



Potomac Hills

Presbyterian Church, PCA



By Grace Alone ~ Through Faith Alone ~ In Christ Alone

The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.
2 Corinthians 4:13-5:10

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English Standard Version

“The Gospel She Believed”

EULOGY FOR PHYLLIS JENETTE JORDE

July 28, 1926 – February 9, 2010

2 Corinthians 4:13-5:10

“Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed, and so I spoke,” we also believe, and so we also speak,¹⁴ knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence.¹⁵ For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.^{5:1} 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.² For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling,³ if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked.⁴ 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.⁵ 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.⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him.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.”

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us Your Word and making us Your people. As we hear about what You promise for this life and the next, help us to see the future glory found only in You. Help us to have the same faith Phyllis had. Do this for each of us, this day, in the name of Jesus, we pray, Amen.

In our Scripture passage today the Apostle Paul talks about his life wearing out and winding down and what he expects to happen when it finally ends. Interestingly, though death is prominent in his thoughts, this isn't really the somber passage we might expect it to be. It's actually a wonderfully encouraging preview of what we all have to look forward to, what Phyllis is getting to experience, at least in part, and what we will someday experience, at least if we know Jesus Christ as the Apostle Paul knew Him. So what is Paul telling us?

Well, first of all, he wants us to know that having ...

4.13-15: CONFIDENCE IN OUR OWN RESURRECTION IS BASED ON FAITH IN CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

“Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed, and so I spoke,” we also believe, and so we also speak,¹⁴ knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence.¹⁵ For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.”

Here Paul quotes Psalm 116, which is a Psalm of thanksgiving to God for deliverance. Just as the Psalmist was so confident in God's deliverance that he couldn't keep his mouth shut, so Paul finds himself in the same situation. He knows the truth and feels compelled to tell others about it.

Paul has acknowledged that death is at work in his body, meaning not only that he's aging **but even more** that he's suffering for his faith. But Paul doesn't view his inevitable death as a tragedy because he knows *“that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus.”* Now that's a truth worth proclaiming! Of course, the resurrection of the believer isn't a new topic for the Apostle. In his first letter to the Corinthians he delivered the most detailed teaching on the resurrection in the Bible, and here he's just summarizing his conclusion.

Simply put, Paul is telling us that if Jesus was raised from the dead, then so will we! These simple jars of clay, these cracked pots, have a phenomenal future!

Paul continues in verse 16, *“For it is all for your sake,”* and I think he's referring to everything he's been talking about in this chapter, namely that as a mere clay pot, he is weak, broken, suffering, **and inevitably dying**. Yet this clay pot is filled with a great treasure — *“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* Because of this treasure placed in him, **and placed in us**, Paul was able to introduce others to new life in Christ. Not only that, these jars of clay will eventually be resurrected and we will be all that God intended us to be as the crown of His creation.

And what is the end result? *“So that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.”* That's Paul's goal both in life and in death — for more and more voices to be added to the hallelujah chorus of praise and worship **“To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!”**

So far Paul has talked about the confidence we can have in the resurrection of our bodies, but for most of us that's future. What about between now and then? What about those who are suffering? What about those who are ready to die but don't, like some of the elderly we all know? I want to cover this because **this is what Phyllis just went through**. And it was her

faith that enabled her to persevere even as her earthly body was winding down. How was she able to do that? Well, Paul tells us here that ...

4.16-18: PERSEVERANCE IS POSSIBLE DESPITE THE PARADOXES WE FACE.

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

This short paragraph contains three paradoxes, facts that seem inconsistent and unlikely on the surface but which are nevertheless profoundly true and profoundly relevant. The first one is ...

- **Outward and Inward.**

“Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.” Is that true of you? I know the first part is, that is, I know you’re wasting away outwardly. But sadly the second part is not always so obvious. Many Christians seem to get harder and bitter as they get older. But I also know many who become “Sweeter as the Years Go By.”

Phyllis Jorde is just such an example. Phyllis had been ill for the past few months. I visited her several times at the hospital and the few times we were able to talk I came away encouraged. She knew where she was going. She had no doubts. I’ve known her for about 13 years, though not well, and she seemed to exude the love of Christ every time I saw her; the fruit of the Spirit was evident in her life. She was wasting away outwardly but being inwardly renewed.

But don’t take my word for it. I spoke to her pastor at Bethel Lutheran Church in Grand Forks, North Dakota, and to his administrative assistant. They spoke of the testimony of Phyllis’ life. How her marriage to Oren served as a model for the other couples in the church, both younger and older. I heard about her and Oren’s service there and how they were pillars of the church. I heard about the many times they quietly helped others, even as they were aging, and how loved they were because of it. I can hear Oren’s voice even now, with that North Dakota / Scandinavian accent, saying, **“Well, it was a good ting ta doo.”**

Oren died four years ago this month, and Phyllis just last week, their outer selves having inevitably wasted away ... but their inner selves so renewed they died younger than many of us ... ready for the resurrection bodies that will someday be theirs.

The second relevant paradox Paul gives us is ...

- **Light and Weighty.**

“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” There’s only one way Paul could refer to his trials and troubles as either light or momentary, and that’s by way of contrast with something else. It’s as though he puts all his physical suffering and mental anguish on one side of a scale. Then on the other side he stacks up the eternal glory that is being accumulated through that suffering. There is no comparison; the scales tip dramatically in favor of the eternal benefits.

Of course, we have to realize that **all** suffering does not produce future glory. When we suffer because of our own sin, there’s no glory in that. But when we endure life’s trials with a humble, grateful, God-honoring attitude ... that adds to the eternal weight of glory. And certainly when we suffer because of our faith in Christ we can be **sure** that eternal glory is being accumulated to our account. John Piper writes of Paul, *“When he is hurting, he fixes his eyes not on how heavy the hurt is, but on how heavy the glory will be.”*

It was hard to see Phyllis in her last days and think **“light and momentary affliction”** ...

but it will not be hard for her to see the “*eternal weight of glory.*”

And being able to see what awaits **but is not visible** is critically important in the Christian life because the third relevant paradox Paul gives us is the ...

- **Seen and Unseen.**

“*As we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.*” We naturally prefer the seen. Paul says that when it comes to spiritual issues, the world **we cannot see** is just as real as **and infinitely more important** than the world we can presently see. Our problem is that too often we define reality as “the material, the touchable, the seeable, the scientific.” But the Bible makes it clear again and again and again that there’s an unseen world that intersects our world, and we ignore it at our own peril.

I assume that if we could see the angels God has assigned to protect us, we would have peace and confidence in the ways of the Lord. For the most part, however, God asks us to trust Him and to fix our eyes not on **what is seen**, but on **what is unseen**. And Paul tells us specifically why we should do this — “*For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*”

Stop and think about that for a moment. Everything we can see other than people — our homes, our furniture, our businesses, our cars, our libraries, our family pictures — it’s all temporary. Someday it’s all going to be left behind. But the spiritual realities are lasting and eternal — love, joy, worship, faithful ministry, lives touched, kindnesses done, generosity shown.

Now in the third paragraph of our Scripture text today Paul returns to the topic of the resurrection.

5.1-5: KNOWLEDGE OF GOD’S PLAN FOR OUR FUTURE HELPS US FACE DEATH WITHOUT FEAR.

“*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.* ² *For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling,* ³ *if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked.* ⁴ *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.* ⁵ *He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.*”

Please notice how Paul starts this discussion of the future for our bodies: “**For we know ...**” He’s not offering us an opinion or speculation or unfounded hope. Instead he’s sharing great truths about the future that we can sink our teeth into. And the first one is that ...

- **The next body is permanent.**

Our present body is temporary, but it will be replaced with one that lasts forever. Paul was a tentmaker, so he speaks of our present body as an earthly tent, and it’s a good illustration. Tents are by their very nature temporary housing. After a while the stakes begin to loosen, the poles begin to bend, the canvas sags in various spots, the cold penetrates, and it’s not very comfortable.

When Paul says “*if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed,*” he doesn’t mean to imply there is **any doubt** about that happening. It’s not a **hypothetical** “if”; it’s a **chronological** “if.” It means “**when**” the tent is destroyed it’s going to be replaced with a house. Now almost anyone would prefer a house to a tent, especially the kind of house Paul’s talking about. First, its nature is eternal. Second, its location is heaven. Third, it is not built with human hands, the implication being that it’s built by God. No wonder he’s looking forward to the next body! John MacArthur speaks the truth when he says, *For all, death comes like an utterly unsympathetic*

landlord waving an eviction notice. But that eviction merely releases believers from a wretched earthly neighborhood to an infinitely grand and glorious dwelling in a heavenly neighborhood.

The second great truth about the future is that ...

- **The next life is superior.**

Paul mentions one thing that characterizes this life, and that's groaning. It isn't constant, but it is inevitable, and there are many things that produce it. We groan because of pain, because of broken relationships, because of dashed hopes and dreams, because of the amount of evil all around us. We groan when people act irresponsibly and harm themselves and others around them. We groan when people suffer and we groan when people die.

But there is still another cause of groaning, and this is one Paul mentions specifically, *"For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling,³ if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked."* Then two verses later he says essentially the same thing again, *"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."* Paul is expressing here a deep desire for the resurrection body God has promised.

Anyone whose physical body is wearing out, or anyone who has endured long-term suffering, can empathize with this. The closer we get to death, the more we long for that body described in **1 Corinthians 15:42-44**, *"So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is **imperishable**.⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in **glory**. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in **power**.⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a **spiritual body**."* He's longing for the day when God will give him a new body, in which he'll be able to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

The third great truth about the future is that ...

- **The next life is guaranteed.**

That's what Paul says in verse 5, *"He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee."* Do you realize that God's purpose was not just to create us, not just to redeem us, not just to sanctify us, **but to glorify us**, and this was His intention from eternity past.

Romans 8:28-30, *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.²⁹ For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.³⁰ And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified."*

It's so certain, he can speak of it in the past tense as though it has already happened. The reason is that we have a guarantee, a down payment, a first installment. Back in **2 Corinthians 1:22** we were told that God has *"put His seal on us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee."*

The fourth great truth about the future is that ...

- **5:6-10: The next home is with the Lord.**

Verses 6-8 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,⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight.⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord."*

In that great passage of comfort in **John 14** where Jesus tells His disciples, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled"*, He actually gives them very little information about heaven — just that it's a place. But He does tell them that *"I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."* Paul wants to be where Jesus is.

How then should we live? If we really believe that God has prepared a resurrection body for us, and if we really desire to be at home with the Lord, how should that affect our daily living now? Paul gives his answer in verses 9 and 10. Our goal is to please Him, for judgment is coming, ***“So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him.”***

In conclusion I would like to challenge us in respect to our own personal attitude toward the future. I fear that retirement has superseded heaven as the ultimate goal for many Christians. We're simply too happy with this world to think seriously about the world to come, at least until we hear the diagnosis.

But I don't get that sense from our older saints. Perhaps because they feel they're closer, heaven is so much more real to them. And we have so much to learn from them. We don't have funerals simply to bring closure. And we don't have funerals simply to help with grief management.

A Christian funeral is the **start** of the process where the church conveys the body of one of our beloved to its final resting place, worshipping as we go. We embrace funerals as an opportunity for the church to act out **one more time** the great and hopeful drama of how the Christian life moves from baptism to resurrection, from death to life, both spiritually and physically. And as we send them to God we accompany them with singing.

Thro' many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come;

'tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

Please stand, as the church, to send Phyllis to her Lord, with the singing of one of her favorite hymns, one of the greatest hymns, one of the most truthful hymns, one of the most hope-filled hymns. We commit her to the Lord, body and soul, with the words of ***Amazing Grace***.

Heavenly Father, thank You for revealing Jesus to us. For those of us who need a new perspective on our world, on our life, on all those questions we can't answer this side of heaven, enable us to really see. Help us to focus on Jesus. Use these promises of God to change us into people who trust You ... no matter the circumstances ... in the Name of Your Son, Jesus, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

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Colossians 3:1-4

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

Jude 1:24-25

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

Works used in preparing this message:

1. The sermon “*Is Your Earth Suit Wearing Out?*” by Michael Andrus, First Evangelical Free Church, 11/13/05, www.thegospelcoalition.org
2. Future Grace: The Purifying Power of Living by Faith in Future Grace by Dr. John Piper, page 360.
3. Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians: Power out of Weakness by Rev. Ray Stedman, page 93.
4. Grief: Finding Hope Again by Dr. Paul David Tripp
5. Fear Not! Death and the Afterlife from a Christian Perspective by Dr. Ligon Duncan
6. Comfort Those Who Grieve: Ministering God’s Grace in Times of Loss by Dr. Paul Tautges
7. Accompany Them with Singing: The Christian Funeral by Dr. Thomas Long