

INTRO: Many years ago, when our daughter was married, but did not yet have any children, I received a Father's Day card from her. The cover said, "Remember when you loaded up all us kids in the van and went camping in a tent for two weeks?" Inside it continued, "Someday I'll get even with you for that." (I thought she was having fun with the rest of us.) She added a note explaining that her idea of roughing it was to take an elevator down to the heated pool and sauna. What can I say? According to this text, tenting makes for a great sermon illustration.

I. TENTING IS FUN

- A. The Apostle Paul knew tents inside and out (pun intended)
 - 1. he made tents at Corinth w/Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:3)
 - 2. labored for a livelihood, not for recreation; no clergy salary
 - 3. lucrative; some awnings were for wealthy people
 - 4. many nomads spent lifetime in tent as only home (some still do)
- B. The image of tenting for you and me
 - 1. a change from the routine
 - 2. a bit of a challenge and adventure (like pioneer's covered wagon)
 - 3. closeness to Creation (especially for urbanites)
- C. The reality: Paul's picture of life on this earth
 - 1. life is full of joys and pleasures
 - a. food and drink; necessities of life are pleasurable
 - b. sports, fishing, hunting, entertainment, sight-seeing
 - c. even the tenting, camping for some people (VW van in Magnolia)
 - d. danger that pleasures lead away from God; replace God
 - 2. in Christ, tenting – and everything else – is more fun
 - a. knowing where all this came from; acknowledging the Creator
 - b. knowing Him as a personal Redeemer, not 'mother nature'
 - c. knowing purpose and end of it all; dominion, stewardship
 - d. so, we walk by faith, not by sight; knowing this all will end

II. TENTING PRESENTS SOME INCONVENIENCES

- A. The actuality of tenting
 - 1. tents can be hot, cold; leaky, torn, or worn out; let in mosquitoes
 - 2. can be crowded and uncomfortable; hard ground (first pup tent)
 - 3. in army, burden to carry ½ of a tent
 - 4. we're often ready to come home after tenting (2 weeks, for me)

B. The reality of life on this earth

1. while still in this tent (body) we groan (v.2); with pain, anxiety
2. many troubles in this life originate in the body (and mind)
 - a. sickness and injury, requiring repair; parts replaced
 - b. bodies wear out like tents; nomad wife weaves a new section each year, beginning from the top down
 - c. uncertainties and insecurities, like wind storms, sand storms

C. Life on earth is uncertain, at best

1. death surely awaits us all
2. and then what? Nothingness? Hell?

III. MOST PREFER A PERMANENT HOME RATHER THAN A TENT

A. The image of tenting

1. a tent is not a good place to weather a storm (we once had to take it down and all crowd into the van)
2. houses are more convenient, comfortable, safe, pleasant
3. there is safety and security at home; esp. if mortgage is paid up
4. remember: contrast between temporary and permanent dwelling
5. it is tempting to focus on the temporary, neglecting the permanent

B. The reality; life is temporary, eternity is permanent

1. we **have** a building from God (v.1) (because we're sinful!)
 - a. it is our present possession, though not yet occupying it
 - b. **from** God = by His grace alone (built and paid for by the carpenter from Nazareth, who was born at Bethlehem, came from heaven)
 - c. not made with our hands; better than anything we could build
2. God has prepared us for this very thing! (v.5)
 - a. given us His Spirit, via means of grace; still giving Him
 - b. our guarantee (v.5) = earnest money; security deposit; deed
 - c. therefore we long for our **permanent** home
3. confident (v.6 & 8) willing to be absent from body, present w/Lord

CONCLUSION: Not that I personally don't enjoy life on this earth. I do! And I also enjoy tenting. But not as a permanent arrangement. We shall all leave here some day, maybe even more quickly than you can take down a tent. Jesus has prepared for us a mansion by means of His work for us on this earth. Think carefully; where would like to live, in an earthly tent, or in a heavenly mansion? Amen.