

Last week, we were talking about having an eternal perspective, and not holding too tightly to this life... **...we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen**. And we (very much) look forward to the day, when we will be raised from the dead, into Christ's glorious new Kingdom.

And I reckon the challenge for us last week, was to not hold too tightly to this life, and not to just focus on this life, because our hope goes **way** beyond this life, and on into eternity...

But sometimes, Christians can go a little bit too far the **other** way – Some people become so ‘heavenly minded’, they’re of no ‘earthly use’. We can get so fixated on eternity and so fixated on our glorious future, that we cut ourselves off from the world. *And we act as if we’re just passing time in ‘heaven’s waiting-room’*. And we fail to adequately live the lives that God has given us to live (today)...

And that’s essentially what Paul is addressing here...

Last week, he used the analogy of “treasure in jars of clay” – our bodies are weak and fragile, and temporary, but the treasure inside of us – the glory that God is working **in** us, will live on...

But what does that look like? What happens when we die?

When it comes to the world religions, there's all sorts of perspectives about death:

- Most **atheists** believe that once you die, that's it. Consciousness stops; there is no spirit,, because "Man" (in their eyes), is merely an accident of time, chance and random physics and biology.

And they believe that your consciousness is merely a chemical reaction, and so when you die, that chemical reaction stops, and you are no more...

- Some believe when we die, we just go into a state of unconscious sleep
- Some believe those who have done good stuff in their life, will be rewarded with some kind of 'heaven', and that the wicked punished with some kind of 'hell'
- Some believe the good will be rewarded and the wicked will be annihilated – that means they will be destroyed (instantly and maybe painlessly) – they will simply cease to exist.
- Then, some believe in reincarnation.
 - If you lived well, you'll come back as a higher lifeform.
 - If you lived poorly, you'll come back as a lower life form.
 - But if you finally manage to rid yourself of bad karma (the effect of evil action or evil intent), then you might have a chance to **escape** this endless cycle of having to bear yet another miserable

existence, and your spirit will be absorbed into some kind of spiritual force, present in the world.

that's what reincarnationists believe.

- For some New-Age-ish beliefs, they reckon the pinnacle of what they hope to become, is a 'free or floating spirit', not tied to a body at all...

But, what do **we** believe? Well, Paul's very clear here – when we're raised, we'll have a body.

He talks about our current body, as if it's a **tent** (it's weak and temporary), but our resurrection bodies, he describes as “**a building**” . He says:

5 For we know that if the tent [our current earthly body] that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God [our heavenly body], a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

And he's at pains to make it really clear that “Hey, you won't be naked – you won't be without a body...”

Now, for the **Corinthian** church, this would've been a topic of conversation, because the early church was plagued by a false teaching called “Gnosticism”... Gnosticism, sort of mixed up Pagan philosophy, with Christianity. And Gnosticism had the hope that, when we die, we get to be free of the body, because the Greek Philosophers thought our bodies were holding us back... But Paul is very clear – “You won't be naked – **Yes**,

we're going to leave our tent behind, but we're going to move into a building.

Alright, he's not talking about 'our residence' – he's talking about 'our bodies'.

Righto, but until that time, we continue to live in the "tent". (But who wants to live in a tent? They're not that much fun). And our temporary bodies groan, don't they... Our physical bodies are subject to all sorts of burdens:

- Physical pain;
- Emotional pain;
- Physical limitations – there's stuff we just can't do;
- Tired;
- Worn out;
- Worries;
- Torments;
- Persecutions;
- Diseases;
- Experience sadness and grief;
- Plagued with anxieties;

And at times, the burdens of life can seem to become so overwhelming, that we long, to be in our **heavenly** dwelling... **(Get me out of here!)**

And when we're raised to our heavenly bodies, not only are we going to be free from everything that pains us and troubles us, we'll be with the Lord in a whole new way. Paul says: **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.

V7 is one of the best known bible verses – **we walk by faith, not by sight**, and we quote it often, but do you realise what sort of faith it's talking about – It's not talking about "I have faith that all will go well in this life"... To **walk by faith, not by sight** is to live this life (no matter how bad it gets), with a certainty that, no matter what happens in this life, shortly, we will be with Christ (with new heavenly bodies), in glory...

But even though we know this by faith, it's not just wishful thinking – it's not 'pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die'... **It's a certainty** – it's guaranteed... The presence of the Holy Spirit, in your life now, **is the guarantee**...

The fact that God The Holy Spirit, is living in your body today, is your guarantee that you won't be left without a body...

OK,, Sooo, if the resurrection life – if our future glory is so wonderful, why wouldn't we just press the skip button, skip the rest of this life, and go straight to glory???

I mean, Paul himself says here (V8)⁸ **Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.**

Paul would rather it; and if we have an eternal perspective, we would rather it. Why not skip straight to the eternal life bit????

Well, there is no 'skip button'.

Are you thankful for what God has given you? I hope so, because God has given you life, and He wants you to live it. And what we **do** with this life, matters.” ...

V⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him (Christ).

What's your life's ambition? – What is the aim of your life???

If we were to ponder that question, we'd probably get all sorts of answers, covering a vast array of spheres... Some would want to tell me about:

- Ambitions for raising a family;
- Career / working life;
- Financial goals;
- Business opportunities;
- Travel;
- Farm;
- Retirement & hobbies

What's your ambition? What is the aim of your life???

I don't know why so many Christians spend so much time worrying about "What's God's will for my life???" And it's

almost like they're paralysed, "Oh, I can't do anything, until I know God's will for my life..."

It's not rocket science, folks... – Do you want to know what God's will is for your life??? **It's to please Him...** - It's that simple... At times, God gives us specific direction, and deploys us in certain ways. But most of the time, God's will, is simply for us to please Him. If you find yourself in a certain situation, pray, "Lord, how can I most please you in this situation?"

- If you find yourself in a job that you don't enjoy, pray, "Lord, how can I please you in this job?"
- If the pressures of family are mounting, pray "Lord, how would You have me honour You in this family?";
- When you find yourself in an ethical or moral dilemma, and you don't know what to do, pray, "Lord, help me to please You, right now"

And;

- If you find yourself being richly blessed, pray, "Lord, How can I use this **blessing** that you've given me, in a way that is pleasing to you???"

How we live, matters.

How much does it matter? Well, let's read V10, and see just how much it matters.

V⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

V¹⁰ 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.

How we live, matters. And it matters, because we are **all** accountable to Christ.

Now, does that ‘mess with your theology’? We are **all** accountable to Christ.

How we choose to interpret this verse, will depend a lot on “How much we let Scripture shape our theology (what we believe about God), compared to how much we let our theology (what we believe about God), shape how we interpret the Scriptures...

Alright, so let me give you an example:

One of the key tenants of the Christian faith, is something called “Justification by faith alone”. Alright, we believe that no one is good enough, to earn their way to heaven. We believe, that when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ: if I was to stand there on my own merit, Jesus would look at me, He’d weigh everything up (good / bad), and He’d say, “Michael, you’re as guilty as Hell...” And He would make a very fair and just judgment – “Michael Brumpton, on your own merits, you are guilty of sin, and I’m sentencing you to Hell.”...

But the good news is, I’m not expecting that judgment. Jesus died in our place. Alright, so I am guilty of sin, and the wages of sin is death – I deserve to die... But Jesus, who lived a

perfectly sinless life, took my punishment upon Himself...

And so (in **this** life) we have an opportunity:

- Kneel before Jesus;
- To express our sorrow for our sins; and
- to **repent** of our sin;
- beg for forgiveness;
- to surrender our lives to Jesus, to follow Him as Lord..."

And we're forgiven. And so, on the day of judgment, those who are in Christ, don't have anything to fear... We **were**, "the wicked", but we're not "the wicked any more". And so, we are judged as "righteous". ("Justified", is the legal term)...

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood [sacrifice of atonement], to be received by faith.

....

Alright, this is pretty much a key element of the Christian faith: We're **not** saved by being good, because we can never be good enough. We're saved by faith, and so on the day of judgment, we are righteous, because our sins have been taken away...

Now, knowing this, how do we make sense of V10? ¹⁰ 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.

Hmmm... Does that mess with your theology???

A fair bit of ink has been spilt over this one verse...

If you come to this reading, with a firmly fixed **theology first**, and try and make this verse fit your theology, you're going to have to try and explain it away... And some people do that... The 'pet' answer is "Oh, he's not talking about salvation – this judgment isn't about whether you're saved or not... It's about whether you get a **big** reward, or a smaller reward for the things that you've done... your salvation is assured – this is about an additional reward...

Maybe... I'm not too sure... To me, this verse clearly goes **deeper** than "small reward vs big reward"...

¹⁰ 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.

Romans 14 is **another** place where Paul says that we all have to stand before the judgment seat of God.

Romans 14:12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Now, this is the picture that I'm starting to get here:

As disciples of Jesus, yes, we **have** been set free from sin... But we're **not** free to go on sinning. We're **not** free to just go and do whatever we want... We have to give an account of ourselves, to Jesus...

What I see here, is an image of Approval Vs disapproval. And whether Jesus is pleased with me, or whether He's displeased / disappointed in me...

You 'get this', don't you? Even though we are forgiven, sometimes we do things that makes Jesus very disappointed in us... And likewise, sometimes we do things that makes Jesus very happy...

And that'd be a bit of a dampener, hey??? For years, we've been looking forward to the return of Jesus, and eternal glory, and we come before the judgment seat of Jesus, and with sadness in His eyes, He says, "I am so disappointed in you"...

That'd take the shine off things a bit for us, wouldn't it...

Anyway, I don't think we're meant to get into a great big theological debate over what can be lost, and what can be gained, and whether it's talking about rewards, or whether it's talking about Jesus' displeasure...

The exact meaning, is hard to grasp, but the **application, is so simple**... And if we get the application bit right, the other bit doesn't matter... Paul gave us the application in V9: **we make it our aim to please him.**

There's the application...

While we're living in our tents – while we're living in this life, the application is simple: **we make it our aim to please Jesus.**

Because we all have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ..... , **we make it our aim to please him .**

Because we will each receive what is due for what we have done in the body (whether good or evil) **we make it our aim to please him**

How would Jesus have us live? We just live to please Him...

- We love Him;
- We serve Him;
- We obey Him;
- We live righteously;
- We love our brothers and sisters in Christ;
- We love others;

We live to please Jesus...

A number of years ago, Christians all over the place, were buying trinkets and T-shirts with WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?)... Well, Jesus can do things that I can't... I reckon a better motto for us would be WWPJ (What Would Please Jesus).

Let's live our lives to please Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sentence: Our life's ambition – to please Jesus.
Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:1-10
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Amen.