

Eternal Perspective

1. Warm-up Question: On Sunday Jeff mentioned that his great nephew Jackson loves to play with finger skateboards, i.e., mini-skateboards you “ride” with your fingers. When you were a kid, what toy was all the rage?
2. Our Scripture passage this week reminds us that our earthly existence is wrapped in an even greater eternal reality, and challenges us to live our earthly life with a deep awareness of what’s to come in eternity. Read II Corinthians 5:1-10, as printed on page 3.
 - a. Jeff told a parable about two twins (a brother and sister), still in their mother’s womb, who have a debate about whether there’s “life after delivery” and what that might be like. The sister envisions an “after life” where they will eat with their mouth, use their legs, have no need for an umbilical cord, and no longer be shrouded in darkness. The brother is skeptical. The parable reminds us how hard it is to imagine a form of existence that we’ve never experienced. What are some of the most significant changes you imagine we may experience in our heavenly form of existence?
 - b. II Corinthians 5:1 says, “We know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” In this verse, Paul compares our physical bodies to tents. A tent is something you set up for temporary shelter. It’s transitory and provisional. It’s not your permanent home. From an earthly perspective, that’s hard to see. Our tent-like bodies are all we’ve ever known. But we also have see of a greater reality. We can sense the presence of God all around us. We have the testimony of Jesus rising from the dead. And from time to time, we have mystical experiences that give us a brief glimpse of the greater reality that surrounds us. Have you ever had a mystical experience? What happened?
 - c. Jeff pulled out his eternity string again on Sunday. He asked each of us to envision the string as the timeline of our eternal existence and said the entirety of our earthly existence (when compared to eternity) comprises only the first inch of the string. When you saw that, what thoughts or feelings arose within you?
3. When II Corinthians 5:1 says we’re still in the tent phase of our eternal existence that means life on earth is only the initial temporary preparatory phase of our existence. Jeff used the analogy of childhood. We’re used to thinking of childhood as a period of preparation for a long life ahead. Spiritually speaking, we’re all still children.
 - a. Tell us about something that happened to you in childhood that was hard, but taught you much, and has made you stronger as an adult.
 - b. Tell us something that has happened to you as an adult that was hard, but taught you much, and will make you a stronger spiritual being throughout eternity.

4. Life on earth is temporary and transitional. Eventually our bodies will give way. Earth itself will eventually come to an end. II Peter 3:11 says, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be?” In our Second Corinthians reading, Paul offers three insights that help answer that question. **Insight #1 – Although our earthly life is short, what we do now will reverberate throughout eternity.** Paul puts it this way: “All of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.” II Corinthians 5:11.
 - a. We tend to think of our heavenly “recompense,” (i.e., reward) as being in material form – things like mansions and bejeweled crowns. Jeff said he doesn’t think we will literally live in mansions and wear crowns in heaven. Do you agree or disagree – and why?
 - b. Jeff said that when Jesus promised us a “crown of life” (Revelation 2:10), he meant that the beautiful things we do during our earthly life will shape our souls, and bring us satisfaction, for the rest of eternity. He gave the example of Sammy Wellman taking a gay hotline call from Dennis in 1976. That conversation saved Dennis’ life and helped him find God. Jeff also gave the example of David caring for his dying Dad. Tell us something beautiful and simple you’ve been able to do in your life that will become part of your eternal legacy and give you great joy even five billion years from now.
5. **Insight #2 – If what happens on earth reverberates for eternity, our chief aim here should be to do the beautiful things God calls us to.** Paul sums it up this way, “We make it our aim to please God.” II Corinthians 5:9.
 - a. What are some of the things of that we tend to pour ourselves into that will have little or no importance in eternity?
 - b. In I Corinthians 13:8-13, Paul says, “As for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. . . . [Ultimately only] faith, hope and love [will] abide, and the greatest of these is love.” What does this verse mean?
6. **Insight #3 – “We walk by faith, not by sight.”** II Corinthians 5:7.
 - a. What does that mean? What’s the difference between walking by faith and sight? How would you explain it to a child?
 - b. Tell us about a confusing time in your life. What did it mean for you to walk by faith through that confusing time?

- c. What's one of the greatest steps of faith you've ever taken in life? (Remember, you'll be able to celebrate that great step of faith, and carry it with you, for all of eternity!)

II Corinthians 5:1-10

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling— ³if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked. ⁴For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵The One who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

⁶ So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord— ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please God. ¹⁰For all of us must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.