

# Living in the Tent – In[TENT]ional

## 2 Corinthians 5:6-17

### Introduction

One day many years ago God spoke to a man living in what is now the country of Iraq. His name was Abram. This is the same Abram who would one day become known as Abraham, the patriarch of all the Jews. God had a simple instruction for him:

Leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. (Genesis 12:1)

The instruction was clear and simple, but I think it was something that would be incredibly difficult to do. You see, to the best of our knowledge, Abram was not a God-follower at the time God spoke to him. He lived in the land of the Chaldeans, and the Chaldeans worshipped the moon. But nonetheless God spoke to him, and remarkably Abram responded:

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him ... (Genesis 12:4)

Abram went. He packed up his tent and went ... **intent** on going wherever God would lead him.

Fast forward several hundred years to the time when the children of Israel were set free from their captivity to the Egyptians. They went, knowing where they were going. God had promised them a land of their own, and they were **intent** on getting there. Well, most of the time. But even in their times of great disobedience, they were **intent** on arriving at their final destination. The land of Canaan. The land of God's promise. And so, every day for 40 years they too packed up their tents, and journeyed on.

For Abram and for the children of Israel life in a tent was necessary because ...

Where they were was not where they were meant to be.

They were not created to live in Iraq or Egypt. God had prepared a different home for them. The Apostle Paul understood that concept as well. He knew that everything about this earthly life was only temporary. It is not our final destination. Where we are right now is not where we are meant to be. Everything about where we are is like living in a tent. That's why Paul wrote at the beginning of this section of Scripture:

For we know that if the earthly tent 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 instead 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 instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. (2 Corinthians 5:1-4)

Those were verses from last week. In today's text he frames it like this:

Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:6)

As long as we are living in this tent – this flesh and blood body – we are not yet home. We are tent dwellers, immigrants in a foreign country. Our anthem could easily be the old Jim Reeves country gospel song which says:

This world is not my home I'm just passing through  
My treasures are laid up Somewhere beyond the blue  
The angels beckon me to heaven's golden shore  
And I don't feel at home in this world any more.

Last week we kicked off this three-part sermon series titled "Living in the Tent." We saw in that first sermon how it was possible to find contentment as we lived life here in our earthly tents. Despite the groaning and burden of this life, we can indeed learn to be content if we are willing to see what God is doing in our lives and to fix our eyes on those things that have eternal value. Contentment ultimately has to do with where we choose to look.

But contentment is only one part of tent life. Remember ...

- Abram had someplace to go. He didn't know where it was, but he was **intent** on going there.
- The children of Israel were going someplace too. They were **intent** on going to the Promised Land. They often got sidetracked, but their final destination was clear to them.

So too with those of us who follow Jesus. We may find ourselves living in nice houses driving nice cars. We may talk about we have "put down roots." We may amass a lot of stuff that helps us feel content right here, right now.

But we must never forget: we are tent people. All of those things we think offer permanence to our lives are really only temporary. Rust and dust. This world is not our home. We are just passin' through. We have someplace to go.

Like Abram and the children of Israel, to get where we are going we need to be:

In[TENT]ional

That means ...

## #1: WE SET A GOAL

People who live with **intent** are goal setters. Paul offers this goal for all of us tent people:

So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. (2 Corinthians 5:9)

Pleasing God is our goal, our ambition. It is the thing for which we strive.

We are starting to hear a lot of conversation about the upcoming Olympic games. For years – for all of their lives – many of those athletes have been **intent** on only one thing: winning an Olympic gold. That goal has consumed them. That's why it is good to hear a story like this one:

In the 2000 summer Olympics, the USA women's softball team won its second gold-medal. The top pitcher on that team was Lisa Fernandez. During those Olympics one commentator described Lisa as "arguably the best women's softball pitcher the world has ever seen." He went on to say, "Somehow she finds a source of strength and support that bridges all the highs and lows, strikeouts and home runs that this game throws her way."

Here is what Lisa Fernandez says: "Being with God and pleasing Him has definitely fulfilled me. When I feel insecure about myself and I'm not sure where I'm going, I turn to Him and open up the Bible. And all of a sudden my world has changed and my view is clear."

In that wonderful faith chapter, the writer of Hebrews makes it clear that:

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

So if our goal is to please God, the only way we can do that is by that kind of faith. Which is why in today's passage Paul writes:

We live by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7)

Faith is why an Abram can start out on a journey without knowing where he is going. He didn't have to see it to believe that God will guide him there. Faith – actually a lack of it – is why the children of Israel struggled so much on their 40 year journey from Egypt to Canaan. They did not trust God to guide them there. They couldn't live with the uncertainties of their journey

Living in the tent requires us to have faith. Because it is a life filled with:

For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened ... (2 Corinthians 5:4)

So in the midst of all that troubles us, we proclaim our faith and make it our goal to please Him.

## #2: WE SEEK TO PERSUADE

People who live with **intent** also try to persuade others.

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. (2 Corinthians 5:11)

We try. That sounds half-hearted effort, doesn't it?

- I tried to lose weight.
- I tried to be nice to my sister.

Lest we miss his point, in verse 14 Paul changes the word. There, he says, we are "compelled."

For Christ's love compels us ... (2 Corinthians 5:14a)

Compelled is a much stronger word. It conveys this sensation boiling up inside me where I have to do something. I don't just "try." I am obligated to see it through.

The Greek word used here describes a narrow path where there is no wiggle room. When you are "compelled" you have no options but to do that thing that compels you. Let me illustrate it with this picture.

This is Black Bear Road in Colorado. If you are in that vehicle, you are compelled to go forward. You have no other choice. Your intention has to be 100% forward.

And what is it that compels us? The love of Christ. When you are living in this tent ...

- And you are convinced that all of this stuff is temporary
- And you know there is an eternal destination prepared for those who follow Jesus
- Then you become convinced -- compelled -- to make sure everyone knows that know too:

Because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. (2 Corinthians 5:14b)

I am so compelled that I don't see the people around me through the same lens as the world uses.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. (2 Corinthians 5:16)

The world sees categories: black/white, Republican/Democrat, good/bad. But I see them as someone for whom Christ died.

## APPLICATION

Tim Hansel is the author of the book "When I Relax I feel Guilty." In it he writes some painful insights of how many people view their relationship with God. He writes:

"I would like to buy \$3.00 worth of God, please. Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of Him to make me love a black man or pick tomatoes with a migrant. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy \$3.00 worth of God, please."

That is not the kind of intentional living Paul writes of in this passage. He calls us to be all in. To be **inTENT**. Are you?

Amen.