

1. Walking By Faith—2 Corinthians 4:16-6:2 (Tell the story of this letter: Paul had made a visit after his first letter—not an easy one—to follow up on all the problems he addressed in 1 Corinthians. This resulted in a strained relationship with this church—exacerbated by a group Paul sarcastically refers to as “super-apostles” in 11:5. These men characterized as false teachers by Paul seized on the difficulties between Paul and this church to undermine his influence in order for them to profit on these Christians. This atmosphere they helped foster through criticism of Paul—he was bold when writing letters, but weak and feeble in person; he was not as credentialed as they were; he could not speak with as much eloquence as they could; and worst of all—he really did not care for the Corinthians like he claimed. So in order to get around to why he was writing—sharing with them why he did not come as promised and to encourage them to complete their gift of famine relief as they had promised—Paul had to wade through all of the criticism, give a thorough defense of himself and his ministry and expose the false super-apostles. In the midst of this we get this marvelous text—really a personal purpose statement by Paul and how he conducted his life and ministry—all by faith. In this immediate text he shares his own personal struggles and then explains how he was able to make it through them. It is really about)
2. Navigating the Tension between Exile and Homecoming (of living in the “seen”—dealing with all that comes with that like despair, persecution, being hard pressed on every side, etc.—being exiled as aliens and strangers in the world—while maintaining a focus on the “unseen,” our eternal homecoming. Put another way—we live now the tent life, but we realize it, like a tent itself, is only temporary. So in order to survive it—we focus on our heavenly dwelling, knowing its promises far outweigh whatever we must endure while in the tent. No denying this will always lead us to tension, but tension that is temporary and manageable—with the Spirit of God within and enabling us.)
3. (So knowing this) How Do We Live By Faith? (in this tension)
 - a. Prioritize the unseen (obvious one here, but not necessarily easy)
 - b. Make it our goal to please God (in any and every situation—this is not a situational thing here as Paul makes clear. It is not a when-I-feel-like-it or when-it-fits scenario. This matters to our eternal destiny)
 - c. Try to persuade men (part of Paul’s explanation of his ministry here. It was not self-promotion like with the super-apostles, but something that flowed out of his faith walk—should ours as well—just natural)
 - d. Regard no one from a worldly point of view (again, get the context. Paul was being compared to the super-apostles and from a worldly perspective they had the advantage. Paul says walking by faith looks beyond the externals. Paul admits to judging Christ this way and how that was a mistake. Walking by faith—we should see people as God sees them—all through his new creation, things have changed)
 - e. Be ambassadors for Christ (and this is all about what ambassadors do—reconciliation. That was Paul’s personal call and what his ministry was about in Corinth. It should be our call also—after all through Christ it is possible—in him we all can become the righteousness of God. This is what walking by faith produces and what solves the tension once for all—once our reconciliation is complete and the tent is folded all tension vanishes)
4. Now is the Time to Act! (or else God’s grace may be in vain)