

Temporal vs. Eternal

2 Corinthians 4:13—5:1 (5:1)

Introduction

When I was in grade school, my friend Eddie and I used to “camp out” in his back yard. His mom would bring us cookies and milk before bedtime and have a cooked breakfast for us in the house in the morning. As we got older, we got more adventurous and found a clearing in the woods behind his house to pitch our tent in. No more snacks from his mom and we had to cook our own breakfast over the campfire. It was fun, even though it was cold and wet at night. So wet that it sometimes took us two or three hours to get a fire going to cook breakfast. It was good to get into the comfort of a house again.

Tents & Houses

2 Corinthians 5:1 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.* What is the tent that is our earthly home? in **John 1**, we read: *The word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).* The word translated “dwelt” literally means pitched His tent, or “tabernacled.” The tent is our earthly body. Since Paul is talking about the resurrection in the verses at the end of **chapter 4**, the “house not made with hands” is our resurrected body. This body we have now is the home for our soul on earth. At the resurrection, the soul will inhabit the resurrected body. As Ambrosiaster says: *Our present body is our earthly home. Our resurrected body is our heavenly one (Commentary on Paul’s Epistles).*

Construction

There are three ways Paul compares and contrasts these two bodies. The first is in the way they are built. In saying that our heavenly bodies are not made with human hands, he’s not saying that our earthly bodies are made with human hands. We know that God has made our earthly bodies. But Paul is using this phrase to show how inferior this earthly body is to the heavenly one. However, we don’t want to lose sight of the fact that, even though God is in control, much of what happens to our earthly body is our own doing. Our eating, sleeping, and exercise habits greatly affect our health and longevity. To say that our heavenly bodies are not made with hands means that they are glorified. They will be like Christ’s resurrected body.

Duration

The second comparison has to do with duration, how long they last. In **4:18**, Paul says that *the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are*

eternal. This body, with all its aches and pains is passing away. That's why he can say that the trials of this life are light. If the trials of this life are light, the glory of eternity is weighty. It will make this life pale.

Location

The location is the last comparison. The present body is earthly, and the glorified body is heavenly.

Perspective

All this gives us a perspective on life. Thinking back, those nights around the crackling campfire made those cold, wet mornings worthwhile. Knowing that Jesus is with us and will raise us again to this new life makes living this life for Him all worthwhile. As Dad said about his army experience during WW II, "I wouldn't take a million dollars for that experience. But I wouldn't go through it again for a million dollars." That's a good perspective on this life. Looking ahead to the next life, no one wants to repeat this one. But we are thankful for the life God has given us and the opportunities we have had to serve Him.

Hope

This also gives us an outlook of hope. While we live this life, we are preparing for the next. We are not sitting around, gazing up into heaven, letting life pass us by. What we do here matters; it all has meaning. But the hope of what's to come keeps us going. As Paul said, *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14)*.

Word & Sacrament

This hope is ours in Jesus Christ, whom we receive in Word and Sacrament. As we receive the means of grace, He works faith in us, giving us that hope of eternity with Him. Live in the temporal but look forward to the eternal.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
