

INTRODUCTION

The message today is entitled “This Old House.” Now depending on your age, when you hear those words, you either think of the song, or you think about the television show on TLC that used to be hosted by Bob Vila. I chose this title based on the song. The words of the chorus are correct. Our bodies are like a house (actually a tent) and we won’t really need this house or tent forever because God has something better planned for us.

But, let’s go behind the music to learn a little about this song. The words and music for “This Ole House” were written by Carl Stuart Hamblen. He lived from 1909 until 1989. He also wrote the words and music to “It is No Secret” in 1950. “It is no Secret” was the first crossover hit in U.S. music history landing at #1 in the gospel, country, and popular charts. “This Ole House” was named “song of the year” in 1954.

Hamblen was an interesting guy. He was from Texas, but he moved to Hollywood. He became one of the first Hollywood Cowboys, hosting a radio show called, “King Cowboy and his Woolly West Review.” He starred in some of the early cowboy movies alongside Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, and John Wayne. He had a reputation for being a money-grabbing, woman-chasing, hard-drinking celebrity. He actually wrote and recorded a country song entitled, “I Won’t Go Huntin’ With You, But I’ll Go Chasin’ Women.” In other words, he was your typical Hollywood star.

But in 1949, there was a young, tall evangelist who set up a tent near Hollywood for a Youth for Christ rally. The preacher was an unknown evangelist named Billy Graham. God saved Carl Stuart Hamblen at that meeting, and his life was gloriously changed. Overnight, his entire lifestyle changed. God sobered him up, straightened him up, and he became a follower of Jesus. Not long after, he was at a party at John Wayne’s. John told Stuart he had noticed the change in his life and asked him his secret. Stuart said the first thing that came to his mind, “John, it is no secret what God can do.” The Duke said, “Hey, Pilgrim, that’s a catchy phrase, you oughta’ write a song about it.” And he did.

Hamblen was fired from his radio show because he refused to advertise alcohol. So he started a new radio show called, “Cowboy Church of the Air” which featured gospel and country music. So the idea of cowboy churches like we have today really isn’t all that new. Carl Stuart Hamblen launched the idea almost 60 years ago!

The truth expressed in 2 Corinthians 5 gives us assurance to understand what happens when a Christian dies. There should be no chapter break between chapters four and five, so let’s pick up with 2 Corinthians 4:18–5:8:

“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. Now we know that if the earthly tent [KJV: “earthly house of this tabernacle”] we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed, but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal

may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Every person in every nation and culture on earth has to answer this question: What happens after a person dies? Basically, the answers to this question fall into three possible categories. First, some people say, "Nothing happens." There is a widespread belief that death is the end of any kind of conscious existence. Atheists usually embrace this position claiming that this life is all there is, and when you die there is utter and absolute nothingness.

Second, there is a position that basically says, "anything could happen." Meaning, "something DOES happen after death, but we just don't know what." This belief could embrace reincarnation, transfer to another planet, or universalism that claims everyone will go to heaven. Donald Trump was interviewed recently and asked, "What about death? Don't you worry about dying?" Trump replied, "No, I'm fatalistic, and I protect myself as well as I can. I don't believe in reincarnation, or heaven or hell—but we go someplace. But I cannot, for the life of me, figure out where."

But there is a third answer, and it comes from the Bible. The Bible teaches there are only two eternal destinations, heaven or hell. You've probably heard about the tombstone where someone had engraved these words as a warning about preparing for death: "Consider, young man, as you pass by, as you are now, so once was I; as I am now, you soon shall be; So prepare young man to follow me." That was pretty good, but someone added these words to the tombstone: "To follow you is not my intent, until I know which way you went!" In order to understand this truth about life after death let's notice:

1. THE TEMPORARY TENT: MY PHYSICAL BODY

We know from Acts 18:3, that the Apostle Paul was a tentmaker by profession. He knew the difference between portable tents and permanent buildings. That's why he wrote that life is like living in a tent. We read in vs. 1&4, "the earthly tent we live in...while we are in this tent we groan."

How many of you have ever spent a night in a tent? Good, because you'll have an easier time understanding this scripture. Our earthly bodies are like a tent—we only live in it temporarily. There are at least two shortcomings about tents.

(1) A tent is too insecure to protect you

A tent isn't a fortress. You can't deadbolt the door to protect you from intruders. The canvas isn't good at keeping wild animals away. When there's a storm you don't seek shelter in a tent. At best, a tent can only protect you from a little rain. Our physical bodies are like that—we don't have any true security while we live in this tent.

(2) A tent is too uncomfortable for to you rest

Given a choice between sleeping in a sleeping bag on the hard ground or staying in a hotel, most would choose the hotel. If you've ever been camping, the first night is pretty exciting. But then there's the mosquitoes, the dampness, the heat, the sound of the other campers snoring. We just can find true comfort while we live in this tent. That's why Paul wrote that "while in this tent we groan."

These tents get old, and the canvas gets thin and torn. The ropes get frayed, and the tent pegs start pulling out. That's just the fact of getting old. I'm 54, have any of you my age or older started seeing all the changes around us? They've started building staircases steeper than they used to- and the steps are farther apart. And newspapers and magazines (and Bibles) have started using smaller and smaller type. My arms aren't long enough to read the paper anymore!

And people are talking softer and softer than they used to because I can't hear what they're saying all the time—they mumble a lot!

And shoes—have you noticed they've started making shoelaces so short that it's harder and harder to bend down to tie them? And it takes so much effort to bend over to tie your shoes that when you're down there you look around to see if there's anything you can do as long as you're there. And the weather—it's getting colder than it used to and hotter in the summer. Maybe this global warming thing is real; I just would like to get some of that global warming on my feet at night! It's just that this old tent is starting to groan more and more than it used to. Can anyone relate to that?

I have a pastor friend who tells the story of being in bed one Saturday morning when his little girl came in and crawled in bed and climbed up on his chest. She said, "Wake up, daddy. Wake up." The Pastor decided to play a joke and keep his eyes closed like he was asleep. His little girl kept gently poking and nudging him and he kept his eyes closed. Finally, his daughter took her little fist and knocked on his forehead as if she was knocking on a door and said, "Hello, Daddy, are you in there somewhere?" You see, even a child can understand we are more than just a body of flesh—we are people who live in our bodies like a camper lives in a tent. But God has something so much better for us:

2. THE PERMANENT BUILDING: MY GLORIFIED BODY

Paul contrasts the tent of our physical bodies to the permanence of our glorified, heavenly bodies. In verse 1 he wrote, "We have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands." There is so much misunderstanding about what we'll be like when we're in heaven. According to a survey by *Time Magazine* in 1997, 43% of Americans believe we'll play harps in heaven, (I'd rather be playing a Fender Stratocaster) and 36% believe we'll wear halos. Many Americans mistakenly believe that when we get to heaven we'll become angels sprouting our own set of wings. The Bible never teaches that and we get most of those misconceptions from Mediaeval and Renaissance art.

The main thing we know about our glorified bodies is that our bodies will be like the glorified

body of Jesus. Paul wrote, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." (Philippians 3:20-21)

That doesn't mean we'll all be 33 years old and sporting a beard and sandals. It means that just as the glorified body of Jesus was real—he ate, spoke, and the disciples touched Him—so, too, we will have real glorified bodies. We're not going to be floating around on clouds like ghosts eating Milky Way candy bars. Paul changed metaphors from buildings to clothing when he said we wouldn't be naked, but we'll be "clothed with our heavenly dwelling." We'll slip on our glorified bodies like we put on a suit of clothes.

I love the way this Christian man described what it will be like:

They say that I am growing old;
I've heard them tell it times untold,
In language plain and bold—
But I'm not growing old.

This frail shell in which I dwell
Is growing old, I know full well—
But I am not the shell.

What if my hair is turning gray?
Gray hairs are honorable, they say.
What if my eyesight's growing dim?
I still can see to follow Him
Who sacrificed His life for me
Upon the cross of Calvary.

What should I care if time's old plow
Has left its furrows on my brow?
Another house, not made with hand,
Awaits me in the Glory Land.

What though I falter in my walk?
What though my tongue refuse to talk?
I still can tread the narrow way,
I still can watch and praise and pray.

My hearing may not be as keen
As in the past it may have been,
Still, I can hear my Saviour say,
In whispers soft, "This is the way."

The outward man, do what I can
To lengthen out this life's short span,
Shall perish, and return to dust,
As everything in nature must.

The inward man, the Scriptures say,
Is growing stronger every day.
Then how can I be growing old
When safe within my Saviour's fold?

Ere long my soul shall fly away
And leave this tenement of clay;
This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise
To seize the "everlasting prize."
I'll meet you on the streets of gold,
And prove that I'm not growing old.

—*John E. Roberts*

Following the metaphor of a tent and a building, the Bible speaks of:

3. MOVING DAY: DEATH MEANS LEAVING MY TENT TO BE WITH JESUS!

Paul knew exactly what happens after a Christian dies. He said it was simply moving from one place to another—from one body to another. In verse 8 we read, "We are CONFIDENT, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

It's time for another survey. Try to think about how many times you've loaded up boxes and furniture and moved from one location to another. We moved six times in the first 18 months we were married, and we've moved a total of 15 times, but we've only moved once in the last 16 years. How many of you have moved more than ten times? How many of you have moved more than 20 times? Is there anyone here who has moved 30 or more times? Moving day is always a busy, tiring, and exciting time. But the greatest move you'll ever make is from your tent to your permanent house—from your earthly body to your heavenly home. The moment a Christian dies, they immediately enter into the presence of Jesus.

One of the words that the New Testament uses to describe the death of a Christian is the word "departure." It was the same word used when a soldier would strike camp, take down his tent, and start his hike to his next location. Paul was referring to his impending death when he wrote to Timothy, "the time has come for my departure." (2 Timothy 4:6) Paul faced death constantly, and he wasn't afraid because he realized it would simply be a departure from this world to the next, from his earthly tent to his heavenly home. He wrote, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me...I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;" (Philippians 1:21-23). He was wanting to go but he was willing to stay. How about you, is that your attitude toward death, or are you just the opposite? Are you willing to go, but wanting to stay? When you understand the glories of heaven, you'll be looking forward to your moving day.

Let me explain again the relationship of your body, soul, and spirit. You are a body, a soul, and a spirit. Paul wrote there are only two kinds of people: Those who are still in their lost condition he characterized as being "in Adam." Those who are saved are "in Christ." An unbeliever's body

is mortal, while for a believer, we'll have immortal bodies. An unbeliever's soul is still ruled by the sin nature, whereas a Christian's soul is filled with the righteous nature of Jesus Christ. For an unbeliever, their spirit is dead, and separated from God. For those of us in Christ, our spirits have been made alive in Christ.

When a Christian dies, the body is left behind to be buried, or cremated, or in the case of many sailors, lost at sea. But in the instance of death, the invisible, inner person, the soul and spirit go to be with Christ. We are absent from the body and present with the Lord. If you're still a little confused, think about the expression we often use, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Or I've had people say something like, "I couldn't be in church in person, but I was there in spirit." Really, it's sometimes spooky to be preaching to a room full of spirits! All I'm trying to say is we already talk like our spirit is the true person inside the flesh.

I've often told the story about the preacher from New England whose last name was Pease. When he was buried he had these words placed on his tombstone:

UNDER THE SOD AND UNDER THE TREES
LIES THE BODY OF JONATHAN PEASE.
HE IS NOT HERE, THERE'S ONLY THE POD:
PEASE SHELLLED OUT AND WENT TO GOD.

That is so true. I sometimes write people on the one year anniversary of the death of their spouse, and when I do, I seldom use the word death, instead I write that it was one year ago when you spouse "relocated to heaven." I really believe that's a more accurate description because Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." (John 11:25-26)

CONCLUSION

So please allow me to be very personal with you for a few minutes. How would you answer this question?

Where will you be five seconds after you die?

I believe there are only three possible honest answers to this question.

(1) There is a CONFIDENT response: "I will be with Jesus in heaven."

That's how Paul would have answered. I would use those same seven simple words to answer it. Now if you ask some preachers they would give you a much more lengthy reply, but they would still be saying that same thing.

Notice the words of confidence in this passage. In verse one it says, "I KNOW..." It's not, "I hope" or "I wish" or "I dream" but "I KNOW that if this earthly tent I live in is destroyed, I have an eternal home in heaven!" In verse 6 Paul wrote, "we are always confident..." in verse 8 he wrote, "we are CONFIDENT I say." Because of great passages like this one, we can know that

we know that we know that when we die, we'll be with Jesus in heaven. Can you, at this moment, honestly and confidently answer with those seven words? If you can't, then your honest answer will be one of the remaining two.

(2) There is a CONFUSED response: "I don't know."

Now, that's an honest answer because there are people who really DON'T know. The people in this category fall into two groups. One group may be real Christians who just don't have a sense of assurance of their salvation. You may be one who, when asked that question, responds by saying, "I don't know—I hope so. I think so." What you mean is you're really not sure, but you're hoping and wishing you'll make it to heaven. It may be either you aren't grounded in the truth about salvation or you've become a victim of the devil's lie. You see, Satan's greatest lie to try to convince people that salvation has to be earned, and that you must work to keep it or you'll lose it. That's the lie of legalism compared to the Gospel of Grace.

God's word says in Romans 10:9, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Period. End of argument. If you have placed your eternal trust in Jesus, and your answer is still "I don't know," then you aren't where you need to be. You need to move to a place of confidence and assurance. It's not confidence or assurance in yourself, but in God's Word. You should let go of doubt and stand on the rock solid Word of God and come to full assurance of your salvation. Move on up to answer #1 and say by faith, "I will be with Jesus in heaven."

But there is another group under this answer. It's for people who sincerely don't know what the Bible has to say about eternal life. Their answer "I don't know" simply comes from the fact that they've never been told. If a Christian asks a person who isn't a believer, "where will you be 5 seconds after you die?" and their reply is "I don't know." Then it's the Christian's job to TELL them the truth of the gospel. Here's what I say to anyone who honestly says, "I don't know." The Bible says, "Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement." (Hebrews 9:27) There are only two eternal destinations, and you'll either die in Christ and go to heaven for eternity, or you'll die in your sins and go to a place of eternal separation from God in a place called hell. But God loves YOU so much he sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for your sins, and if you'll believe in him, you'll never perish, instead you'll have eternal life."

Now once that I've explained that to someone who honestly says, "I don't know" "POOF!" they disappear from this group. Because now they know! At that point, they'll either seek to trust Jesus as their Lord and move up to answer #1, or they reject the truth and move to the only other possible honest answer:

(3) There is a CALLOUSED response: "I don't care."

Some people's hearts have become so hardened to the gospel they have allowed calluses to grow around their heart. They have no interest or desire to know God and to be in heaven. They don't simply reject the truth, they do worse than that—they *ignore* it. Their response is, "Big deal. I don't care." But that's not really an honest answer, because the time will come when they will care very much about where they will be five seconds after they die. At the moment they face

death, there will be that instant of doubt, "What if all this stuff about Jesus was true?" And then five seconds after they die, they will know for certain it is true, and they will care at that moment. In fact, it will be the ONLY thing that they care about.

So, where will you be five seconds after you die? Can you answer with those seven words of confidence? I will be with Jesus in heaven. Like Paul, I'm not afraid of death, because for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

I love the story about the little girl who walked home from school every day. Her route took her through the local cemetery. She loved to feel the breezes, and she enjoyed the sound of the birds, and the silence in the cemetery. Sometimes she would just lie on her back in the grass and watch the shapes of the clouds change. She would skip through the cemetery singing songs, and whistling her favorite tunes. She loved to pause and read the names and dates of people on the tombstones. One day one of her friends said, "Why do you walk through the cemetery every day, aren't you afraid?" The little girl answered, "No, I'm not afraid, it's just the way home."

And for a child of God, death is moving day—it's our way home!

OUTLINE

1. THE TEMPORARY TENT: MY PHYSICAL BODY

"the earthly tent we live in...while we are in this tent we groan." vs. 1, 4

- (1) A tent is too insecure to protect you
- (2) A tent is too uncomfortable for to you rest

2. THE PERMANENT BUILDING: MY GLORIFIED BODY

"We have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands." vs. 1

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." *Philippians 3:20-21*

3. MOVING DAY: DEATH MEANS LEAVING MY TENT TO BE WITH JESUS!

"We are CONFIDENT, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord." vs. 8

Where will you be five seconds after you die?
(only three possible *HONEST* answers)

- (1) Confident: "I will be with Jesus in heaven."
- (2) Confused: "I don't know."
- (3) Callused: "I don't care."



DISCLAIMER: These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes