

"Death and the Believer"

Part 1

2 Corinthians 5:1-9

Introduction: Tonight in our study of 2 Corinthians we have come to chapter 5 and this is a chapter that is full of spiritual Truth and so we shall take our time working our way through the chapter. In the first part of the chapter Paul is going to deal with the subject of DEATH. This is a subject many people do not desire to even talk about. There are many people who are so fearful of death that they refuse to even consider the subject. I believe that I am safe to state that after we study our way through this section you and I will both have a different view of DEATH than we did before we entered into this section.

In 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul taught about what happens to the believers who have died in Christ when the rapture happens.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

¹³ *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

¹⁴ *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

¹⁵ *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

¹⁶ *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

¹⁷ *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

Here in this passage Paul describes what happens to those who have already died in Christ when the rapture happens. They will be resurrected and then those who are living in Christ will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.

Then in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul explains in detail what will happen to those who are alive in Christ when the rapture occurs.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53

⁵¹ *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*

⁵² *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

⁵³ *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

Here we see that the believer who is alive at the rapture will be CHANGED in a moment. This is when we will receive the GLORIFIED body. So, in 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul explains what happens to those who have died in Christ at the rapture and in 1 Corinthians 15 he explains what happens to the living believer at the rapture.

Now as we come to 2 Corinthians 5 Paul will give the details concerning the DEATH of the believer if the Lord extends grace and longsuffering to this world and we are not taken in the rapture.

Let us keep in mind that Paul was a man who did not fear death.

Philippians 1:20-24

²⁰ *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.*

²¹ *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

²² *But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.*

²³ *For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:*

²⁴ *Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.*

Paul's desires could be listed as follows:

1. Caught up in the Rapture.
2. Die in service.
3. Live on earth.

Paul preferred death over life and in this study we are about to enter into we shall see why living on earth was at the bottom of his list.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:1

We need to consider this verse in sections:

1. **Paul uses the word "KNOW" when he addresses the topic of death.**

Paul does not say that he HOPES or that he GUESSES or that MAYBE this is the truth. He states right up front that what he is about to say on the subject of death is something that he KNOWS to be the ABSOLUTE Truth. Let us keep in mind that Paul is holding the pen to record the Words here but the Holy Spirit is the One who is "breathing" the Words which he is recording. Therefore this Truth is directly from the Lord. The Words which are recorded in this passage are Words which we as believers can hold to as an anchor while we pass through the turbulent storms of this life.

2. **Paul refers to our earthly house as a "tabernacle".**

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:1 again.

The earthly house which Paul is speaking of here is our present bodies which are the dwelling place of our souls. The word "tabernacle" means "a tent". The idea is that the bodies which we have are only TEMPORARY dwellings. These bodies can be exercised, painted, tucked and trimmed but the bottom line is they will one day dissolve. No matter what we do we cannot keep these earthly bodies from growing old and dying.

This is by the way the result of sin entering into the world and it is also God's plan for these bodies to NOT live forever. Let me step you into Genesis 3 where God is pronouncing the curse upon Adam and all who would come after him.

Genesis 3:17-24

¹⁷ And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

¹⁸ Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

¹⁹ In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

²⁰ And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.

²¹ Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

²² And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

²³ Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

²⁴ *So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.*

When Adam and Eve watched the innocent animal die I am sure they thought about getting to the tree of life so they would not die. But God blocked the tree of life because it would have been a disaster had they eat of that tree in their sinful bodies. To live forever in our bodies of sin would be HELL. I say this because people who die and go to hell will be given the same body which they have here and they will suffer forever in that body. But for the believer there is a better plan. It is for us to die and to be resurrected and given a new glorified body. God does NOT desire that we live forever in these bodies.

3. **Paul used the word "if" when he referred to the believer's death.**

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:1 again.

Paul knew that every believer would not experience death. Those who are alive when Jesus returns in the rapture will not experience physical death.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

¹⁶ *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

¹⁷ *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

The use of the word "if" here in 1 Corinthians 5:1 affirms that the Rapture is imminent which means it can happen at any time. Paul is saying here in verse 1, "IF our bodies die, but they might not because there is always the possibility of being caught up in the rapture." He does not use the word "when" because that would not allow for the possibility of the rapture.

There are many people who believe that the rapture will happen at the mid-point of the Tribulation and some believe the rapture will happen at the end of the Tribulation. But the Bible is very clear that the church will NOT go through the Tribulation.

Revelation 3:10

¹⁰ *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, **I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation**, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*

Here Jesus was speaking to the church at Philadelphia and he promised they would not go through the Tribulation. In Daniel 9 God revealed some very important Truth to Daniel.

Daniel 9:24

²⁴ Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

God told Daniel that 70 weeks of years were determined upon DANIEL'S people who would be the Jews. Sixty nine weeks have been fulfilled and we are living in the gap between the 69th and the 70th week. It is in this gap that God is gathering a bride for His Son. When the bride is complete we will be raptured and the 70th week will then begin in which God will work with Israel again.

4. Paul tells us that when this house is dissolved we will receive a BUILDING from God.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:1 again.

The word "BUILDING" is used in contrast to the word "TABERNACLE". The current body we have is seen as a tent because it is temporary but the new glorified body which we will receive is a BUILDING in the sense that it is PERMANENT. Paul also tells us that the new glorified body is NOT MADE WITH HANDS. Let me show you what this statement is referring to.

Hebrews 9:11, 24

¹¹ But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

²⁴ For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

Both of these verses speak of Tabernacle which Jesus now ministers in and in both verses we are told it is NOT MADE WITH HANDS. This is the same statement made about our glorified bodies. So what does this statement mean?

It means here in Hebrews that the Tabernacle which Jesus ministers in is NOT OF THIS WORLD. That is the very same idea when Paul speaks of our glorified bodies. They are bodies which are not of this world.

1 Corinthians 15:42-50

⁴² *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:*

⁴³ *It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:*

⁴⁴ *It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*

⁴⁹ *And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*

⁵⁰ *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*

Here in verse 50 Paul when Paul says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God and he is stating that we cannot enter into eternity with these bodies. The bodies we have are made for this world but the glorified bodies will be made for eternity. Our new bodies will be flesh and bone and they will be like the resurrected body of Jesus Christ.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:1 again.

It is an eternal body as opposed to these temporary bodies.

Conclusion:

This is why Paul looked forward to death. When it happened he knew that his soul would be separated from his body and he therefore knew that he would be free. It was not that he desired a body which looked like it was chiseled from stone. That did not concern Paul. He desired to be set free because of how his earthly body hindered his ministry.

Romans 7:15-24

¹⁵ *For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.*

¹⁶ *If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.*

¹⁷ *Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

¹⁸ *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

¹⁹ *For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*

²⁰ *Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

²¹ *I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.*

²² *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:*

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²³ *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

²⁴ *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

Paul longed for death because it would set him free from the struggle between the 2 natures.

This study tonight helps us to see the importance of studying the Word of God. The more we know the greater the peace we can have in our hearts.