

The Book of 2nd Corinthians

Chapter 5:1-10

January 10, 1999

- **Outline of 2nd Corinthians:**
 - Chapter 1 God equips His people through trial, comfort and perseverance.
 - Chapter 2 Restore fellowship to the repentant; One aroma, two response.
 - Chapter 3 The glorious covenants
 - Chapter 4 The Light of the Glory of Christ
 - Chapter 5 Longing to be further clothed;
- **Review & Introduction**

Paul continues in this section with his defense against those who opposed him at Corinth. Although he is on something of a tangent, the topics he discusses are related to the primary topic. This section is specifically tied to the previous chapter where Paul speaks of his afflictions as light and momentary when compared with the eternal glory that awaited him. Here he will give more details to this eternal hope for the faithful and introduce the eternal destruction for those outside of Christ.

These are probably the most controversial verses in this epistle. Not only is the grammatical structure complicated, some of the exact meanings require the whole counsel of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, we find some answers to a question that rumbles in the heart of every human, "what happens to us when die?" This idea is not new to Paul's communication with the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul lays out very clearly that our earthly (made from dust) bodies shall be replaced with a heavenly body.

- **Exposition of 2nd Corinthians 5:1 - 10**

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

- Paul begins with a comparison of two structures described by a mixing of two metaphors. The comparison is between a temporary dwelling that Paul calls a tent and an eternal dwelling referred to as a building from God, not made with hands. As a tentmaker, Paul was naturally inclined (and divinely inspired) to these pictures. But notice that by its very nature, a tent was a temporary, transient structure. It would be a mistake, or at best, foolish, to think of the tent as a permanent residence.
- Behind this illustration is the real comparison that Paul makes between our current, temporary bodies and the bodies that we will be given after the resurrection. Continuing from chapter 4, even though there are those who will destroy Paul's "tent", he does not lose hope because he is assured of the eternal body that is to come.
- The two metaphors mixed here (in the proceeding verses) are seen in the language of being clothed with a dwelling.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,³ if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.⁴ For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

- Paul introduces a concept which is similar to that which he writes in Romans 8. He speaks here of a "groaning" which comes from an earnest desire to be *further clothed* with the eternal dwelling thus ending our mortality. It is important that we understand the groaning. Notice in Romans 8:18-27 we see three entities groaning; first the creation itself eagerly awaits the deliverance from the bondage of corruption by groaning, v. 22. Secondly, we groan as we await the adoption as sons evidenced by the redemption of our bodies. Just as the creation groans in anticipation of redemption, so to Paul writes that our groaning is in anticipation of the same thing. Further he writes that the Spirit of God assists us in this groaning by making intercession for us providing comfort and strength in our weakness as we wait for this redemption. This is the exact same context that we see in 2 Corinthians where Paul is speaking of the new body we are to receive. Paul describes the intense longing and frustration that he feels as a groaning deep within himself.
- Paul appears to have hoped that he would live long enough to see the second return of Christ. This comes out here in that he refers to not wanting "to be unclothed" which refers to the intermediate state of being a disembodied soul waiting for the resurrection. Paul was not fearing death nor was he fearing the disembodied period but rather it appears that his preference would have been to survive long enough for the Lord to return and have his tent directly covered with the eternal dwelling. For Paul, death meant he would be with, Christ but to live is Christ as well. Philippians 1:19-26

5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

- How is it that we can be sure that we will be conformed to the image of the Son? Certainly not by the assurance of our own self-sanctification. Rather He has indwelt us with His Spirit and thereby given us the confidence that the work which God began at conversion will surely be completed. In addition to the deposit of the Spirit (not that more is necessary) He has also given us His holy Word with promises of the redemption of the body. Philippians 3:17-21; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight.⁸ We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

- Because it is God who has prepared us and because He has given us a deposit as a guarantee of the completion of the work He began, we are always confident. Notice that sound, proper theology breeds confidence for the regenerate. When we are taught something by the Scriptures, our response should be confidence.
- Paul knew that it would be better to be with the Lord because as long as he continued in his temporary dwelling (the tent), he was apart from the presence of the Lord. Not that the Lord was not with him by means of His Spirit. Rather Paul is longing to be (once again) in the presence of the glory of the Lord. Although he could not see or touch his new body, still Paul gloried in the confidence that his groans would be abated.

9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

- Knowing that the presence of the Spirit means that we can be assured of being present with the Lord, Paul seeks to please Him at all times. Paul understands what it means to have a *Lord*. The principle here is similar to 1 John 3:1-3 where those who have the privilege of being predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ live their lives in a manner worthy of the calling and manifest lives of holiness.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. NKJV

- Here is the conclusion of the matter. Paul's conduct is characterized by confidence, faithfulness and self sacrifice. In all things, Paul's desire is to please his Lord. All along he has been referring to himself, describing the Christian life. With himself as the example for all Christians he moves on now to include not only all Christians, but all people. He teaches here that all people must present themselves before the tribunal of Christ—yes, even Christians. Here though, we Paul is not referring to the judgement between eternal security or eternal destruction. The Scriptures are plain that all people will stand in judgement when God separates the sheep from the goats. But even for the sheep there is a judgement.
- In Romans 8:1 Paul emphatically teaches that there is no fear of condemnation for those who are in Christ. The condemnation of the law is removed for those who walk according to the Spirit. However, God is a rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him. Hebrews 11:6. The works of Christians do not escape the eye of the Lord, both the faithless works and the faithful works. Although the condemnation for faithless works has been atoned for in the death of Christ, the consequence of the works still remains and must be removed. Therefore, this judgement appears to be a refining judgement where the bad is burned away and God gives rewards for faithfulness. 1 Corinthians 3:9-15
- What this means is that heaven is not the great leveling of Christians—heaven is not egalitarian. There will be those with more faithful works and greater rewards or crowns. There will also be those who, although they come through the fire saved, will not be given the same glory or rewards as others. Given this, Paul eagerly sought to be a Christian whose life was characterized as always striving to please the Lord.
- Notice also that nothing escapes the vision of the Lord. There is no such thing as a secret sin. All things are laid open to the eyes of God and all things will be judged. Hebrew 4:13 We have no private sins before God. We have no sins that we can hide from God and not have it affect our fellowship with Him and covenantally our spouses and children. Equally true, God sees the works of faithfulness that are otherwise unseen. He sees vindicating evidence that is otherwise undiscovered. All things are visible to Him and we are told to store up treasures like this in heaven where they cannot be destroyed or stolen. Matthew 6:19-21