

4/12/26

From an Earthly Tent to Eternal Glory

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:1–8

Sermon Introduction

What would you be willing to do if you were absolutely certain of the outcome? What would you be willing to endure if you knew, without question, that in the end everything would be made right?

On January 25, 2026, a climber named Alex Honnold scaled one of the tallest skyscrapers in the world, Taipei 101, in Taiwan. It stands over 1,600 feet tall. He climbed it with no ropes, no harness, and no safety equipment.

Now, I'm not one for heights. If I'm being honest, I'm not sure there's any amount of money that would convince me to do that.

But if you could somehow guarantee my safety, if you could remove all possibility of failure, then everything would change. I might be willing to consider it.

This leads to a question; how much does certainty affect the way we live? Because when you are certain of the outcome, it changes both what you are willing to endure and how you endure it.

That is what is being addressed in this passage. Paul had experienced suffering, weakness, and pain in ministry. And yet, instead of fear or despair, he speaks of certainty, longing, and confidence.

He wants us to see that what you know about our future is meant to transform how we live in the present.

Main Point: 2 Corinthians 5:1–8 sets before us three realities of our resurrection glory so that we would persevere through the pain of life with a growing confidence in the Lord.

Outline:

I. The Certainty of Our Future Glory (1)

II. The Conflict of Our Current Condition (2–4)

III. The Confidence of Our Present Walk (5–8)

My prayer has been that the Lord would encourage our hearts with the certainty of our future, so that no matter what we face, we would live faithfully unto Him.

I. The Certainty of Our Future Glory (v. 1)

Verse 1 reads, **“For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”**

Paul begins with a statement of certainty, **“For we know.”** He is emphasizing the absolute certainty of your future resurrection. This passage is a summary and application of what he already taught the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:34–54.

He then says, **“that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down.”** Here our present earthly bodies are described of an **“earthly tent.”** And the word **“house”** isn’t referring to a physical building but to the idea of our dwelling place.

The imagery used here is so fitting. Tents lack permanence. They wear out, are easily damaged, and can be taken down at any time. They were for sojourners and travelers.

That is how Scripture describes our current bodies. Fragile, subject to weakness and decay, and only a temporary dwelling in this life.

The phrase **“torn down”** means destroyed, which points to the death and dismantling of this earthly body. Whether through disease, disability, aging, sudden tragedy, or even persecution, this tent will not last.

The verse states that when the earthly tent is torn down, **“we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”**

The word **“building”** contrasts something fixed and permanent. And it is **“from God”** and **“not made with hands.”** In Scripture, the phrase **“not made with hands”** distinguishes what is achieved by man vs. what is accomplished by God.¹

The contrast is between what is earthly and temporary vs. heavenly and enduring.

This language also connects to how Christ spoke about His resurrection body. In John 2:19–22, Jesus said, **“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,”** referring to His body.

Later, His opponents testified:

¹ (see Deuteronomy 4:28; 2 Kings 19:18; Psalm 115:4; Isaiah 37:19; Acts 7:38; 17:24; Ephesians 2:1. Contrasted with: Daniel 2:34, 45; Colossians 2:11; Hebrews 9:11, 24)

Mark 14:58 “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’” (see also: **John 2:19–22**; cf. **Matthew 26:61**; **27:40**; **Mark 15:29**)

Just as Christ was raised in a glorified body, so will His people be.

And this body is described as “**eternal in the heavens.**” Unlike our present bodies, it will never decay, never weaken, never die. It will not be subject to sin, suffering, or corruption. Your future resurrection body will be perfect, permanent, prepared by God.

So how can you be sure of this? Your confidence isn’t built on naïve optimism or pleasant platitudes, but on the truth of God’s Word.

In **John 5:28–29**, Jesus says:

“...An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice,²⁹ and will come forth...”

The same voice that called Lazarus out of the grave will one day call you to rise to eternal glory. Your resurrection is a future historical reality. (I don’t know if that is a grammatically correct sentence, but its biblical)

In **John 6**, Jesus repeats the promise four times that He will raise His people on the last day (v.39, 40, 44, 54). In verses 39–40 He says:

“This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.⁴⁰ “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

Your resurrection does not depend on your own ability to keep yourself, but on Christ’s faithfulness to keep you. He will not lose a single one of His people.

In **John 14:19**, Jesus says, **“Because I live, you will live also.”** (See also: **John 6:57**)

Your future life is secured because you serve a risen, living Savior.

Paul knowing this certainty wrote in **Philippians 3:20–21** **“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory...”**

And in **Romans 8:29–30**, he writes, **“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many**

brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

This verse is often referred to as the “golden chain of salvation.” There are no missing links in this chain. No one is justified who will fail to be glorified.

The word “**glorified**” is in the aorist indicative which is used to describe an event that hasn’t yet happened, but it is as if it already done. In God’s purposes, it is certain. That is how secure your future glory is.

As you consider the assurance of your future glory, be encouraged. These promises are given to comfort your heart, strengthen your faith, and give peace to your soul. Your future is not uncertain. It is secure in Christ.

But this certainty belongs only to those who are in Christ. The truth of this “golden chain of salvation” leads me to ask you: Have you responded to Christ’s call?

Outside of Christ there is only the just judgment for sin. But in Him there is forgiveness, reconciliation with God, eternal life, and the sure promise of resurrection glory.

This hope cannot be found in you. You are not “good” in the biblical sense. You do not consistently do the good you know you should do. No amount of effort, religion, or moral improvement can make you right with God.

You cannot earn salvation. You cannot repay your sin debt. If you trust in yourself, you will be without hope on the day of judgment.

The certainty of this hope is found in Christ alone. In His perfect life of obedience. Christ alone fulfilled all righteousness. In His sacrificial death as a substitute, where Christ alone bore the penalty for sin. And in His victorious resurrection, where Christ alone conquered sin and death once for all.

Christ now calls you through the gospel. He sends His church as ambassadors to proclaim to everyone on His behalf, to turn from your sin, stop trusting in yourself, and put your faith in Him alone.

To properly respond to His call, you must repent and believe. You must submit to Him as Lord and trust in Him alone as Savior. If you believe in Christ, you will be forgiven. You will be justified. You will be made new. And you will share in His resurrection glory.

As certain as this hope is, it is not yet fully realized. There is a conflict between our future glory and our present experience. That leads us to our next point...

II. The Conflict of Our Current Condition (2–4)

In these verses, Paul brings us to the lived experience of the Christian life. As Christian's our life is marked not only by certainty, but also by groaning and longing.

Look at verses 2–4 **“For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven. 3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.”**

The word **“groan”** means to “to express oneself... in the face of an undesirable circumstance, to sigh,”² to cry out in pain, to grow weary due to stress and suffering. It has a close association with complaining or lamenting.

This is not the groaning of unbelief, but the groaning of faith. It is the tension of living between what is already true in Christ and what is not yet fully realized. This is the language of the believer's heart that feels the weight of life in a fallen world.

We groan because of our failing bodies. We feel weakness, fatigue, sickness, chronic pain, injury, and the effects of aging. Our bodies do not cooperate the way we want. They break down. They limit us.

They remind us that we are frail, made from the dust, just earth vessels. Even when the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak, and we long for the redemption of our bodies.

We groan because of suffering in the world. We see disease, disasters, poverty, persecution, grief, and death. We watch people we love suffer. If we sat and considered all the suffering around us the weight would be unrelenting and burdensome.

Life in a fallen world is marked by sorrow, and even our best moments are touched by the reality that everything here is temporary, transient, and often marked by pain.

We groan because of the presence of sin in the world. We see injustice, violence, warm corruption, oppression, and the prosperity of the wicked. God's truth is rejected. What is evil is called good, and what is good is called evil.

The reality of sin distorts what God made good and leaves damage everywhere it touches. The world does not function as it should, and we feel the weight of that daily.

² William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 2000, 942.

We groan because of sin still dwelling in us. We battle lingering pride, selfishness, fear, doubt, anger, and temptation. We do the very things we hate and fail to do what we know is right. There is an ongoing battle within us between the flesh and the Spirit.

We long to be fully free, to be made perfectly holy, and to finally be without sin in the presence of Christ.

We all know this groaning by experience to varying degrees. And as a pastor and elder here at Cornerstone, I know many of you are experiencing these pains to significant degrees right now. My hope is to encourage you.

God uses this groaning in the heart of the believer to deepen our **“longing,”** to stir in us an earnest desire to be with Christ, to dwell in the new creation, and to be clothed with our resurrection glory.

That is the language of being **“unclothed”** and **“clothed.”** It is not a mere desire to escape life or to be done with this world. It is a longing to be fully restored, to be raised in a body with no more sin, no more weakness, no more pain. To live in a creation where there is no corruption and no curse.

In this way, our hope is not a morbid desire for death, but a Christ-centered longing to be with Him and to be fully clothed with the life He has promised.

One day soon, **“what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.”** Our present groaning will not last forever. In fact, it is only light and momentary in comparison with the glory that is in store for us.

When that day comes, as it says in Luke 6:21, our weeping will give way to laughter, and to unending joy and praise in the presence of Christ.

But for the present, how should you respond to this groaning? God intends for your groaning become a means of grace in your life. The pain of this life is designed to be a pathway to Christ and to the sufficiency of His grace.

I’ve adapted these encouragements from the book *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercies* by Mark Vroegop to help you use your groaning to grow in God’s grace. These are the patterns of prayer we see reflected in the Psalms and the New Testament.

First, direct your groaning to God. Every heartache, every pain, every burden must be brought to Him.

Second, express it with honesty and transparency. God already knows your heart. He sees your pain. Learn to speak to Him about it rather than trying to carry it on your own.

Third, let your groaning deepen your longing to be with the Lord. Fix your mind on the certainty of your future glory. Fill your thoughts with Scripture and the promise of being with Him in a new creation and a resurrected body.

Fourth, a request His grace to either bring about a change in your painful circumstances or the grace for you to endure them. (**Illustration of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane**)

Fifth, and this is crucial, ask for the grace to trust Him and to praise Him as He unfolds His good and perfect plan for His glory and your good.

This is how God loosens your grip on this world and deepens your longing for Christ. Your groaning is meant to lift your heart and eyes upward.

If your groaning is not brought to the Lord, it will turn inward into frustration, bitterness, or despair. But when it is brought to Him, it becomes prayer, dependence, and worship.

Groaning, rightly understood, is our theology expressed through tears.

Horatio Spafford, a Christian lawyer from Chicago, was acquainted with groaning. First his young son died, then much of his wealth was destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire. In 1873, he sent his wife and four daughters ahead of him to Europe, but their ship collided with another vessel and sank.

All four daughters died. His wife survived and sent a telegram with the words: “Saved alone.” As Spafford later traveled across the Atlantic to meet her, the captain pointed out the place where his daughters had perished. It was there, that he said, “It is well; the will of God be done.”

Spafford was not denying his pain. He was groaning. But his groaning was directed to God, shaped by faith, and anchored in the gospel. That is why he could later write, “When sorrows like sea billows roll... it is well, it is well, with my soul.”

He could say this not because not because it wasn’t painful, but because Christ was sufficient.³

³ <https://hymncharts.com/the-story-behind-it-is-well-with-my-soul/>. Accessed: 4/8/26.

This is what happens when our groaning is brought to the Lord. The cause of the sorrow does not disappear, but it is transformed into trust, and even in the most severe pain, the soul can rest in Him. And that leads us to our last point...

III. The Confidence of Our Present Walk (5–8)

Paul has moved from our certainty, to our groaning, and now to our confidence. These verses show us how we live in view of what God has promised.

Look at verse 5 **“Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.”**

God Himself has **“prepared”** you for resurrection glory. This is His **“purpose”** and He has designed it to function in this way.

From eternity past, through Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, through the moment of your conversion, and even through to your present suffering, He is working toward this end.

God is working toward your final transformation into the likeness of Christ. And to assure us of this work, He has given **“us the Spirit as a pledge.”**

That word **“pledge”** refers to a down payment. It is a binding guarantee that more is to come. It is the first installment of a deposit that is a guarantee of completion.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in your life is God’s pledge that He will finish what He has begun. In Ephesians 1:13–14, the Spirit is said to be given as the guarantee of your inheritance. And in Romans 8:23, He is called the **“firstfruits”** of what is to come.

So how does the Spirit function as this guarantee in your life?

He is actively transforming you from your old sinful and selfish ways and producing the life of Christ in you (2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:16).

You see His work and ministry in you by growing your love for God and others (Galatians 5:22; Romans 8:15).

You see His work and ministry in you by empowering a continued repentance from sin and a pattern of obedience to God (Ezekiel 36:26–27; John 16:8; Romans 8:4, 13; 1 Peter 1:2).

You see His work and ministry in you by producing genuine humility (Galatians 5:22–23; Philippians 2:1–3)

You see His work and ministry in you by a growing devotion to God's glory (John 16:14; 1 Corinthians 12:3).

You see His work and ministry in you by an active and increasing prayer life (Romans 8:26–27; Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20).

You see His work and ministry in you by a separation from the world and its desires (Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:5–6; 1 Corinthians 2:12).

And the beauty is what He has begun in you, He will complete. As **Philippians 1:6** reminds us, **“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”**

So the Spirit's present work in your sanctification and conformity to Christ is a preview of His future work of your resurrection (Romans 1:10–11).

This is what leads Paul to finish this section by saying in verses 6–8, **“Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— 7for we walk by faith, not by sight— 8we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”**

Here we see that as believers we have a confidence in both life and death. The words **“good courage”** comes from a single Greek word that means “to have certainty in a matter, [to] be confident.”⁴ Another definition is “to have confidence and firmness of purpose in the face of danger or testing.”⁵

This is incredible. In a life marked by suffering and groaning, it says we as Christians are **“always of good courage.”** Always confident about what is in store for us. Always confident in the face of the pain and groanings of this life because we know the end of the story.

Why? Because **“...knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight.”**

We know Christ. We commune with Him. But we do not yet see Him. We do not yet experience the fullness of His presence. And so, it says, **“we walk by faith, not by sight.”**

This is how God has designed the Christian life. We live not by what we see, but by what God has said. We trust His promises in the midst of suffering. We obey Him even when it is costly.

⁴ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 2000, 444.

⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*, 1996, 1, 305.

Faith, especially in trials, glorifies God because it declares to everyone watching that He is trustworthy. And more than that, Scripture says our faith is what pleases Him (Hebrews 11:6). It displays our belief, our conviction, our love, and our devotion to Him.

Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley were two men transformed by the Word of God and the gospel. Both had devoted themselves to the traditions and teachings of men as Catholic ministers. But through the influence of the Protestant Reformation, with its emphasis on the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, they came to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because of that conviction, they were imprisoned under the reign of Mary I of England (Bloody Mary). After eighteen months in a cell, with little more than the New Testament to sustain them, they were led out on October 15, 1555, and bound to the same stake to be burned.

Just before they were fastened to the stake, Ridley said to Latimer “Be of good heart, brother, for God will either assuage the fury of the flame, or else strengthen us to abide it.”

When the fire was lit, Ridley cried out in distress. And Latimer responded with words, “Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle by God’s grace in England as shall never be put out.”⁶

Today, there is a plaque there that reads, “To the Glory of God, and in grateful commemoration of His servants... Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer... who near this spot yielded their bodies to be burned, bearing witness to the sacred truths which they had affirmed... and rejoicing that to them it was given not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for His sake.”⁷

They faced death with courage because their confidence in Christ was greater. Your suffering and groaning in this life may not look exactly like Latimer’s and Ridley’s, but the source of your confidence and grace is the same.

You too can walk by faith and not by sight if you keep your eyes on Christ.

Next week’s passage will show us that no matter what face in this life, we make it our aim to please Christ, knowing that we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

But the beauty of our passage this morning is that it gives you certainty about your future glory,

⁶ Adapted from: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-british-candle>. Accessed 4/10/26.

⁷ <https://firstthings.com/latimer-and-ridley-are-forgotten/>. Accessed 4/10/26

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shows how the struggles of your present condition draw you closer to Christ, and reminds you that you can face every trial, suffering, and groaning with confidence.

Let's pray.

Benediction: Romans 15:13 (NASB95)

¹³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.