

An Eternal Hope

And this is Mrs. Jackson. She is one of our sweetest residents," said Kendra to the new nurse's aide, Nedria.

Dorothy Jackson had come to Meadowview Nursing Home one year ago. When she arrived, she had a garden variety of health challenges, coupled with her age of 88 and no one in her family capable of providing her with 24-hour care. Now, her health had begun to decline further, but she knew God was still using her for His purposes.

Mrs. Jackson's loving demeanor had drawn nursing home employees to seek her out. There was Desiree, who had told no one that she was five weeks pregnant and undecided about keeping the baby. There was Jayla, who shared everything that everyone was doing wrong. Also Martel, who told of being tired of his job and his marriage.

Mrs. Jackson provided godly counsel to her "nursing home children," as she called them. She also passionately prayed for and with them, when they allowed her to.

Two years later, when Devany came with three of her cousins to pack up her grandmother's nursing home room, she was greeted by many on the staff. They hugged, cried, and told her how much Mrs. Jackson had meant to them. One aide named Desiree wanted to show a picture of her baby boy.

"Here he is," said Desiree, handing Devany the cell phone. "His name is Hosea, and your grandmother was his great godmother."

1. *What things are you passionate about doing?*

2. *Do you think those things relate to your purpose in life? Explain your answer.*

3. *What are the problems of living outside of God's purpose for your life?*

4. *Can your purpose in life change over the years? Explain your answer.*

Looking Beyond Today's Troubles

2 Corinthians 4:16–5:4, KJV

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

2 Corinthians 4:16–5:4, NIV

¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

^{5:1}For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ²Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, ³because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Paul ended 2 Corinthians 4 the same way he opened it: by reminding the Corinthians that despite their (and his) struggles, “we do not lose heart” (vs. 16; see vs. 1).

“Though outwardly we are wasting away”—that is, despite their troubles and even the progressive, inevitable failure of their earthly bodies—“yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day” (vs. 16). In fact, their troubles—which Paul regarded as “light and momentary”—were producing in them “an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (vs. 17). Whatever they suffered in this life would be nothing compared to the glory that lay ahead, God was using their sufferings to renew them inwardly, in preparation for that glory. The Corinthians only needed to look at Christ Himself for evidence of this truth.

Therefore, Paul told them to “fix [their] eyes . . . on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (vs. 18). Rather than focus on what would not last, Paul urged them to build on the foundation which is eternal: Christ. “For we know that . . . we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands” (2 Cor. 5:1). Therefore, the Corinthians could “know” their future with Christ was certain—and permanent.

But that was not their current state: “Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling” (vs. 2). Suffering was not something they needed to seek out; it was readily present. Even now, they and Paul longed to be “clothed” with their glorified bodies, and “not be found naked” (vs. 3). Paul reiterated these ideas once more in verse 4, then clarified the basis of their hope: “that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” Even in the midst of their suffering and weakness, the Corinthians could look toward certain victory in Christ.

5. *How did Paul encourage the Corinthians to view their sufferings?*

6. *What did the Corinthians need to focus on, in order to view their sufferings in the right perspective?*

7. *How did Paul describe the Corinthians’ (and his) hope in verses 2-4?*

Living by Faith

2 Corinthians 5:5-10, KJV

5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5:5-10, NIV

⁵Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

⁶Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Paul next declared the basis for the Corinthians' future hope: God Himself had "fashioned [them] for this very purpose," and had "given [them] the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (vs. 5). God's purposes never fail, and His Spirit had been given to believers to testify to that fact. And yet, it was only a "deposit"—a tiny fragment of the glory to come. This knowledge should have bolstered the Corinthians, even in the midst of their current trials. This was clearly Paul's belief, in any case: "Therefore we are always confident" (vs. 6; see also vs. 8).

Nonetheless, Paul acknowledged the tension between

the “already” and the “not yet”—despite the indwelling of the Spirit, the Corinthians were “at home in the body [and] away from the Lord” (vs. 6). Therefore, they needed to “live by faith, not by sight” (vs. 7). As much as possible, they were to live as if they were already “clothed . . . with [their] heavenly dwelling” (vs. 4) and operating fully in God’s presence. Because of the “deposit” of God’s Spirit they had already received, this was already true in part. Through the Spirit’s guidance and empowering, even now they could work toward their certain future, rather than being driven by “sight” or appearances. Verse 8 reiterated the Corinthians’ struggle and hope from a more positive slant: “We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

In the meantime, Paul declared that they were to “make it [their] goal to please” God (vs. 9). Whether Christ’s return takes place while we are alive (“at home in the body”) or dead (“away from it”), all believers will stand in Jesus’ presence to give an account of our lives. That is why Paul established as his goal always pleasing the Lord. And by his example, he encouraged his readers to do the same. Whatever they did in the body now, God would judge in the future. This judgment would not determine whether one goes to heaven or hell; that is determined by faith in Christ (or the absence of faith). The future evaluation for Christians would assess their faithfulness as Christians.

Therefore, the Corinthians needed to strive to please God, while it was still a choice. By doing so, their confidence in God and their future with Him would be strengthened.

8. *What could the Corinthians base their hope on? What had God already given them?*

9. *How did Paul describe the Corinthians’ (and his) current situation, and how were they to respond to it?*

10. *What were the Corinthians to do while still in their bodies, and why?*

Make an Impact with Your Purpose

Scripture is clear that God made us for a purpose—His purpose—and we are called to fulfill that purpose in every stage of our lives. As a boy, David glorified God by defeating Goliath when no other Israelites would stand up to the Philistine giant. Josiah came to the throne of Judah at age eight and started a revival that changed the nation. As a teenager, Daniel defied the king along with his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Timothy was a young pastor who stood against the pagan society of Ephesus.

Growing older may change our purpose, but we are still working for the Lord and fulfilling His purpose as long as we are here. As 2 Corinthians 4:16 reminds us, our physical bodies may be “wasting away” but inwardly God is renewing us every day. Moses followed the Lord and led the people until the age of 120. The Gospel of Luke says that the prophetess Anna, at the age of 84, worshiped in the temple every day.

Seniors have much to contribute to younger generations as a result of their long lives and their faithful service. Their purpose is far more than just sitting in a retirement home. For example, their purpose may be to act as daily prayer warriors supporting the ministries of their church. The church advances on the wings of prayer.

Whatever our age or stage in life, we must discover our gifts and cover the earth with them. We can be a blessing to those around us and even impact the whole world.

11. *Why is finding our God-given purpose in life so important?*

12. *Why may we not see what our purpose is ourselves?*

13. *How might Ephesians 2:10 help us find our purpose?*

14. *Why might we think as we get older that God has no purpose for us anymore?*

Our Mission on Earth

Heaven is our eternal home where we will live forever. God has given each person a particular mission here on earth to fulfill as long as we are here. He has equipped us to fulfill that mission. We should remain confident that we have what it takes to complete this unique plan.

► *Finish this sentence as a commitment to complete your life's purpose here on earth: "I will trust God to help me _____ as long as I am here. I give my life to You as a humble offering."*

KEY VERSE

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. —2 Corinthians 5:1, KJV

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. —2 Corinthians 5:1, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of August 30 through September 5

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Exodus 14:1-9—God Hardens Pharaoh's Heart.

Tues. Exodus 14:10-20—Don't Just Do Something; Stand There!

Wed. Exodus 14:21-31—Victory by the Sea.

Thurs. Luke 1:67-75—Blessed Be God Our Savior.

Fri. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58—Victory in Jesus.

Sat. Exodus 15:1-10—Moses Sings of God's Triumph.

Sun. Exodus 15:11-21—Moses and Miriam Praise God.