

2 Corinthians 5

5 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. 2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, 3 because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4 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. 5 Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

In verse 1, Paul tells the Corinthian church and us that our bodies are nothing more than a tent. The most important part of you and I are our souls. Our physical bodies are just a dwelling place for the soul and because of sin, it will not last forever. Just as God raised Jesus from the dead and gave Him a resurrected body, then He will do the same for us. 2 Corinthians 4:14 tells us so, “*because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself.*”

In verse 2, Paul says that while we are on this earth, our soul “groans” for a heavenly body. Our physical bodies are failing us as we age. This fact goes back to the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. Genesis 2:17 says, “*but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.*” The promised death was not immediate but the sin would lead to death as a lifelong process. If you have seen the infomercials related to stopping the aging processes in our bodies and faces, then you recognize that these companies are preying on our desire to have the perfect heavenly dwellings that Paul is talking about.

In verse 3, Paul says that when we get to Heaven we will have a resurrected body. We will not just be spirits or ghosts. Our souls will inhabit the new resurrected bodies that are designed by God to allow us to live our best in the conditions of Heaven.

David Guzik says, “To God, the body itself is not a negative. The problem isn't in the body itself but in *these* sin-corrupted, fallen bodies that we live in. Jesus approved the essential goodness of the body by becoming a man. If there was something inherently evil in the body, Jesus could never have added humanity to His deity.”

In verses 3 and 4, Paul tries to explain that our souls will not be naked but will have a resurrected body. He is not talking about us having unclothed resurrected bodies. However, physical nakedness is only a problem because of our sinfulness. Consider that Adam and Eve lived naked without a problem until they allowed sin into the world. Genesis 3:7 says that after they ate of the forbidden fruit, “*And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; so they sewed together fig leaves and made coverings for themselves.*” The sin problem will be gone in Heaven.

In verse 4, Paul points out that our earthly bodies will be left here on earth until the Rapture. The Rapture will reconnect us with our resurrected version of our bodies left on earth. When we studied “Heaven”, we learned from Randy Alcorn that he believes that when we die, we will receive a temporary resurrected body so that we will be able to function in Heaven until the Rapture when we are reconnected with our resurrected old bodies.

In verse 5, Paul says God is the one that has all of this planned and He is at work in us today. He is molding us and making us better Christians and preparing us for our future in Heaven. He says that “God has given us the Holy Spirit as our deposit or down payment to remind us about what is to come.” The Holy Spirit helps us to finish the race, to get to Heaven. He is not the final payment, just the assurance of how amazing Heaven will be.

6 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 For we live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

In verse 6, Paul points out that as long as we are on this earth, we are not in heaven. Not counting the Rapture, when we leave these earthly bodies we will be taken into the presence of Jesus and God the Father in heaven.

“We can be always confident, even in hard times, if we keep Colossians 3:2: *Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.* (Guzik) “What, then, is the way to maintain peace when there are changes in the soul; when we are sometimes taken up to heaven and are anon cast down? Why, the only way is never to be unduly elated by prosperity without or within, and never to be unduly depressed by adversity or by doubts and fears, because you have learned to live neither upon the things without nor upon things within, but upon things above, which are the true food for a new-born spirit.” (Spurgeon)

Verse 7 says that Christians are to “*live by faith, not by sight*”. This is easier said than done. The most famous doubter in the New Testament was Thomas. He said that he wouldn’t believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead “*unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.*” He was living by sight and not by faith. Too often today, believers and nonbelievers want God to prove that He is real by doing a miracle or something out of the ordinary. What does Deuteronomy 6:16 tell us? *Do not put the LORD your God to the test.*

If Paul were getting a test at my doctor’s office, he would be asked if he thinks about death or is suicidal. If his answer was what he said in verse 8, the doctor might recommend an antidepressant. What Paul is saying is that Jesus is in heaven and living on the earth in these physical bodies will never compare to living in our resurrected bodies in heaven. Verse 8 is used at many funerals. If

we are present in this body then the presence of God is taken purely on faith. As a believer, if we are absent from the body, then we are present with the Lord. There will be no doubt because we will be able to see God and Jesus in the throne room of God.

Verse 9 means just what it says. Jesus is the one that decides where our final home will be. He will say “Away from me!” or “Well done.” If we pretended to be a Christian but didn’t live for Him or “*please*” Him, His decision will not go in our direction.

In verse 10, Paul states a fact. We all will be judged in the end. It will be to determine our punishment or our reward. Our righteousness will not get us to the reward portion of judgment. It is our faith in Jesus that gives us the imputed righteousness of Jesus. Which will it be punishment or reward? Are you living by sight or by faith?

11 Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. 12 We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. 13 If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. 14 For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

In verse 11, Paul gives justification for sharing the Gospel message with others. No one wants others to face the wrath of God. We know that our God is powerful but we fear His wrath. We have studied Revelation and other end times prophecies and wouldn’t want other to face what is coming, the wrath of God poured out on mankind.

In verse 10, Paul said that we will face judgment from God and we will find out whether the things that we have done were good or bad. If they were bad then we can expect the wrath of God. If we lead others to the saving knowledge of Jesus, then they will not face the wrath and have nothing to fear. Our conscience will be clear.

“Paul could see the need to persuade the world of the person and work of Jesus, and of his own integrity as a messenger of the good news. But he knew there was no need to persuade God, and it frustrated him that it was necessary to persuade the Corinthian Christians.” (Guzik)

Paul is not bragging about his weakness, his trials or his struggles. The Corinthians took pride in appearance. Paul took pride in what was in the heart. Paul wanted the Corinthian Christians to have a way to answer those that had pride in appearance.

We have heard in our study of Paul’s letters to the Corinthians that “*Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.*” (1 Corinthians 1:23). He preached the Gospel message, this foolishness, for God. This made me think of King David dancing for God as the Ark was

brought to Jerusalem. In 2 Samuel 6:21-22, David tells Michal, “*so I celebrate before the Lord. 22 Yes, and I am willing to look even more foolish than this, even to be humiliated in my own eyes!*” It is a matter of doing whatever you do to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*”

"The apostle tells them, that if indeed he was beside himself in any of their opinion, it was to God, that is, for the honour and glory of God: or if he was sober, it was for their sake; in what temper so ever he was, it was either for service to God, or them." (Poole)

In verse 14, Paul tells us and them that it is the love of Christ that compels him to serve God. How much did Jesus love Paul and us? He was willing to die for us. John 15:13 tells us that “*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*” If Jesus showed us that much love for us then we should give our lives to Jesus. As Paul puts it in verse 15, we should no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died for us.

16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

In verse 16, since the body is just a tent that will be replaced in heaven (v. 1), we should not evaluate others based on human appearance (NASB says ‘flesh’) but we should look at their heart. This is the same thing that he said in Verse 12. What is in our hearts is the true indicator of what we are really like. Unfortunately, humans can hide what is in their hearts using their outward appearance, consider politicians.

Verse 17 is a commonly quoted verse. When we accept Jesus into our hearts, we are to behave differently because we are a new creation. The old things in our life, the people we associate with, the things that we did or the life we lived has passed away. We are to live a new life for Jesus and there is no room for anything in our past lives that could lead us back into our sinful lives.

“It is unfair for us to expect those who are not in Christ to live as if they were a new creation. However, it is not unfair to expect a changed life from people who say they are Christians! "I know no language, I believe there is none, that can express a greater or more thorough and more radical renewal, than that which is expressed in the term, 'a new creature.'" (Spurgeon) However, being a new creation doesn't mean that we are perfect. It means that we are changed, and that we are being changed. (Guzik)

18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

In verse 18, Paul says that the Gospel message and the route to salvation is a gift from God. It is grace, God's Riches at Christ's Expense. We cannot have salvation or become righteous on our own, it is because of Jesus' work on the cross. I have said before that it is strange but God has put His trust in mankind to deliver His message of salvation. Throughout history, mankind has failed God time and time again. Yet this is how God chose to send the Gospel message to man. We must share God's message of salvation with the people that we are in our circle of influence.

*"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself is all the more amazing when understood in light of what happened on the cross. At some point before Jesus died, before the veil was torn in two, before Jesus cried out *it is finished*, an awesome spiritual transaction took place. The Father lay upon the Son all the guilt and wrath our sin deserved, and Jesus bore it in Himself perfectly, totally satisfying the wrath of God for us." (Guzik)*

Because of Jesus' work on the cross, our sins are no longer counted against us. Our sins were imputed to Jesus on the cross and when we accept Jesus, His righteousness is imputed to us. God has given us the Gospel message and when we receive the Holy Spirit then we are to give the message to others. Acts 1:8 says, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

In verse 20, Paul says that we are ambassadors of Christ. By representing Christ, we are to show others that Christ lives in us and show our love by sharing His message. We are to reach others for Christ. The NLT says *"God is making the appeal through us. . . We plead, "Come back to God!"* Up until the last generation, the U.S. was considered a Christian nation but today more and more people are growing up without Christ. Today, the need to plead, "Come to Jesus!"

Verse 21 is a Paul's paraphrase of John 3:16, *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (NASB)*