



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, June 13 (B) – 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 [11-13]

Focus: *At Home or Away, We Walk by Faith*

word of life

“... for we walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7 (NRSV)

Read 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 [11-13]

Paul is addressing in today’s reading his understanding of death. Earlier in his ministry, Paul seems to have expected to live until the second coming of Christ. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.) The text for today seems to indicate that he is anticipating his own death.

1. *How might the anticipation of his own death change Paul’s teaching?*
2. *Has your thinking about death changed as you have gotten older? How so?*

The verses prior to the assigned reading provide the context for the verses that follow. Paul, the tentmaker, uses the imagery of a tent to contrast human existence in this world with the glory of the world to come after death. (2 Corinthians 5:1) A tent is temporary structure. It is portable and can be moved from place to place. And it can easily be knocked down or destroyed. Paul speaks of an earthly tent to describe the transitory nature of human existence and the frailty of the body. One can almost hear the verse from Isaiah 40: “All people are grass ... The grass withers, the flower fades....” (Isaiah 40:8 NRSV) Our bodies are as tents and grass – here today, gone tomorrow.

3. *Which imagery resonates more with you to describe human existence – tent or grass? Why?*

But the verses continue in Isaiah: “...but the word of our God will stand forever.” (Isaiah 40:8 NRSV) Paul also continues the contrast of the tent with the imagery of “a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Corinthians 5:1 NRSV) It is permanent, fixed, and secure; and it is called “home.”

4. *What are other examples in Scripture that refer to heaven as a house or a place to come home?*
5. *Is the image of heaven as a house meaningful for you? Explain.*
6. *Describe heaven.*

With the sure and certain hope in the promises of God, Paul can face the reality of death “always confident” (vs. 6) of coming home to know the fullness of God’s presence. He can be “away from home” (earthly existence) or “at home” (heavenly glory). Although ultimately his preference is to be “at home,” he asserts that either way, “we make it our aim to please [God].” (vs. 9)

It is by faith that a follower of Jesus lives – faith in the promises of what is yet to come. It is a faith that engenders confidence, sure that one day we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. It is a faith that believes and therefore sees, rather than one that sees and therefore believes. For “we walk by faith, not by sight.” (vs. 7)

7. *What do you think it means to “walk by faith, not by sight”?*
8. *Contrast the saying, “Seeing is believing” with Paul’s verse, “We walk by faith, not by sight.”*

Such confident faith frees us for service as we await the coming glory. Paul exhorts the church in Corinth to do God’s will, for when we “get home” to heavenly glory, we will make an account of how we faithfully lived “while away” in the body.

word among us

Julia was excited as she went through security at the airport. It had been four months since she had arrived to begin her college career; and now, as Thanksgiving Day approached, she was going home. She knew her parents would be standing in the terminal waiting for her to get through security. She knew that they would smother her with hugs and kisses when they first saw her. She knew what her mom would be fixing for the Thanksgiving meal, what dishes she would set on the table. She knew, because she was going home.

And it was just as she knew it would be – and more. When they arrived at the house, Julia was surprised to see her cousin Sara run out the door to greet them. Sara and Julia were about the same age, and they played together as children. But Sara’s family moved away, and Julia hadn’t seen her for years.

As Julia and Sara walked arm-in-arm into the house, Julia stopped, looked around the living room, and with a sigh of contentment said, “This is exactly how I thought it would be. It sure is good to be home.”

1. *Think of a homecoming you have experienced. Share your story.*
2. *Did the experience of “coming home” meet your expectations?*

“For we walk by faith not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7 NRSV) Like Julia, whose excitement was rooted in a confident faith of what coming home would be like, we too can live in confidence that God has made us a heavenly home. We anticipate a glorious homecoming one day. Some faith traditions refer to a funeral as a *Homecoming Service*. When that day comes, we will then see the fulfillment of our expectations – and more. Our faith will become sight. In the meantime, we live expectantly, trusting in the promises of God.

3. *How is a funeral for a Christian like a homecoming?*
4. *Describe how you envision your final homecoming with God.*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God’s faithful people

It’s not always easy to live “by faith and not by sight” in an age where “seeing is believing.” Our scientific, rational minds require tangible proof that can be seen and quantified. We need the community of faith to encourage and support us as we strive to live by faith while we are “away” from our heavenly home. We need to be continually reminded that we as a family of faith are on a journey together – a journey home. As we live among God’s faithful people, we experience a glimpse of what our final homecoming will be – a welcoming, a banquet feast, a deep peace of going home.

5. *When do you feel most “at home”?*
6. *Have you heard someone near death say, “I’m ready to go home”? How did it make you feel?*
7. *What preparations (if any) do you need to make before you are ready to “go home” to God?*

Prayer

O God, grant us the assurance to walk by faith, confident in your promises to us; through Christ our Lord. Amen

last word

Make an inventory of what you want to do before your final homecoming with God.

Daily Faith Practices

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