

“So that Mortality May Be Swallowed Up By Life” 2 Corinthians 5:4

During their desert wanderings the Israelites lived in tents. I suppose many people reading this devotional enjoy camping. In 2011 I spent a month walking part of the South Coast Path from Studland in Dorset to Land's End. I took a one person tent and camped every night. It was one of the best things I have ever done in my life.

But at the end of my journey I did what everyone does when they come to an end of a camping trip. I pulled down my tent, rolled it up, put it away and, in my case, never used it again. I returned to my real home here in Pendle, and a nice comfortable bed instead of lumpy camping mat.

The Israelites, too, when they reached the Promised Land of Canaan, dispensed with their tents and lived in houses instead. But even so, they celebrated a feast each year in which they remembered their wandering in the desert and all the things they had learned and experiences that they had had which were intended to prepare them for life in the secure permanent home that God had for them, a land “flowing with milk and honey.”

So our physical human bodies are compared to tents, in which we dwell temporarily until the time comes for us to go to our true home, the eternal heavenly realm where we will finally enjoy perfection in God's presence. Paul speaks for many when he says that in this physical body we groan, because of the limitations, frustrations and infirmities of our earthly lives. We long to be clothed with the immortality that is our destiny in Christ. In fact, he says, it is for this very purpose that God has prepared us.

The hope of the Christian faith is that of an eternal home. Jesus opened the door to it for us when he died on the cross, rose from the dead and returned in glory to heaven. It is his sacrifice for us on the cross that gives those who follow him the assurance that eternal life is theirs. It does not depend on human effort or merit, but simple trusting faith.

That is why we can know with confidence that our loved ones who know Christ as their saviour, when they pass on from this temporary and often burdensome life, are with him in the full abundance of eternity, and that we will be there too one day.

Prayer

Father, thank you for the hope and assurance of eternal life that we have in Jesus Christ. Thank you that all the spiritual blessings of heaven are ours in him, even in this world. Help us to live from this truth now, growing in faith and the abundance of life, sharing the good news of salvation with those who do not know Christ as we journey towards eternity with him. In Jesus' name, amen.

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