



Daily Bible Habit

II Corinthians

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Focus Points...*For II Corinthians 5*

Stop And Consider...

- * That if Christians are God's ambassadors to share the salvation of Jesus Christ, who will share the message if Christians remain silent?
- * How we, like all God's people, live in the assurance of God's promises. Though not yet seen, we believe, even though others may doubt.

Listen...

- * To Paul's prescription for how Christians should live for Christ, though groaning in this world.

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, through Baptism and the working of Your Word, I have become a new creation. As I await the final realization of Your work in me, enable me to be Your spokesman to invite others to the new life and new birth found in You. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Savior and Lord. Amen.

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Commentary:

Paul's discussion regarding "earthly tents" is a continuation of his "fix your eyes on what is not seen" discussion from 4:18ff.

Paul affirmed that Christians, as long as they are in this world, "groan" as they await deliverance from this world in heaven. In Romans 8:2, Paul wrote about this universal Christian experience.

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."

Note that the "groaning" in Romans 8 and II Corinthians 5 are similar. Both are chronic, unrelenting groanings. Both are based on the same Greek word, *stenazo*.

However, there is an important difference between the groaning in Romans 8 and the groaning in II Corinthians 5. In Romans 8:2, the word "groaning" (*sun-stenazo*) is in a compound form and literally means "to groan *together*." As long as sin, death and the Devil wreak havoc and God's creation groans longing for the final deliverance in Christ. It is a *shared* groaning by everything in Creation. It is a universal longing for redemption.

In II Corinthians 5:2, Paul described the “groaning” (*stenazo*) as the experience of the individual believer. Though “we are always groaning,” the groaning we do is what each of us experiences by ourselves in our own individual experience of faith. This groaning is relieved only when we are no longer subject to the sin and evil of this world.

Paul, in II Corinthians 4-5, encouraged each individual to remain steadfast amid the groaning. One-by-one, each person who individually endures the “groaning” gains the eternal “clothing”: the promised “heavenly dwelling” (5:2).

The longing for a house instead of a tent is one of the main images of the Old Testament. The NIV incorrectly renders the Greek word *skene* as “tent.” The KJV has a more correct rendering for *skene*: “tabernacle.” The important difference is that the NIV rendering glosses over the covenantal implications of *skene*.

Whenever covenant Jews heard the word “*skene*”, they knew it wasn’t just a tent. It was the tabernacle. Mention of the tabernacle brought to mind Israel’s patient wilderness wanderings and the test of faith which it entailed. As Israel “groaned” in their long, forty-year journey toward the Promised Land, they longed for a permanent house of worship—a permanent Temple. Until that time, their worship centered around a special portable tent which we know as the “tabernacle” (*skene*). Each time they worshiped at this special tent, they groaned in longing for the realization of what they believed, but did not yet see...ever confident that God would be faithful.

Paul likened the Corinthians’ patient groaning to that of the ancient tabernacle-worshipping Israelites. God was faithful to the ancient Israelites. He finally provided a permanent house of worship for His people through King David in Jerusalem.

God would also be faithful to the Corinthians. God would give His chosen people in Corinth a permanent—eternal—house in heaven. Those who trusted in God’s promise, though groaning and longing for heaven, would receive strength for today and God’s eternal promised dwelling for tomorrow (cf. also Hebrews 9:1ff.).

Paul acknowledged that some will consider this hope to be insane. They will accuse those who proclaim this hope, to be “out of their minds” (5:13). Paul’s response in 5:12 is simple: keep on proclaiming this hope anyway.

“We are...giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart.” (5:12)

That’s the core purpose of II Corinthians 4-5: to encourage the Corinthians to give an answer to those who cannot believe what they cannot see. Whether they

believe in the unseen promises of God or not, Paul will not cease proclaiming God's promises to come. Neither should the Corinthians.

“For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all, and therefore all died.” (5:14)

Paul and the Corinthians were Christ's ambassadors. God made His appeal through *each* of them (5:20). Since God was speaking the Gospel through them, dare they silence God by their own silence? Dare they let the world keep God's promised hope hidden?

Regardless of the groanings, the pain, the ridicule or the persecution, the answer was a resounding “No!” even as it is for us today.

You are Christ's ambassador. Are you silent...or faithful?

PRAYER:

Lord, how I groan as I try to live and proclaim my faith in this world of unbelieving scoffers. Though they may try to belittle, discredit or hurt me, renew in me the sense of who I am: Your very ambassador. Since I am Your ambassador, do not allow me to be silent. Instead, remind me that I am the very mouthpiece of God to this sinful world, called to speak Your Word. As I speak, give me the boldness of Your Spirit. Open the hearts of those who hear that the veil of unbelief might be removed. Indeed, as I await the full new creation which You promised at the end of the world, make me and all to whom I witness and new creation—forgiven by grace and passionately desirous to proclaim Your Word. Amen.

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