

# THE MINISTRY: ITS HOPE AND THE ASSURANCE OF AN ETERNAL HOME

## 2 CORINTHIANS 05:01–10

### ***Introduction: Hope, Heaven, Death, Reward, Body***

What is Paul talking about in this passage? Is he referring to a temporary body, or to the heavenly house or mansion which is to be given to the believer when he dies and goes to heaven?

One thing is sure: Paul is not talking about the resurrection body he is to receive when Christ returns. That body is not in heaven; it is to be created when Christ returns. The believer does not receive his resurrected body *until* he is raised from the dead at Christ's return (cp. 1 Cor 15:12; 1 Th 4:14f).

If Paul is talking about receiving a body when he passes from this life into heaven, then he is talking about receiving a temporary body, a body that will house his spirit up until the resurrection. However, Scripture has nothing to say about a temporary body, although God may actually give us a temporary body when we die and go to heaven. There is nothing to keep Him from doing it, but Scripture is silent about the matter. It is one of the subjects that is not necessary for our faith and salvation; it is one of the "incomparable riches" that God has *locked up* in Himself and that He is going to show and lavish upon us in the eternal ages to come (Eph 2:7). What Scripture teaches is what Paul is saying here: the believer goes immediately to be with the Lord at death. And, as already pointed out, the Scripture also teaches that the believer's earthly body is to be raised from the dead and perfected when Christ returns (cp. 1 Cor. 15:1-58).

In light of this, curiosity naturally asks what happens to us when we die? How do we exist before God: with a temporary body or only as a disembodied or *bodiless* spirit? Note two facts.

1. Scripture is clear: when we die, we immediately go to heaven to be with the Lord.

***John 8:51*** "I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."

***John 11:25-26*** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die [but be present with the Lord]. Do you believe this?"

***Phil 1:21-24*** For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ [immediately], which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

***Mat 22:32*** "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

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**Luke 9:29-31** *As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem.*

**Luke 16:23** *“In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.”*

**Luke 23:42-43** *Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”* (cp. 2 Cor. 12:2, 4 where paradise is revealed to be the third heaven.)

2. Scripture is not clear about how we exist between death and the resurrection. Shall we be disembodied spirits or be given temporary bodies? Any comments about the matter are pure speculation, for Scripture is silent. However, two things must always be kept in mind about God.
  - a. God can cause us to exist as spirits without bodies. True, it is difficult for man to imagine a person without a body, but God can do it if that is the method He has chosen to use.
  - b. God can also give us temporary bodies if He chooses. Man can more easily imagine this, for he lives within a temporary body now. God could even cause the temporary bodies to become a part of our eternal bodies that we are to receive at the resurrection.

Just as our present bodies are to be a part of our eternal bodies, the temporary bodies could be a part of our eternal bodies. This is not to say nor even to suggest that we shall receive temporary bodies when we die. Scripture is silent, saying nothing about the matter. The point is simply what the former point was: if God has chosen to give believers temporary bodies when they die, He can do it. God is God. In dealing with this subject we must keep in mind what has already been said:

- ⇒ How we exist before Christ at death is one of the subjects that is not necessary for our faith and salvation. It is one of the “incomparable riches” of His grace that He has *locked up* in Himself and that He is going to show and lavish upon us in the ages to come (Eph. 2:7).

In light of the above facts, the present passage will be interpreted to mean two things: that we shall receive immortality and that we shall receive a house, an eternal mansion in heaven.

- I. Assurance 1: personal conviction — the conviction that we have a house in heaven (vv. 1-4).
- II. Assurance 2: God — He guarantees the hope by the Spirit (v. 5).
- III. Assurance 3: the Holy Spirit — He enhances the hope (vv. 5-8).
- IV. Assurance 4: judgment — it stirs the hope (vv. 9-10).

## I. *2 Corinthians 05:01–04 Personal Conviction: Heaven*

The first assurance is *personal conviction* — the conviction that we have a hope, that we have a house in heaven. Note the word “know.” The conviction is firm and sure. It is not the kind of conviction that *hopes* something is true. It is the conviction of knowledge. Paul knew beyond question: he had a building, a house in heaven.

The earthly body is pictured as a tent that houses man’s spirit, his real self, during its earthly pilgrimage. But the tent (body) is ever so frail and temporary; it goes through the wears and tears of this life, and it deteriorates and eventually dissolves. The believer’s body dies (cp. 1 Pet. 1:13-14). However, the Christian believer *never fears*, for he is to receive a building from God, a spiritual house made eternal in the heavens. The heavenly house lasts forever; it does not have to suffer wear and tear. It is not corruptible: it does not age, fade, deteriorate or waste away; and he never has to leave it. This is the believer’s glorious hope. However, while in the world — while in his present tent (body) — the believer has two significant experiences.

1. He groans for his house in heaven. Note how deeply Paul desired his heavenly home: he *groaned* and *longed*. He yearned and ached for his heavenly home.

The word “clothed” means that he wanted to be clothed with his heavenly home and fitted for it just as though he was being fitted and clothed with a suit. It means that he wanted to be sheltered, covered and enclosed in his heavenly home.

2. He groans both for release and for immortality (v. 2-3). Paul does not just groan to be naked, that is, to die and be released from the trials of this world; he is burdened (note that he says this) to be clothed with his heavenly home.

The minister suffers, and sometimes he suffers terrible trouble as discussed in the former passage and outline (1 Cor. 4:7-18). The burden sometimes becomes so heavy that he just groans under the weight. But the groaning, as stated, is not to die in order to be released from the burden. The groaning is for his eternal home, that his mortal body might be swallowed up by eternal life.

If a person interprets this passage to be speaking of a heavenly body which the believer is to receive at death, then William Barclay’s comments are descriptive:

*“But with Paul there is a difference. He is not looking for a Nirvana with the peace of extinction; he is not looking for absorption in the divine; he is not looking for the freedom of a disembodied spirit; he is waiting for the day when God will give him a new body, a spiritual body, in which he will be able, even in the heavenly places, to serve and to adore God....He [Paul] saw eternity not as escape into nothingness, not as release into permanent inaction, but as the entry into life and into a body in which service could be complete” (The Letters to the Corinthians, p. 228).*

**John 14:2** *“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”*

**Rom 2:7** *To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life.*

**1 Cor 15:53** *For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.*

**2 Cor 5:1** *Now 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 Tim 1:10** *But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

**Heb 9:11** *When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.*

**Heb 11:10** *For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

**Heb 11:13-14** *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.*

**Rev 21:10** *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.*

**Heb 13:14** *For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.*

**Rev 22:14** *“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”*

## **II. 2 Corinthians 05:05 God’s Guarantee: the Holy Spirit**

The second assurance is God — God guarantees that we shall receive immortality, shall receive our immortal house in heaven, guarantees it by the Holy Spirit. Paul had just said that he *knew* he had a house in heaven. He did not just hope that such existed nor was he just expressing a wishful thought. How could he be so certain? Because of God. God has done two things for us.

1. God has made us for, worked us out, fitted us, fashioned us to undergo an immortal change. How? By entering our lives (see note, 2 Cor 4:7). When we trust Christ as our Saviour, God puts His presence and power into our bodies and we become immortal or eternal beings.
  - a. The believer participates in the divine nature.

**2 Pet 1:4** *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

- b. The believer becomes a new creation.

**2 Cor 5:17** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

- c. The believer becomes a new person, a new self.

**Eph 4:24** *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

**Col 3:10** *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

2. God gives us the presence of His Spirit. This is separated from the above point because the above point deals more with God making the believer into a new creature or new man. This point deals more with the presence of God's Spirit within the believer.

The point is this: the Holy Spirit Himself is the "deposit" or "guarantee" or "pledge" that God is going to give us immortality, that He is going to give us an immortal home in heaven. The Holy Spirit is the very "first instalment" of heaven (William Barclay. *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 229).

**2 Cor 1:21-22** *Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

**Eph 1:13-14** *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.*

**John 14:16-18** *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."*

**John 14:26** *"But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."*

**Rom 5:5** *And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*

**Rom 8:16-17** *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

*1 Cor 3:16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?*

*1 Cor 6:19-20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

### **III. 2 Corinthians 05:05–08 Assurance of the Holy Spirit**

The third assurance is the Holy Spirit — He enhances the knowledge that we have a house in heaven. He does three significant things for us.

1. The Holy Spirit stirs confidence and courage to face the present life. The word “confidence” (*tharroumen*) means courage, or to be cheered up (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 229). In this world all believers face such things as:

- pressure    • loss            • trouble        • disease
- sorrow     • accident    • rejection     • death

But no matter what they face, the Holy Spirit stirs the courage to face it all. How? Again, note the word “know.” The Holy Spirit enhances our *knowledge*...

- that our present home is the body, but it is temporary and passing. Therefore all trials and problems will quickly pass away.
- that we are now absent from the Lord. The idea is that we are to be with Him. The Holy Spirit stirs a longing within us to be with Him. And that longing gives us courage to march on through this life.

2. The Holy Spirit stirs faith within us. Knowing that our present home (body) is only temporary — that we are soon to move to our heavenly home — stirs great faith in us. True, we do not yet see our heavenly home, but the Holy Spirit stirs faith within us — faith to walk through all the trials and problems of this life.

3. The Holy Spirit stirs great courage, even a preference to be with the Lord. This is a crucial point, extremely important for day to day living. The Holy Spirit not only gives courage to live day by day; He gives the courage to die. He even stirs within the faithful believer a preference to be “at home with the Lord.” Some people may question this fact, and some may even scoff at the idea. It is certainly true that many do not understand it. Nevertheless, it is a fact that many believers often experience. They actually long to be with the Lord; to be clothed with immortality and perfection, and enabled to worship and serve Him without infirmity and failure.

It must be stressed that this desire and longing is not born of the believer himself:

=> It is not a creation of his own ideas and thoughts.

=> It is not worked up by his own desires and man-made hopes.

=> It is a conviction — the sure knowledge, a state of mind — that is created by the Holy Spirit who is within the believer.

#### IV. 2 Corinthians 05:09–10 Judgment

The fourth assurance is judgment — judgment stirs the longing to please God and to receive our heavenly home. Judgment stirs diligent ambition, a clear, earnest “goal” (*philotimoumetha*) to please God. The word means to constantly aim, to be constantly ambitious, to strive earnestly. Paul says that he is to be judged; therefore, he works his fingers to the bone. Why? That he may please (*euarestoi*) God. The word means well pleasing in the sense of being accepted.

But note the major point. There was a second reason why Paul laboured so diligently: he was to face the judgment of Christ (see *Judgment Seat of Christ*, 2 Cor 5:10). ■

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 05:10 JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. 2 Corinthians 05:10*

This is the judgment of believers, not of unbelievers. Note carefully the words, “We must all appear.” By “we...all” Paul means all those who have a nature like him, a new nature in Christ. That is, all those who believe in Christ are the ones who will stand at the judgment seat of Christ. Several important points are stressed.

1. The judgment of believers is a surety: it will happen and nothing can stop it from happening. “We *must* all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” Not a single believer will be excused from the judgment.
2. The believer will be judged by Christ Himself. *Every believer* will face the scrutiny and searching eyes of Christ and be judged.

**John 5:22-23** *“Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him.”*

**Acts 10:42** *He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.*

**Acts 17:31** *“For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”*

**Rom 2:16** *This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.*

**Rom 14:10** *You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.*

**2 Cor 5:10** *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

**2 Tim 4:1** *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge.*

3. The believer will be judged for “the things done while (dia) in the body.” What kinds of things are done in the human body?

Acts, behaviour, works. Note three significant points.

- a. The believer's sins are forgiven once he has confessed and repented of them (Eph 1:7; 1 Jn. 1:9; 2:1-2). He never has to worry about God charging him with sin, for Christ has already paid the penalty for his sins. His sins are forgiven once-for-all.
  - b. The believer will be conformed perfectly to the image of Christ. In fact, he is even predestined by God to eternal perfection just like God's own dear Son (see notes, Rom 8:29; 1 Jn. 3:2). He is destined to receive a perfect and an eternal body — a body just like Christ's (1 Cor 15:50-58).
  - c. However, the believer is called and gifted for a special task and work while on earth (1 Cor 12:4-14:40; Eph 4:7-13). Just how well the believer accomplishes this task and work will determine his judgment (see notes, 1 Cor 3:13-15; 6:2-3; 9:24-27, esp. 9:27; Mt. 19:27-30; 25:20-23; Lk. 16:10-12; 19:15-23).
4. The judgment of the believer will determine his reward and the degree of reward, whether good (gain) or bad (loss). Some believers will definitely be ashamed before Christ at His coming (1 Jn. 2:28), and they will suffer loss (1 Cor 3:11-15). The believer who survives the fire of judgment will be greatly rewarded, so greatly that the rewards explode the human mind (see note, *Rewards*, 1 Cor 3:13-15 for a complete list of the rewards).
5. When studying the judgment of believers, several passages need to be studied carefully (see notes, 1 Cor 3:13-15; 6:2-3; 9:24-27, esp. 9:27; Mt. 19:27-30; 25:20-23; Lk. 16:10-12; 19:15-23; See *Sin and Believer's Judgement*, 1 Jn. 5:16). □