you die, then you go to be with Him. That's what God wants.

In the meantime, He gives you His Holy Spirit to dwell within you, as what the Greek word here, and not kidding now, is "arrabón." The word "arrabón" means earnest money. It means down payment. It can be translated engagement ring. It literally says God has given you a work of His Spirit within you to assure you that He's coming to finish the work that He started. You're the bride of Christ, but right now you're just engaged, aren't you? The wedding supper hasn't happened yet. You belong to Him. You're asked to be faithful to Him as a bride in waiting, but you're going to go and one day be joined to Christ. You're going to be His bride. And that will fulfill completely God's purposes. That's what He was interested in. In fact, he writes in Ephesians Chapter 1, "In Him you trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance, of the redemption of the purchased possession, to God's glory." In other words, God puts the Spirit in you to say, I belong to Him. He has purchased me. He marks me as His own, and one day He's coming to get me, because that's His ultimate plan. Notice what it says in verse 5, "He has prepared you for this very thing." That's what God wants. He wants you to get to Heaven. When you share the Lord with people, you're entering into God's plans. You're the one that speaks for Him. Come to Jesus. He wants you with Him. That's His desire.

The next body is the best, the next life is perfect, going to Heaven will satisfy God's ultimate purpose, and finally, **4. Your next dwelling place is going to be with the Lord.** Verse 6, "So we are confident," Paul says, "knowing that while we are at home in this body we'll be absent from the Lord. Now we're walking by faith, and

not by sight. But we're also confident, yes, pleased rather to be absent from this body so we can be present with the Lord." Paul's bottom line is easy to remember: That people of God can only be in one of two places. You're either here or you're with the Lord. There's not a bus stop. There's no purgatory. There's no waiting grounds. There's no, well, we hope you make it. No, you're either here or you're there, period. And with great confidence and without fear, Paul was able to serve in the most threatening and dangerous conditions because he was sure that this temporary home that he was dwelling in now would someday be replaced, and as a result he would be with God in Heaven in that sense. Absent from the body, we're present with the Lord, but he said while we're in this body, we're really not with the Lord. Well, we are, but not in His presence in the sense of where we will dwell. So Paul said we can only be in one of two places: We're either going to be here or we're going to be there with Him.

Paul was able to write to Timothy in his last letter, "I fought the good fight, I finished the race, I've kept the faith. There's laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord will give me in that day, but just not to me but to everyone who will love His appearing." Paul lived his life with a proper view of death. If you have that, you're invincible really. You're not afraid of anything. What can they do to you? Take your life. Ooh, send me to Heaven. Jesus said to His disciples early on, "You should never fear those who can destroy your body and then they can say nothing more about you. You should be sure that you please Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell." Or if you will, answer to God. Be ready to stand before Him.

So Paul's attitude towards death and his understanding of what would come next, and his hope for the rapture, but his willingness to give his life for the things of the kingdom -- in fact, he even says in verse 8, I guess it would be pleasing to go. I'm stuck between the two. I want to go, but I want to stay. I want to be there, I want to be here. I can only be one place.

Your next body will be the best one. We're going to have all the bells and whistles. It's going to be the custom body. And God knows we need it. The next life we're going to live is going to be a perfect life. Life of great joy and peace and rest and glorified in God. We're

groaning now. We won't be groaning then. You're not really where God wants you to be yet. But you're going there. You're going to be with Him forevermore, because your next dwelling place is not upon the earth, but with the Lord. So how bad can it get? This is, by the way, as bad as it gets for Christians, this life and this world. It could only get better from here.