

JJ<sup>1</sup>

Some people hate it. Some people love it. Some think you should have as little as possible with you. Others think you should bring it all. I'm talking about camping. Personally, I love camping. But I'm not the "home-on-wheels" type of camper. I'm more of a tenter. I like being out and away from everything. I like being out in the wilderness. Just a tent and a sleeping bag and the essentials—coffee and some kind of salted pig meat. Although, as the years keep going by, something more than just a thin sleeping bag and a tent bottom between me and the ground is getting more and more appealing.

Some of my best memories are from camping, and so are some of the scariest. Even if you like camping as much as I do, eventually it's time to come home. Sometimes it hasn't been long enough to be away from the busyness of life, but usually you're ready to come home. You're ready to enjoy the simple blessings of sleeping in your own bed, a hot shower and flushing toilet. You're ready to be back somewhere that's permanent. The place you call your home.

Our lives in this world as Christians are like one long tenting trip. "Now we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building

from God, an eternal home in heaven, which is not made by human hands. In fact, the reason we groan is that we long to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven."

Some of you have been tenting for a long time. Some of you are pretty new to tenting. But either way, we've all done some groaning. Now, this isn't groaning about eating leftovers, or when you're beloved sports teams lose. When Paul talks about our groaning during our life-long tenting trip, he's talking about the groaning we do because of sin.

It's the groaning we have because we're sinful human beings. It's the groaning of Paul in Romans 7 when he tells us of the battle in his heart between his sinful nature and his heart of faith—a battle each one of us fights every day. Paul is talking about the groaning of living in a sinful world. It's the groaning of seeing a nation reject the Lord and his love for the lies of the devil and a share in his eternal destruction. It's the groaning of living with the consequences of sin, whether it's our own or the sin of others. It's the groaning of being made fun of for our faith in Christ. It's the groaning of suffering from illness, disease and loss. It's the groaning of wondering why the Lord hasn't taken you home already.

<sup>1</sup> JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

Yes, there are wonderful and beautiful things about our tenting trip that is our lives in this world, just like the tenting trips we can go on. But just like the joys and intrigues of tenting are temporary, so are the joys and intrigues of this life. In both we still long to go home. In this life we long to go to our permanent home. We long for heaven as Paul says, "To be sure, while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life."

What a beautiful image! Death swallowed up by life! And the life Paul is talking about is real life—the life God has always wanted for us. Real life is life that isn't hindered by any weakness of body or soul because of sin. Real life is an eternal and perfect union with God. Real life is what Adam and Eve had with the Lord before the fall into sin. Friends, this is the life God has planned for you. The next verse of our text assures us that this life is yours!

"Now the one who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the Spirit as the down payment." Now, when someone makes a down payment, it's made as a guarantee that future payments are coming. But a guarantee is

only as good as the person backing it. Someone with bad credit is not going to get a good interest rate on a loan. Someone with great credit often will. Now consider the one who is making this down payment to you in the form of the Holy Spirit. It's your perfect, almighty, ever-loving God!

Friends, God's purpose in making you was to spend eternity with you in his heavenly home! That's why God brought you into existence. That's why God brought you to faith. God gave you the Holy Spirit who lives in you as a deposit, a down-payment to guarantee to you that this tenting trip you're on will end when he brings you to live in the permanent home of heaven!

Friends, this is why "we are always confident and know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord, for

we walk by faith, not by sight. But we are confident and would much prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. And for this reason we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home or away."

Right now, on our tenting trip, we live by faith, waiting for the day when we will live by sight. But until that day comes, life now as we are tenting is different

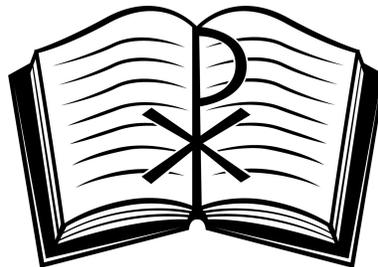


because of the down payment that has been made to us. You see, because a down payment has been made on your future home, you can be realistic about your tenting life here. You are now, through faith, able to enjoy the things of this world without being afraid of losing them, because you know that everything here is just temporary and will be surpassed in heaven. You now are able to endure the pain and problems of living in this tent because you know and are confident that you have a secure future home in heaven. And because of this down payment on your home in heaven, you have different goals for living here. It isn't to live for yourself and to be built up for yourself as much as you can, or to try and earn your way to heaven through your own goodness. No, it's simply to do that which pleases God, who has already made the down payment out of the never-ending fund of forgiveness won by his Son.

One day, we'll be done tenting. On the Last Day we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, as Paul says, "... so that each one may receive what is due for what he did while in the body, whether good or bad."

First we have to understand that Paul isn't talking about works-righteousness. He can't be because that wouldn't agree with what he believes or the rest of

Scripture. When he writes "that each one may receive what is due for what he did while in the body," the word translated "did" would be better translated "practiced." The idea is this: Paul is talking about the character and attitude that defines the person. An unbeliever will live like an unbeliever and a child of God will live like a child of God. That's not to say the believer is perfect. That's not Paul's point at all, for us or himself. Paul confesses that he and we both struggle with sin and are unable to always do the good we want to do. (cf. Rom. 7) But the believer's tenting trip is characterized with the desire to only do what pleases God, and when we fail, to turn to him in repentance.



The most important thing for us to take away from this passage about judgment day is who will be the judge. Jesus is the judge! What better judge could there be? The same person who substituted himself for us on the cross and won for us the verdict of "not guilty" from his Father—this is the one who now sits as our judge.

Is he going to go back on all that he's done? Is he going to forget the verdict he already won? Of course not! We know he will not and can not! Why? Because Jesus has taken our sin and nailed to the cross and left it there forgiven. Friends, your names have been written in the Book of Life! That's why you have the Holy Spirit

living in you as the down payment for eternal life. This is what you know, and therefore you are confident that after **TENTING FOR A TIME**, you will stand before Christ, your judge, and he will say to you, “My child, you’re done tenting. Come home.” Amen.

SDG<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God Alone Be The Glory”. This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn’t about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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