

"Death and the Believer"

Part 2

2 Corinthians 5:1-9

Introduction: Tonight in our study of 2 Corinthians we have again returned back to chapter 5:1-9 and it is in these verses that the Apostle Paul deals with the subject of DEATH. This past week I was reading something which reminded me of the many ways in which man has attempted to "soften" the reality of death. In this attempt man has developed many theories which I personally believe are directly from Satan. They are planted in the minds of people in order to cause confusion and to get people to buy into a lie that will eventually take them into eternal destruction. Let me share with you some of the theories which Satan has sold to people.

1. **Reincarnation** - There are many people who actually believe that we will be eternally recycled. They believe that after we die we will be come back in another body. Thus we will continue to be recycled forever.
2. **Purgatory** - Those who believe in purgatory believe there is a place between heaven and hell and if you are not good enough to get to heaven then you will go to purgatory when you will be "spiritually purged". They also believe you can be prayed out of purgatory or you can be bought out of purgatory. The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church defines it as "an intermediate place between heaven & hell, where the unfinished business of earth is settled."
3. **Soul sleep** - Soul sleep is the teaching that when a person dies, his soul "sleeps" until the time of the future resurrection. In this condition, the person is not aware or conscious. This teaching is based upon 2 verses from Ecclesiastes which are taken completely out of context.

Ecclesiastes 9:5

⁵ For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

⁷ Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

4. **Annihilation** - Those who hold to this false teaching believe that when we die we just simply cease to exist.

These are 4 theories which man has accepted in an attempt to "soften" the blow of death. But we know based upon the Scriptures that each of these is nothing but lies which are sold to man by the Devil.

Last week in our study we looked at the statement which Paul made in 5:1 and it is in this verse that Paul made it clear that if our earthy tabernacle dissolves then we can be sure we have a heavenly building from God which will replace the "temporary tent".

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:1

Paul was a man who preferred DEATH over LIFE.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:8

Paul was more willing to die than he was to live. This did not mean that he lived in a reckless manner but it meant that he did not fear death.

Philippians 1:20, 21

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.*

Now before we get into our verses for tonight I want to consider a question which comes into my mind:

"How did Paul gain this much confidence so as to look forward to death?"

Let me walk you through a couple of experiences which Paul had earlier in his life.

Galatians 1:11, 12, 17, 18

¹¹ *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.*

¹² *For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

¹⁷ *Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.*

¹⁸ *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.*

Paul received his teaching directly from Jesus Christ and it is believed that he had spent these 3 years alone with God in Arabia and Damascus. I point this out to help us to understand that the Truth which Paul held to was the very Truth he received from the Lord.

2 Corinthians 12:2-4

² *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.*

³ *And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)*

⁴ *How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

Here Paul writes concerning his own experience of being caught up to the 3rd heaven. It was there that he heard words that were "UNSPEAKABLE". In other words Paul was exposed to things in heaven that no words could possibly describe and if he would have had the words it would NOT have been lawful for him to speak. We do not know what Paul was exposed to in heaven but he did record another verse that will arouse our curiosity.

1 Corinthians 2:9

⁹ *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

This is a quote from Isaiah.

Isaiah 64:4

⁴ *For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.*

Paul had been to the 3rd heaven, he had spent time with the Lord being taught spiritual Truth. He knew what awaited the believer after death and so that is why he was so looking forward to death. We think this life is wonderful at times but even the greatest times here are not even close to what awaits us when we die in Christ and we step onto the other side.

Let us now get back to our study.

I. **Paul's Desire**

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:2

Here Paul states that he was groaning while he earnestly desired to be clothed with his new glorified body. Paul **EARNESTLY DESIRED** to receive his glorified body not because it would look better, not because it would no longer ache with pain, but because it would be free from sin.

Romans 7:18-20, 24

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.*

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

Paul knew that when he dropped his robe of flesh that the battle with sin would be over. But he did not desire to just float in eternity without a body. He desired his glorified body in which he could serve his Lord without the hindrance of sin. In the glorified body Paul knew that he could serve the Lord in absolute pureness.

Therefore Paul tells us in this verse that he **EARNESTLY DESIRED** to receive the glorified body. The words **EARNESTLY DESIRING** mean "to long for". I want to show you another passage where this very word is used.

Psalms 42:1-2

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

² *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*

Here in this Psalm David compares himself to the deer that is being chased by the hunters. As the deer runs from the hunters and the dogs it **LONGS** to get to the water brooks for it is at the water that the deer will find refreshment and peace. In the same way David was pursued by his enemies and he did not long for God to destroy them but David longed for the day when he would be taken from this world and stand before God. He understood that when that day came there would be nothing but pure peace, rest, and worship in his life.

This was the very idea in the mind of Paul. He longed to be in the presence of his Lord. He longed to escape the sins which he battled with in the body. He earnestly desired to worship God in a glorified body so that his worship would be absolutely pure.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:3-4

Here in verse 4 Paul tells us that when the day comes that we receive the glorified body then MORTALITY will be SWALLOWED UP OF LIFE. The body which we have now is a MORTAL body. This means that our bodies are subject to death and decay. But when the rapture or death comes then MORTALITY will be swallowed up of life. When that day comes we will then experience ETERNAL LIFE at its fullest. It will be on that day that we will be what God desires for us to be with not one ounce of sin to hinder our fellowship with Him.

1 Corinthians 15:51-54

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.*

⁵⁴ *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

Now let me take some time and explain something which is very important. We will not receive our glorified bodies until the rapture of the church takes place. So if we die today our body goes in the ground and our soul goes into the presence of the Lord which would be in heaven. There are some that believe we will be given temporary bodies until the rapture and they base this upon a few Scriptures.

Matthew 17:1-4

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

² *And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*

³ *And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.*

⁴ *Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.*

Here we see that Moses and Elias were VISIBLE to Peter, James and John. So there are some who use this to say that we will be given temporary bodies after we die that we will have until the rapture then we will receive our glorified bodies.

This teaching is not backed up anywhere in the Bible. It is very possible that here in Matthew that God gave temporary bodies to Moses and Elijah just for this occasion only and then they were taken away. I say this because when angels appear on earth they are given bodies which are temporary because angels are spirit beings.

When we die we will be "spirits" in heaven.

Hebrews 12:22-23

²² *But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,*

²³ *To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men [believers in heaven] made perfect,*

It is also important to know that we will be visible to all others in heaven and in our souls we will be able to worship and praise God while we wait upon our resurrected bodies.

Notice those who are martyred in the tribulation.

Revelation 7:9-15

⁹ *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;*

¹⁰ *And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*

¹¹ *And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,*

¹² *Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*

¹³ *And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?*

¹⁴ *And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

¹⁵ *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.*

Conclusion:

If we die and are not raptured away we too will praise and worship God with our souls in heaven. But we will be in a time of waiting for our glorified bodies. Let me show you the words of Gromacki:

"If a believer dies before Christ's return, the body will disintegrate and the immaterial self will go into the presence of Christ within the third heaven. He then will have to wait for the day of resurrection before he gets his new body, his eternal clothing. This period between the physical death of a believer and his resurrection is designated as the time of nakedness. It is when the self has neither its old body or its new body. Theologians have called it the intermediate state of the soul."