

Embodied Life

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Date: 07 August 2022

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[0:00] All right, thank you, Lisa. Hey, good morning, everybody. How are you doing? Good? Awesome. We're going to jump right into it. We've got a lot of ground to cover today. We are in a series, if you're new, called, not called anything, but it's in the book of 2 Corinthians.

If you have your Bible, go ahead and turn to 2 Corinthians verse 5. And if you don't have your Bible, no worries. We always show the verses up on the screen behind me as well, and the screen's to the side of the stage, so you can track along.

The series is unpacking the grand theme, the overarching theme of 2 Corinthians, which is power through weakness. And there's a unique way Paul really brings this out, and we're going to get to it, but let's jump into the text.

It says this in 2 Corinthians 5 verse 1. For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling. If indeed by putting it on, we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

[1:18] And he who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always a good courage.

We know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage. And we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

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

This is God's Word. So this passage is about the Christian faith, and how it helps us to understand and see our bodies as they are, but also as they will be.

And what it does, and it can help us out today, is it kind of cuts at the body image issues of our culture, which is as big a problem today as it was then. Paul is writing this letter into a context of a church living in a Greco-Roman world, which was much like ours today, not with all the fancy technologies we have, but very much in what it valued.

[2:35] It gave priority and preference to those who had affluence, to those who had political connections, to those in power, and to those who had strength and beauty. And it's just not they valued those things, it's that they worshiped them.

Those were the things that were celebrated. And what it did, it separated out in society the winners and the losers. And one of the ways those winners and losers were sifted was based on their body, which in many ways is no different to our modern age.

We all judge the body according to a standard set for us. And this has been happening forever. In fact, historians argue that ancient Greece were the ones who invented the notion of the ideal body. And you saw it, you could see it through the way art and sculptures were made back then. And what they would do, they would try to make the perfect specimen. And they wouldn't just use one person as a model for it.

In fact, they would go, and they would take inspiration from various bodies, you know, picking and choosing the parts that they saw as beautiful, but from different people. And so they would literally, what they would do with their art and their sculpture is they would design and they would craft this perfect ideal person in form of strength and muscularity and the right hair and the beautiful face, all with perfect proportion and symmetry.

[4 : 0 2] And in those days, the biggest compliment you could pay a young man was to say that he resembled a statue or a sculpture. That's a real thing. The implication being that to reflect the image of the perfect specimen that somebody had created out of their own imagination was to reflect perfect beauty and strength.

The standard in that culture was set for everybody living in it. And by contrast, because that was what was exemplified as good, then if you weren't any of those things, actually you were dehumanized and cast aside.

And that's what the culture did, the weak and the sick. The unhealthy, those not mentally strong, they were considered less than human. In fact, if a baby was born deformed, oftentimes they would cast it out on the side of the road as kind of like that was the garbage heap of those days.

Weakness. Weakness was something to get rid of. It's very sad. Now, it's easy to look back with snobbery and think, hey, you know what?

We're better than that. We're above that. But we aren't, actually. Our culture is no different. There are standards of beauty that come from us from the fashion and entertainment world.

[5 : 2 5] There are standards of strength from the sports and athletic world. There are standards even of what a beautiful mind is from the academic world, right? And the cultures and subcultures you and I feed on and the ones we live in are the things that kind of shape what we value the most about the body and how we tend to judge the body as beautiful or not beautiful.

So in the fashion and entertainment world, if you're in that and you're breathing that in all the time, they elevate men and women of a certain look and shape above others. The sports world celebrates those with strength and agility.

The academic world, it worships the mind. Literally, they made a movie about this, right? The beautiful mind. None of us are exempt from making judgments about our bodies and the bodies of others is what I'm trying to get at.

But we'd be fooling ourselves to think that our judgment is totally objective, that we are judging based on our own standards.

Actually, it's just not true. Our culture is constantly telling us who the winners and losers are. Which in some is going to produce pride, right?

[6 : 3 9] If you got the right stuff, you're going to become arrogant. While in others, you don't have the right stuff, what does it produce? Man, shame and loathing.

But in the end, whether you have it, the right stuff, or you don't have the right stuff, everybody loses because our standards degrade the bodies we have.

It's easy to see how it degrades those who are in the low end of the spectrum, the have-nots, when it comes to beauty, strength, and brains. But I want to say it also degrades those who do possess them.

If you got the muscle and ability to play sports well, you know what? That is the only thing that is celebrated about you. So there is one aspect of your being that is being celebrated.

If you're pretty enough to get on magazine covers and land lead roles in movies, then you are only valued for how you look and how pretty you are.

[7 : 3 8] And the same, in the academic world, the better your brain, the better you're off. The point is, is that our culture, in its selectiveness of what it values in people, it degrades the body.

Because what it does, when elevating those things that are our strengths, it turns those things into a commodity. Not only that, it turns our body into a commodity. And here's the thing about commodities.

Commodities are not sacred. Commodities are just things you have and things to be used. They're not held sacred, which the Bible says is not true. Your body is actually a sacred thing.

So, in culture, you can use your body to make money. You could sell your beauty and make money off of it to increase your profile and position in life.

You can objectify others in the same way. Right? We do that all the time. The porn industry is based on an objectification of the body, certain aspects of the body and their functions.

[8 : 4 2] And that is it. It is a degradation of the human body. And you and I, we can use other people's beauty and wealth and strength for our own pleasure and gain.

In both cases, whether using it for your glory or using it, using your strengths, your personal strengths for your own benefit or others for your own benefit, what it communicates is everybody's just out for themselves.

All right? How can I use my body to get ahead or satisfy my desires? And how can I use your body to get ahead and satisfy my desires? And in this environment, we are selling and buying each other. We are treating each other as commodities. We're being used and we are using each other. It sounds terrible, right? It should. It should sound terrible.

Because in the end, no matter where you start in the spectrum of beauty and strength and brains, we all end up losers. We all end up losing those things.

[9 : 46] It's only a matter of time until you're relegated to living under the degradation of a body without any value. As we age and get older, that is going to happen to us.

And so, there is no value placed, real value placed on the body. It's not really held sacred, but that is not true with the gospel. And the gospel doesn't promise it will come and modify your body once you get saved by Jesus.

It's not going to modify your body, turn back the clock to suddenly make you strong again or beautiful again or smart again so you can start dominating in this life. What it does, the gospel shifts the standards by which we judge the body.

And that is what Paul is getting at in the first five verses of 2 Corinthians. And as much as the Corinthian culture had the standards, we have to look and we have to see that the gospel has its own standards and they're better.

Verse 1, it says, for we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. You know, it feels a little unkind that Paul starts out by talking about our earthly bodies as tents, right?

[10 : 55] And we're just thinking like, man, if we're saying the gospel says our body's sacred, I wouldn't say tent is like a very sacred thing, right? We just went camping on our vacation at Lake Norman out in Charlotte and as much fun as we had with our tent, as we drove around and we were on a boat for one of the days, there were some pretty sweet lake homes we saw that made our tent feel slightly less impressive.

I would be happy to have switched if anybody was offering, right? But that's what Paul is doing here. He's comparing our body right now to our body that is to come in the resurrection.

This one, this body that we have is a tent. The one that is to come is more like a big old mansion on a lake. You might be just like a little pup tent, right?

Your body may be less impressive, might be a little pup tent. Somebody else's might be a big old eight man tent, but it's still a tent. And your eight man tent might give you some pride and that's because you've never seen or heard about a lake home yet.

That's the problem. You can try to spruce up your tent, you could bedazzle it, you could put in a mini fridge, an air mattress, but it's still a tent.

[12 : 18] And another thing a tent lacks in comparison to a proper well-constructed building is in its strength. So, we got caught up in a pretty fierce thunderstorm while we were camping.

Like 30 mile an hour sustained winds, that is not to account for the gusts that were hitting our tent. And our tent did not make it, let me tell you. We had to get out and sleep in the car.

You can be praying for Rory and Sierra because I am pretty sure they still have some psychological damage from that episode that we went through. But just like no one would say a tent is more beautiful than a mansion, no one would say that a tent has the strength of a house either.

See, what Paul is doing here in saying the tent versus our heavenly dwelling, the building that God is making with his own hands, is he isn't comparing tents to tents.

That's not what he's doing. He isn't comparing us against each other, which is our proclivity. That's what we tend to do, right? He is comparing the tent you're now in to the better one that is coming.

[13 : 26] And that is the standard shift that the gospel calls us to and gives us when it comes to judging our own body. And what this does, this avoids the winners and losers categories here on earth that breeds arrogance or pride and shame.

Because in Christ, all of our tents are going to be upgraded. Right? Which is a good thing. That is a good thing. It keeps us from getting caught up in the strengths and weaknesses of our bodies, which is a standard, which is a shift in standard, but it's also, it's a shift in hope.

The gospel shifts the hope from our mortal bodies to an immortal one. In verse 2, Paul says, for in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling.

If indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent we groan, being burdened. Not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what

is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Again, back to Lake Norman. If someone came up to me during our tent camping and said like, hey man, in three days you can have my lake house. I would have literally groan the rest of the time in my tent, longing in anticipation.

[14:47] For when we would step into that wonderfully air conditioned, beautiful, well stocked home that's on the lake. And the only thing that would have been louder than my groans would have been the groans of Haley and my kids.

The point is that without knowing about the lake house option, I'm satisfied with the tent, right? It's great. It keeps out the weather, it keeps out the bugs. Hey, I'm good. But in comparison to a big lake house with a pool and maybe a boat, it kind of makes sense that our desires and longings would shift to want to be there, right?

It's better. Now this metaphor that I'm giving you falls short because the gospel doesn't tell us we are going to be given a totally different body, right? Like, we're not trading in a tent to get a mansion.

What Paul is describing here is that when we die, this earthly tent is coming down. But at the resurrection, and the resurrection isn't like when you die you go to be with the Lord.

The day when Jesus returns, that is resurrection day. Our old body, we are going to be reunited with it. This is good news, okay?

[16:04] That body is going to be glorified. So that is, we're not going to be getting a totally different body, but our old bodies are going to be made perfect.

They are going to be what God has always determined them to be, but they aren't because we are in this age where our bodies are under the corruption of sin and the futility of sin.

And so like Romans 12 talks about, our bodies groan. They groan. Sorry, Romans 8, not Romans 12. Our bodies groan, longing for that change.

But we're going to be, in that day, reunited, right? Maybe that song we'll be playing, reunited and it feels so good. I don't know. My brain's a little weird.

That's what I think about these things. What's happening and why that is necessary is that body, that glorified body, fits with everything else that is happening when Jesus returns.

[17:07] Because the heavens and the earth will also experience renewal, not replacement. Like our bodies, all of creation will be totally transformed, will be totally made perfect, and they'll no longer be subject to mortality, to death and decay.

Those things won't be a reality in our bodies anymore. We are going to live forever and ever. And neither will there be sin or evil at work in our bodies as well.

They're going to be totally transformed in that moral sense too. So this new body that we will be receiving fits in appropriately with the new heavens and the new earth, which is why Paul starts to mix his metaphors here.

He goes on from comparing a tent to a building. Now he's talking about putting on future bodily dwelling, kind of like a garment, right? He says, so we won't be found naked, which literally means we won't be found inappropriately dressed for the moment, but we will be robed in the clothing of resurrection bodies fit for the eternal life we are inheriting in the age to come.

Jesus talked about this in his parable in Matthew 22 about the wedding guests, right? The wedding guests, all these people were invited and the ones who were invited, he gave them clothes to wear to come in and those who came in with their clothes were welcomed in and those who were found without the right clothes on were cast out.

[18:30] In one sense, our bodies will be totally different, right? This is how the clothing metaphor is really helpful. In one sense, they're going to be totally different, but in another sense, they're going to be very familiar and similar.

You and I are still going to look like ourselves just in a perfected way. When Jesus rose from the grave in his resurrection body, he was the prototype. We get to look at him and see the disciples could tell it was him.

They could see it was Jesus. He looked like Jesus. He talked like Jesus. Maybe he smelled like Jesus. I don't know. But he came back in a perfected way.

Think about that, guys. Man, we need to get some holy imagination around this, of what that means to have these perfected bodies. I don't know about you, but I think it's like maybe my back hair is going to be gone to the glory of God.

If you've got a crooked nose, it's going to be straightened. If you struggle with tiredness or mental illness or dementia, man, those things are going to be replaced with vitality and a mental capacity that is out of this world.

[19 : 38] The back pain or the weak knees or the muscular dystrophy, any of those ailments we can carry around in our bodies, those are going to be eliminated. They're going to be gone. We're not going to be dealing with them anymore.

If you're missing limbs, they're going to be back. And not only will we physically sculpted by God's perfect designing hands in that body, but we're going to be morally perfected as well.

No more temptation towards sin and evil. And I can't wait for that day to you. I don't know about you, but you know, Christians in the room, man, following Jesus, we got to admit, man, this fight against sin is like constant.

And it can wear us down sometimes. Man, I'm looking forward to putting down that burden as well. Because there, our only desire in our body is going to be to please God.

And our only reality will also be knowing his pleasure in us. It only makes sense for us as Christians to long for that body.

[20 : 41] If we know, if we know that is what is to come, we should be longing for it more than anything else. So we don't try to live and make this body perfect with our own hands.

And I'm not saying that we should like give up on being healthy and stewarding this body we have. Yes, it is important. But man, we're not putting all our hope in it. And the other part of that is we don't despise our bodies when they fail us or when they don't measure up to some sort of standard. Now, it's true that this current body isn't appropriate for the next age. But we have to realize as Christians that doesn't mean it's good for nothing now. Because look at verse 5. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the spirit as a guarantee.

And it goes on to say, so we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord for we walk by faith and not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

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

[21 : 58] And what this is saying is the life we live in this body as Christians should anticipate the life to come. Our bodies may be mortal, yes, they may be imperfect, yes, but they aren't useless because they aren't useless to God.

It doesn't matter your body's weakness or strength. It doesn't matter what you don't have. God can use you.

Man, there is a lady, Joni Erickson Tata, and she's, you know, I think in her 60s now, a great athlete in her younger days, and then through an accident became a paraplegic.

And that rocked her world. She became depressed. She became hopeless. And then suddenly, she got this vision. She got this revelation of, you know what, despite her weaknesses, how God could use her.

And she has gone on to be a massive blessing to so many people, to the glory of God, to share and minister how much God loves those, man, who seem, by outward appearances, to be weak.

[23 : 15] Man, that is somebody who has caught the revelation that it doesn't matter what my body is like, God can use it. God can use it. And here's the thing.

He gives us His Holy Spirit. He puts it in this weak body, preparing us now for the eternal life that is to come. So how can you and I think little of our tent bodies if God sees it fit for Himself to come and dwell in it?

Therefore, we should walk away from this saying, you know what, my body is not to be despised. It's not to be held with disdain. So, give honor to your body.

Give honor to the body of others, not because of some worldly standard set, because, man, God has put His Spirit in them. God has honored those bodies with His own dwelling.

And some Christian traditions, man, they look at these passages and they walk away with the wrong understanding because, man, it clearly does say this earthly body is just a tent that's passing away.

[24 : 21] But they would take that and just make it lead them to despise the body and the flesh and even abuse it. You know, one can think of how monks would flog their backs with reeds or sticks or

whips, literally beating their body because they said, all the sinful desires is coming out of my body, so I'm just going to abuse it and mistreat it to try to bring it under submission.

At other times, people would go too far in denying themselves certainly bodily pleasures like food or drinks, things that God says are not bad things for us to enjoy, but because our body takes pleasure from them, they assume that any kind of pleasure that the body can enjoy must be a bad one.

And so, it's a mistreatment of the flesh. We can do that and misunderstand that. And this all comes from this misunderstanding that the body was worthless and unable to please God.

And so, these Christian traditions, man, they just couldn't wait to be free of it so they could really be holy and pleasing to God, which is really a defeatist way to live. It really is.

It doesn't give you any kind of hope. And that defeatist way to live is just the opposite of how we're called to live in this body, knowing that the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Look at what verse 6 says.

[25 : 42] So, which means like, hey, let's go back and look at what that so is referring to. So, because the Holy Spirit is given to us as a guarantee, we are always of good courage.

We are always of good courage. And then in verse 8, he says again, yes, we are of good courage. Even though, even though we are in this body and away from the Lord, man, we walk by faith and not by sight because we know that one day we're going to be away from this body and at home with the Lord.

On this side of eternity, you and I, we need courage. We need courage to walk by faith and not by sight. And the Holy Spirit is given to us to lead us and empower us to do that.

The life we live is longing to be at home with the Lord. But until then, we live with courage because we know that while it's hard, it's not impossible to please God this side of heaven.

And in fact, that pleasing God is meant to be our aim now as we live this life in this body. Verse 9, so whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him.

[26 : 55] We make it our aim to please God 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.

Now, I want to say, some of you hear this and you think like, oh, man, I know how to get into heaven now. I got to do a bunch of good works and my good works has to outweigh the bad stuff I do.

No, no. This is not salvation through works. That is not what Paul is getting at at all. See, when we look at the whole of Scripture, we see for Christians that there are two judgments, right?

The first judgment is when Jesus returns and he says he's going to separate the sheep from the goats, the saved and the unsaved. The first judgment isn't based on anybody's works but on whether or not you had faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

That's it. Eternal life is based on faith and faith alone. And those who don't believe, they are not going to inherit eternal life.

[28 : 01] They're going to be cast into eternal death. But the Bible very clearly states in several places there is a second judgment for those who are entering into eternal life.

The works we did on earth will be judged by Jesus. And we see this, he refers to that in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. But we also see it, Paul writes about it in another letter he wrote to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians chapter 3 and he says this in verse 12. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest or revealed for the day.

It's talking about a day means resurrection day when Jesus returns. The day will disclose it because it will be revealed by fire.

And fire will test what sort of work each one has done. And if the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

[29 : 05] Right? It's not that he's going to be let into heaven, he's just going to receive a reward. And if anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss though he himself will be saved but only as through fire.

So, it's very clearly we see this thing that we're talking about here of rewards, future rewards. This isn't about you earning eternal life but about receiving rewards that God has prepared for you to come into and receive in heaven the inheritance that God has set aside for you.

And here's a guy named Hervin Bavinck, wise old Bible teacher, he puts it this way. If God on his part wants to picture the salvation and glory he desires to give his children using their imagery of wages and reward and that is indeed what he does throughout the scriptures, he does that to spur on, to encourage and to comfort his children who being his children are already his heirs. Let that sink in. The inheritance, right, the Bible says the sons, the children of the house, they're the ones that get the inheritance. The inheritance which is then kept for us in heaven is not a wage paid out, we're not earning them, it's not a wage paid out to employees in proportion to what they have earned but a reward that the Father in heaven grants to his children out of sheer grace. Out of sheer grace. And that reward is one of the many incentives for moral conduct. But by no means is it a rule or a law for it arises from God's will alone.

[30 : 51] So in this body we have honor. God looks at you and he sees you as special. He sees you as beautiful.

He sees you as wonderful. So much so that he is willing to dwell in you. And he is pleased to use the body that you are in right now for good works that he has prepared for us. And Ephesians talks about that. We get to walk in these good works that he has prepared for us before the foundation of the world. We get to do that. And we get to do that to bring glory to him in our bodies.

So let's make it our aim to please him. As the band comes up let's consider some ways to respond. If you're here I want to speak to those in the room who are not yet a Christian. One day this life in your body will end. Right? some things we can count on death and taxes. We will all die and all of us are going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

[32 : 06] And nothing you do in this body will earn you eternal life. That only comes by faith in Jesus as the Savior who died for your sins and who is now reigning as King in Heaven.

And salvation if that's your salvation I want to say it doesn't come through you doing better and trying harder. It comes by faith in that truth and confessing your sin and asking for the forgiveness Jesus offers through his death on the cross and that is the offer to you today if that is you. Now if you're here and you're already a Christian your response before we respond with communion in a moment the Bible warns us before we do that to examine our hearts and I want us in our response to take a moment for examination before we get into communion but this is how I want us to consider examining our hearts and think about this for yourself.

Are you using this embodied life to please God or are you using it to please yourself? Do you look at others and the bodies they have they may look a little different from yours or they may be considered by the world standard as less than and do you look at them with disdain? Do you judge them harshly? Or do you have an unholy pride or disdain of the body that God's given you? So we're going to take a moment for those of you in the room or they're not yet Christians I want you to wrestle with what I said about God's calling you to faith in him for those of you who are already Christians I've given you some handles to wrestle with in your own life and listen to what the spirit is highlighting and respond in repentance for where you need to repent and you know what God's grace is always there to bring forgiveness and heal our hearts so let's take about 20 seconds to just examine our hearts quietly I find it helpful to close my eyes to help me do that let's go for it and see Amen.

[34 : 47] Holy Spirit, you've been speaking to us. You've been moving on hearts, and I pray that you would complete the work you have begun in us.

Amen.