

## Privilege of the Gospel

### The Hope

**Introduction:** Today we move to the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians

- We have witnessed the wonder of the Gospel (His presence available, emboldens, transforms)
- The nature of the Gospel
- The paradox of the Gospel
- Today, the Hope of the Gospel that makes the Gospel such a great privilege

(ILL)

*Loneliness Is an Epidemic with Physical Impact*

*Adapted from James K.A. Smith, "Not Meant To Be Alone," Commentary (5-3-18)*

*Researchers created a banal scenario: a group of people would play a frivolous game of catch, tossing the ball to one another to pass the time, trying to keep it aloft. But one member of the group would never have the ball tossed her way. Try to put yourself in her shoes: you're in a group that starts a game of catch; the ball popcorns randomly around the group; giggling and frivolity ensue; you keep waiting for your chance to join in the fun. But the ball never comes your way. You're patient at first. You smile when others smile.*

*You inch a little further into the circle to try to draw attention. Your smile is becoming more forced now. Until eventually, you conclude: the ball is never coming your way. This game isn't for you. You pretend you didn't want to play anyway. You stop trying. The researchers discovered that the ostracized person will testify to an increased sense that life is meaningless and devoid of purpose. Now imagine this isn't an experiment but the shape of a life: instead of waiting for a ball to come your way in a silly game of catch, you're waiting for anyone to call or drop by or speak your name. You can't even express it, but you're hungering for some sign that you are known. But no one calls. No one asks how you're doing. No one listens to your thoughts about the morning news. You are alone. Loneliness has become a societal epidemic in late capitalist societies.*

*For example, one study from the U.K. (although the US has a similar picture) concludes: Seventeen per cent of older people interact with family, friends or neighbors less than once a week, while 11 per cent do so less than once a month. It is linked to cardiovascular disease, dementia and depression and according to some researchers, its effect on mortality is similar to smoking and worse than obesity. One study revealed that it can increase the risk of an early death by as much as 30 percent. There is also a strong link between isolation and poverty: having two or more close friends reduces the likelihood of poverty by nearly 20 percent.*

## *The World's Most Desperate Need*

*Vision is the world's most desperate need. There are no hopeless situations, only people who think hopelessly. Winifred Newman*

### *Fall 2001 Survey Says Many Despair*

*According to a Fall 2001 national poll taken by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research: Only one in five report they often feel hopeful about the future; seven in ten reported such feelings in a comparable 1990 national survey.*

***“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.”  
I Corinthians 15:19 NKJV***

***“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”  
Colossians 1:21-23 NKJV***

So...what is the HOPE of the Gospel

### **I. We Know-REVELATION**

***“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” II Corinthians 5:1 NKJV***

A. This knowledge or revelation spoken of by Paul, comes on the heels of his statement at the end of chapter four.

***“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” II Corinthians 4:17-18 NKJV***

B. It's a knowledge of the temporary nature of our physical bodies

#### 1. Earthly house (tent)

- a. Emphasizes the fragile and impermanent nature of our bodies
- b. Also a familiar picture of the transitory nature of tent without foundations
- c. Reminiscent of the tabernacle in the wilderness

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- d. The life of a tent-dweller is never settled; their outlook is of a sojourner and pilgrim

***“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,” I Peter 2:11 NKJV***

***“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Hebrews 11:8-10 NKJV***

- e. This should be the attitude of every believer...This earth is not my home!

- C. It's a knowledge of the eternal new bodies we will one day assume (“we have a building from God, house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”)
  - 1. This is our resurrection body that is promised
  - 2. It is eternal and will never suffer or experience pain

D. It's a knowledge unique to the Christian faith

- 1. Where did this knowledge come from for Paul?

***“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:6 NIV***

— Paul’s Damascus road experience

***“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.” 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 NIV***

- 2. Its also a revelation of the Holy Spirit

- a. Calvin-(This knowledge) “does not spring from the human intellect, but takes its rise from the revelation of the Holy Spirit.”

b. Paul also addressed this:

***“But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” I Corinthians 2:9-10 NKJV***

3. The belief of the immortality of the soul is part of many non-Christian religions and philosophies
4. Paul’s teaching here (what he says we know) far exceeds any of them
  - a. Not only is the soul redeemed it will live forever
  - b. The body is as well and eternally glorified
  - c. The pulls, limitations, pains, suffering of this present world and body will one day be a thing of the past
  - d. Continuity with the body is part of the miracle

The HOPE is what we KNOW (revelation)

***“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” II Corinthians 5:1 NKJV***

## **II. We Groan-DESPERATION**

***“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 who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.” II Corinthians 5:2-4 NKJV***

For what does Paul say we groan?

**A. For the purposes of God to be fully realized**

***“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” Romans 8:18-23 NKJV***

1. God’s purpose is that all of creation be delivered from corruption (from the fall)
2. Waiting for the full revealing of the sons of God

3. No more corruption, decay, suffering
4. God's purpose, because it is His, will be accomplished

B. For the full measure of what we already experience through the Holy Spirit to be known

***“Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” Romans 8:23 NKJV***

***“Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.” II Corinthians 5:5 NKJV***

1. We now have a foretaste of communion with Him
2. Worship in His presence (not left comfort less)
3. Moses has a veil, people stood afar off
4. No veil now the Spirit in us but still through a glass darkly
5. The face to face...we groan for that to be realized

C. For the privilege of being alive at the time of Christ's return

***For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.” II Corinthians 5:3-4 NKJV***

1. New bodies come at Christ's return
2. Die before His return your soul is with Jesus but not body until resurrection
3. Groaning not to be unclothed (without body)

***“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” Philippians 3:20-21 NKJV***

- a. Paul had two reasons he longed for this (end of suffering and stifle the critique of his opponents)
- b. When Israel groaned in Egypt (moaned...cried out and God heard)-Exodus 2:23-25
- c. John...even so come Lord Jesus

d. This is the process:

***“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” I Thessalonians 4:13-17 NKJV***

The HOPE is what we GROAN for-(Desperation)

### **III. We are Confident (ANTICIPATION)**

A. Confident that our present state is not the end of our journey

***“So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.” II Corinthians 5:6 NKJV***

1. At Home in the body
  - a. God made us...fearfully and wonderfully
  - b. NO matter what we look like, what we consider our worth, we are His and made in His image
  - c. We cannot alter who He made us...not our right...this is our home
2. But absent from the Lord
  - a. Now are we the children of God
  - b. Doesn't yet appear what we shall be
  - c. Confident this is not all there is

B. Confident that our future state will provide a deeper and more meaningful intimacy with Christ

***“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” II Corinthians 5:8 NKJV***

The hope makes us CONFIDENT (Anticipation)

#### **IV. We Walk (INSPIRATION)**

***“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” II Corinthians 5:7 NKJV***

##### **A. By faith we are inspired**

1. Fix our eyes on that which unseen and eternal (4:18)
2. Looking unto Jesus we run the race (Hebrews 12:1)
3. Great cloud of witnesses cheers us on

##### **B. By the Holy Spirit who resides in us**

***“Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.” II Corinthians 5:5 NKJV***

1. The Holy Spirit is at work in us (makes us feel God's presence)
2. Opens the Word up to us
3. Comforts us with His peace
4. Makes us homesick
5. Holy Spirit is the first installment of the hope of eternal life that we share
6. Inspires us to hope

***“And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” Revelation 22:17 NKJV***

The Hope makes us WALK (Inspiration)

#### **Conclusion:**

*If, as Jesus said, we cannot know the hour or the day [of his return], yet we also see the signs, how are we to be both ready to go and resigned to wait?*

*According to the apostle Peter, the scoffers say: "Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. ... Where is this 'coming' he promised?" (2 Peter 3:4; all Scripture quotations from the NIV). But he reminds us that the Lord's tarrying means salvation for more. Still, Peter poses the question: "What kind of people ought you to be ... as you look forward to the day of God?" (3:11-12). His answer: "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God ... looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth" (3:12-13).*

*[Here is a story] that can fill in what "looking forward" might mean. When our middle son, Ben, was much younger, he had heard more than one sermon about the importance of surrendering our lives to Christ. Ben seemed well-attuned to the heart of God; he exhibited the selfless and kind tendencies that would take some—like his mother—a lifetime of sanctification to acquire. So it disturbed my husband and me when Ben stubbornly resisted our invitations for him to give his life to Christ. He would offer no explanations; he would simply tell us in his preschool English that he wasn't ready.*

*He resisted for several months. Then, one morning as we sat around the kitchen table eating our Cheerios, little Ben announced that he was ready to give his life to Christ. He then got up from the table and went upstairs. My husband and I looked at each other and followed him. I guess we expected to find Ben on his knees in prayer. We didn't. Instead, we found him folding his Star Wars pajamas into his Sesame Street suitcase. We said, "Ben, what are you doing?" He answered, "Packing." "Why?" we asked. "To go to heaven," he said.*

*We then understood why our child hesitated to give his life to Christ. He thought that in so doing, he would have to leave us and take up residence, literally, with Christ in heaven. We should all possess the faith of little Benjamin: we should have our hearts so fixed on Christ's appearance that the attachments of our earthly life pale in comparison. For we are "aliens and strangers on earth ... longing for a better country—a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:13). Wendy Murray Zoba, "Future Tense," Christianity Today magazine (October 2, 1995)*