

# Valuing Our Lives

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning folks, lovely to see you. Please do have that passage open in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. Make every effort to get God's Word in front of you this morning. In a sense it really isn't what I say, you've got to always check it against what God says in his Word. So please do me a flavour and do that and get the Word of God open in front of you. What a passage we have this morning.

I want to begin by getting us to think about a karaoke classic. So I was 15 years old when this song came out in the year 2000, right? Now here's what I'm going to do. Put your hands up if you were not born yet in the year 2000, right? My oh my, look at that. No nothing of Y2K, you guys weren't panicking about the millennium bug. Those were great days. The year 2000, but here's why it doesn't matter whether you're around or not because I'm pretty sure you'll have heard this song. As I say, I was 15 at the time, written by a, I guess it's a band, called Bon Jovi. The song is called It's My Life. The chorus goes like this. I'm not going to try and hit those notes, okay? It's my life, it's now or never. I ain't going to live forever, I just want to live while I'm alive. It's my life. Is that familiar? Yeah? This was my first encounter with a modern day mantra. See if you've heard of this. The modern day mantra is, you only live once. Here's what I think we're trying to do as human beings with that phrase. I think we're going to square a circle. We're trying to make sense of the fact that we know that life is precious, life is a gift, life is wonderful, and yet we also know that life is unpredictable, it's fragile, and too often it's gone. What do we say before we know it? We are and we get the image of being the proverbial candle in the wind. But here's where we go wrong. Instead of that slowing us down and helping us think about what life really is all about, we respond by trying to make as many

Kodak moments as we possibly can, by squeezing as much happiness as we possibly can out of our three score and ten existence. To think that this is all there is, is our default setting as modern human beings. Now here's an insight from David Gibson. David Gibson's a pastor up in Aberdeen, written some wonderful books that will get you thinking. Here's something I read of his recently, an observation about modern people. He said this, we are a generation who know the price of everything, but the value of nothing.

Here's what I want to suggest is true for every single one of us today. Whatever you think about the God of the Bible, maybe you're here today, this is your first time in church in a long time, you are so welcome, we love that you're here. And here's where you will connect with this passage, here's where every single one of us will connect with this passage. Here it is, what we think happens in the end totally shapes how we live in the present.

Have you ever thought about that? How what you think happens in the end totally shapes how you live in the present. In all sorts of ways, the job you go for, the relationships that you have, where you invest yourself, all of these things are driven by what we think happens in the end.

[ 3 : 53 ] And here's the thing, if I can play on the words of this passage of verse seven, our default setting in this world is to live by sight and not by faith.

And God, through the life and the pen of the apostle Paul, friends, he is lovingly wooing us to come to Jesus and do the opposite. He's calling us to come to him, hold his hand and to live our lives, as it were, backwards. And to live our lives backwards is to be so confident in what Jesus has done to secure our future, that it completely shapes how we live today as we anticipate that future.

To know that Jesus loves us, has died for us, has shed his blood for us, has risen for us, has ascended for us, holds our lives at the right hand of God in his hands. When you know that that is who he is and where he is, it completely transforms how you view today and where we invest ourselves today and what we love today. And here's the sharp end of this passage.

This is all about how we understand our physical bodies, right? How are you feeling about your body today?

Couldn't think of a more modern day question that we're asking ourselves right now as a society, right? Here's the two polar reactions I think we're often tempted to go to. And I'm saying this in pastoral love. As we live our lives in the world and as we watch the rest of the people in the world, here's the two polar reactions. Number one is to obsess.

[ 5 : 57 ] Putting in the hours at the gym, spending some serious time in front of the mirror, stepping onto those scales. We can obsess or we can despair.

As our bodies age and we feel the aches and pains. And as our mental health dips up and down, as our energy levels move in and out, as we are plagued by disease and illness. And remember, Paul is suffering in his body.

We saw this last week in all sorts of ways as he lives his white life in the service of Jesus. He is aware, if you tap back to verse 16, how he is outwardly, verse 16, wasting away.

Friends, how are you feeling today as you live your life in your body? What does the future hold, do you think? You know, in the job I had before moving to Edinburgh, I shared an office with a guy called Duncan.

And Duncan was one of the most sharp legal minds I think I've ever met. But Duncan always got put on the big cases, the corporate cases. And he was the one, as I shared a room with him, that I saw him do for months and months and months.

[ 7 : 17 ] He was the lawyer that worked in the deal that saw orange. Orange, again, this is going to time some of you. Orange become EE. Right? And he worked on this for months and months and months.

And what he'd do every day is he'd come into the office and he'd put on his Bluetooth headset. And he'd ring the head office at Orange. Because he was fluent in French as well as English.

And as he was being transferred to the right number, I could hear on his headset the on-hold music that was played as he was getting put through to the right person.

And every day I heard this phrase, The future's bright, the future's orange. Now, here's what I want to say to all of us today, if your hope is in Jesus.

Friends, the mantra of this passage is that the future's bright, the future's resurrection. If you want to hold something and take it through this passage today, that's your phrase.

[ 8 : 21 ] The future's bright, the future's resurrection. There's two things here that Paul wants us, as followers of Jesus, to know about our bodies as we take in that.

And here's number one, and it just comes at verses one to five. Is that they have a glorious future. However you're feeling today, know that.

That we, because of Jesus, have a glorious future. And what Paul does here is he sets up another compare and contrast. Between our bodies now and our bodies then.

And I love hanging out with Paul, because the more I hang out with Paul, I realize that he is a visual learner. He's a visual learner. He's always giving people, and he's a very good preacher, because he's always tapping into everyday images, phrases, life, to make his point.

Right? Last week, we thought about our bodies as being jars of clay. And it was lovely to hear reports of conversations and growth groups and honest conversations and just people praying with one another and how helpful that metaphor was.

[ 9 : 30 ] As Paul helped us think about the present, the present experience of the Christian, as we suffer in our bodies, and particularly as we suffer as we follow Jesus. As we are like jars of clay, the treasure is inside.

What he does today is he helps us grasp something deep about the future by tapping into another image. What is that everyday image? Come and see it. Then we get it verse 1 and verse 3 of chapter 5.

What is his image? It's a tent. And Paul's a tent maker by trade. Right? This is his game.

This is his gig. He understands the world of tents. But what we have to appreciate is that tents have moved on a bit since Paul's day. Right?

So Paul isn't picturing the outdoor pursuit section at Mountain Warehouse. This is not predicting glamping at Glastonbury. Right? Different kind of tents.

[ 10 : 28 ] What he's picturing is a sheet, a couple of sticks for poles, way out in the wilderness, maybe with a tiny fire by the side, and nothing in the sky but stars.

You're playing this game, in the first century game of articulate, what's your word association with tents? Temporary, fragile, easily destroyed.

That's what he's picturing there when he says the word tent. But the image takes on greater significance. It taps into new contours.

When you consider that God's people have a long history with tents. And particularly in the season of their corporate life when God rescued them from Egypt.

And he was taking them through the wilderness to the promised land. Right? And what are they sleeping night after night as they do this? Tents. Imagine the repetition of that.

[ 11 : 31 ] All those years wandering in the wilderness. Imagine the repetition. Right? Imagine it. Walking by day, stopping. Building your tent, sleeping in it.

Taking it down. Walking by day, stopping. Building your tent, sleeping in it. Taking it down. What would we say today? Rinse and repeat. And in addition to the people's individual tents, right in the middle of their camp was another tent.

The tabernacle. The place where God lives. Right in the middle. Right in the midst of his people is the camp round about. God trying to help them understand that his desire is to dwell in the heart and in the midst of his people.

And it's the same gig. God had prescribed that tabernacle. How it was to be taken down. It's the same gig. Right? Walking by day, stopping.

Building the tent. Taking it down. Rinse and repeat. Do you know the phrase that we've banned saying on car journeys? When will we be there?

[ 12 : 47 ] And the annoying thing is now when the kids ask it, there's a sat-nav right there on the phone that tells them exactly when they can get there. Whereas before phones, you could say we're going to get there when we're going to get there. Now you have to say it's going to be seven hours and 15 minutes.

But imagine that in the Israelite camp day after day. Child to parent. Why are we doing this again? When are we going to get there? What's this all about? Parent to child.

Why are we doing this? It's because God is taking us to a greater home. He is taking us to the place, the land that he promised he would take us.

God is taking us out of this black and white 2D experience. And he's taking us to the place where everything this is will be HD color. Where we will leave this tent existence behind and where we will be home.

And the Christian believer, even though we exist in a different generation, friends, we are caught up in that same line of longing.

[ 13 : 55 ] Our home is not a piece of land. It is in everything that that land symbolized. It is God's people in God's place, in our new bodies, enjoying God's presence for eternity.

And Paul says our bodies are like tents. What is our present experience? Verse 5, we are burdened.

Do you know that today? And we're groaning. And verse 4, we are longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.

Where what is mortal? Well, like Pac-Man, it will just be swallowed up by life. Whatever you're going through here today, that is your future.

The shape of Jesus' life and his death will be the shape of our life and death. Because Jesus' resurrection in the past, it guarantees our resurrection in the future.

[ 15 : 14 ] I see the two quickfire encouragements from verse 5. Firstly, that God has fashioned us for this. Now, I don't know if you're up for this, but go with it.

Picture yourself as a bride-to-be. Not long after getting engaged, and you go to the shop in search of your dress, and the person comes and gets you perfectly measured for your perfect dress, and you're looking at yourself thinking, it's wonderful, it's glorious, I'm going to look radiant.

But the thing about that dress is it's not for today. It's for that day. And it's almost like when God saved us, he fitted us perfectly for our resurrection bodies.

He guaranteed it. And he said, it's there. It's up ahead. But it's not for this day. It's for that day. That is, in the words of verse 5, that is what is to come.

And the second encouragement, the indwelling spirit of God inside of us, he guarantees that.

[ 16 : 28 ] And I take it at times he reminds us of that, the glorious future that's ahead of us. It's interesting the amount of times in this letter that Paul talks about the spirit being a guarantee.

I wonder whether in Corinth there's a lot of mysticism, there's a lot of new age spirituality going on, and Paul is saying, actually, the spirit inside of us. He's helping remind us of this. Our bodies have a glorious future. And secondly, they have a present purpose. Because going back to that analogy, when you know that you're going to be wearing that dress on that day, anticipating that changes everything about how you live in the moment, doesn't it? And that's the logic that Paul is using here. He wants us to put on our resurrection spectacles, if you like, and view the world today through those lenses. Because here's what he knows. Here's what is true in life. That where we're looking impacts how we're living. Where we're looking impacts how we're living.

[ 17 : 40 ] And we move into verses 6 to 10, and Paul is telling us where he is looking. Do you see these wonderful phrases? Paul longs to be, do you see the phrase, at home with Jesus. It's his longing. And all death can do to him is to make his life infinitely better. When a Christian dies before Jesus' return, that is where they are. They are, and this is precisely where people get the phrase from, they are home with the Lord. They are spiritually in heaven with Jesus, awaiting his return, at which point our bodies will be physically raised, and we will be with God in the new creation. And Paul says, I long to be with Jesus. I long to be with my Lord. Friends, there is no greater joy in this life than to know and to walk with this good God who created and saved us. A father loving his son in the joy of the spirit. This is who our God is. He is triune. And the fact that he is father, son, and spirit means that he is at his heart relational.

[ 19 : 00 ] And this is what distinguishes the Trinity, the triune God of the Bible from Allah. Our God longs to be known. He can be known. And there is no greater joy than to know him. And I take it that heavenly homesickness is a good thing. Do you see how he uses the word confident twice there? And that confident leads him to the conclusion of verse nine. He says, while I'm in my body here on earth, what is my life going to be all about until then? It's going to be all about, do you see the phrase, pleasing him? How do we respond to the glorious future? We respond to it by present godliness. Godliness is the game that we're called to play. I always love how I pray in the valley of vision. And if you've, if you look for something new devotionally to do in your own times, the valley of vision is just this collection of Puritan prayers. Just found it immensely useful when I did it a number of years ago.

[ 20 : 08 ] Here's the prayer. Teach me the happy art of attending to things temporal with a mind intent on things eternal. Eternal. Really practically, have a think about in your own life how you can please him. Do you see how this gives dignity to everyday steps of obedience, flowing from a love for Jesus in our everyday bodies, in our everyday existence? Where has he put you? Around whom has he put you? What decision are you facing? What person can you love? What new habit can you pick up? What sinful habit do you need to destroy? How can we please him in our bodies? And the fact that this God sees it all, I take it leads us into the dignifying and yet the sobering news that comes at verse 10. Here's the thing.

[ 21 : 16 ] See, when Jesus returns, he will have the perfect and final say on the things that every human being has done in their bodies, whether good or bad. That's exactly what he's saying. I know one of the big issues with the whole you only live once mindset. Friends, it knows very little of justice. And if that's your game today, if that's what you're thinking, and if that's where you currently are, can I ask you just to lovingly wrestle with that question? If you believe this world is all there is, then you have a massive problem. Those people who have done terrible crimes and who were never held account for them on earth, they really have pulled a fast one. Haven't they? Jamie Savile, Adolf Hitler, those are just the ones that we know about. Can you imagine if we got started on the ones that were done in the shadows?

