

## 2 Cor 4.13- 5.10. TENT. 30<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

### Home Group Notes:

Well done that you've managed to settle down and get into the rhythm of meeting. November will be a month of Ecclesiastes, we won't fit it all in but if you're not sure what to be reading next ...

### Welcome:

Surely some of you have got some cracking camping stories?  
Anyone get trick or treated the other evening?

Worship: try Psalm 116.

Word: *There's a clear temptation to focus on what it is that grinds you down, IF you think that's a fruitful route to go down then talk about it, personally I'm not so sure so I'd suggest leaving it until Works.*

1. Read 2 Cor 4.13-5.10 (you might want to encourage multiple translations)
2. What strikes you out of this passage? What One word would you have honed in on?
3. Can anyone remember any thing James said?
4. So why do we not lose heart?
5. How can we help others not to lose heart?
6. How can I fix my eyes on something I can't see – isn't that just a nonsense?
7. How do I know that I'm inwardly being renewed?
8. Why did I pick on Tent as my one word?
9. What's all this about clothing? Why does it mean that Paul doesn't want to be naked/ unclothed?
10. For what purpose am I made?
11. Why do I make it my goal to please Him?

Works: If there's particular things that you'd like prayer for, worries or issues that grind you down, now could be a good time to pray about it BUT the rule is more prayer and less talk or else you're just having a good whine or being swamped with loving advice. For confidential reasons you might want to split into threes for this bit.

Also Pray for people at this time for whom grief issues spring to the fore. The Bereavement service was last Sunday. Pray for those trick or treating and those afraid of them.

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Once upon a time, we had a really nice **trailer tent** which served us well for many a summer. And one day we towed this tent about an hour and a bit west of here. On the first night the wind blew and it made the **tent** creak so loudly, it's amazing any of us slept. We went out that day for a jolly and then as we came back we found that the tent had been **crushed** by the wind, the old metal poles had finally bent, the canvas had been

torn, everything was soaked through.... So we packed it all up and towed it home (ask Anna Hardy for a different angle on this story).

My one word sermon is **Tent!** The idea is that this is a sermon about **not losing heart** about not giving up and keeping going. Paul does this by focussing upon what it is that he does know and then thinking about all the implications that come from that.

SO Paul starts off by remembering his **own rescue**. There was a time when Paul positively persecuted Christians, arrested them and oversaw their deaths - a time when he did **not think of Jesus as being the key to his life, to forgiveness, to hope**.

And then he was converted and so now he sings with the ancient Psalmist (116.10) I believe and therefore I speak. Last time I urged you to read more OT, perhaps I should narrow that down to urging you to read more **Psalms**. (though next week we're onto Ecclesiastes so perhaps you should get reading that).

The Ancient Psalm (116) is a song of **God rescuing** someone and Paul takes it up as his theme song. God rescued me and that's what has brought me to belief and that's why Paul speaks out.

So Paul does not lose heart because he looks back and **remembers God's rescue**. And then he remembers **Easter Day**. Jesus risen from the dead.

A few years back I was invited to publicly discuss with a man who thought that **St Paul did not believe that Jesus** had risen from the dead. It was a terribly odd discussion, we tried being nice to him, he was all guns blazing, nit picky and looking for any gaps in our points – in the end we realised that actually he wasn't interested in listening to what the bible says but was just keen to get **himself promoted** so we closed it down. A little sad really but if I'd remembered it, this would have been a cracking text to have used.

Paul is very clear and solid about **Jesus risen from the dead** and it is for Paul the solid reason to **our hope of life** after death, of the power of God to **take him, me, you**, us after we're dead, to raise us and to present us into the **presence of God**.

That's a pretty solid and awesome truth to keep in mind.

**Paul doesn't lose heart** because God has **rescued** him, because God **raised Jesus** and now because of **You**. This is all for your benefit.

The work that Paul does is driven along by his desire to do good, to help people and maybe some of that will bring glory to God. My **godfather**, a vicar, used to say If some days you can do some good for some people then that will have been a good day.

**All three of these things help** hold us together: your own rescue by God, knowing Jesus risen from the dead, helping others to the glory of God – it all helps to keep us going.

But there's more.

So don't lose heart. And there are plenty of things that **want us to lose heart**. Plenty of distractions and **discouragements**. You already know what they are in your life so I **won't dwell** on them for too long.

St Paul in Chapter 1 of this letter said we were under great pressure far **beyond our ability** to endure, so that we **despaired** even of life. That sounds like a good reason to lose heart. And you know your own reasons.

Some of the youth group went to **Southover** evening service last week where we saw some adults and some teenagers getting baptised and they each gave a full **story** about why they wanted to get baptised. On the whole the pattern was quite similar – I went to an **alpha** course, it made a difference to me, knowing **Jesus is making a difference** to me, so I'd like to really commit my life to Jesus. One young lad said something similar but concluded saying something like – I really felt that God was saying "I should **man-up and grow** a pair." ! Marvellous, these sort of things encourage us, so we do not lose heart.

The trick says Paul is to **focus on what you can't see** rather than on what you can see. We see things, hear things that make us lose heart. Focus on Jesus, **risen** from the dead. **Remember** the good that God has done for you. And think about the good that **God is doing** in you right here right now.

So yes we're all getting **older**, yes we're all going to **die**! As Paul says We are **wasting** away! But inside, we are being renewed. And it is happening **day by day**.

Every day, something wants to have a **go at you** and discourage you, every day we get older and waste away a little more, **everyday** we need to **focus** not on what is seen but on what is unseen, focus on the **eternal**.

If we can do that then the **troubles** we go through might look a little different – Paul now refers to whatever it was that led him to '**despair** even of life' – 'indeed in our hearts we felt the sentence of **death**'! – Paul now calls that a **light and momentary trouble**. Of course that's easier said After the event.

But if we can look to the unseen eternal, heavenly hope that we have. **If we can live by faith** and not by staring like a rabbit caught in the headlights. Then we can have this boldness this confidence that is able to look even at life and death in a very different way.

Paul mixes his **metaphors** now saying it's a bit like me in a **tent** now but I have a **home in heaven**, a solid building in heaven.

I can't **wait to be clothed** and dressed for living with God in heaven. It's as if what awaits us in **heaven is more real**, more solid, more certain than what we live with right now. No, we don't want to die, we don't want to be **unclothed**, as Paul

puts it but at the same time, if we can **grasp how fabulous** our heavenly clothes are to be then yes, like the end of term! (as CS Lewis would put it), we **look forward** to what is to come and it gives us **hope** and we **don't lose heart**.

And that's what this is all about. Yes we live in this tent, buffeted and **increasingly squeaky** tent. Whatever life throws at us, even if it throws it at our bodies, this is just a tent and we have a **fabulous solid home** that we are yet to move into.

So we come to the climax I think of Paul's encouragement – **God has made you for this very purpose** – you were made to be clothed with your heavenly dwelling – we were made for heaven, you were made to live with God. This is your purpose.

That's why we have this **deposit** – remember all those weeks ago my sermon about the **washing machine** and God buying you? God paid a deposit of Holy Spirit – you have been **bought**. Now Paul says you were made for this purpose: to live with God.

It's a great letter, so far, Paul starts off by saying receive the **Comfort** of God before you start giving it out. Know that God has paid His **deposit**, His Holy Spirit on you, so that your faith can be focussed on Jesus and not on Paul or on me who might let you down from time to time. Comfort, Deposit,

**Aroma, Letter** – you smell of God, you are a letter of recommendation from Jesus to the world and if I'd been preaching the next bit – you are a **Clay Jar** carrying fabulous treasure. And now you are a **Tent**.

I'm not preaching **pie in the sky** when you die – Bishop Wallace prefers to talk about steak on the plate while you wait!

You are a Tent. It reminds us that this **troublous life** is temporary, that we are on a **pilgrimage**, a journey towards the Celestial City (as Bunyan would say). That there is **more certainty and reality** and solidity in the world to come than we enjoy here and now.

And this leaves us with a **good mixed feeling** where we long to be with Jesus **completely** because we really do know there's more to come and yet we know that it is **good and right for us to be here right now** doing what we can.

So we **don't lose hope**, even though we live in this **tent**, this wasting away tent – because **every day** we're being renewed, so we **fix** our eyes on home, our heavenly home that we were made for and we look to **Jesus** who holds us and will finally bring us into God's glorious presence. Amen.