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Absent From the Body and At Home with the Lord



By Steve Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #267 ~

You are going to physically die – unless you are raptured. Either way, that's wonderful news for the Christian, because he will be in heaven with Jesus, and will receive a brand-new body! People often see death as a bad thing, as something they don't want to think about or talk about, as that which they even try to postpone. But if you are a Christian, you should be longing for it, for it's a good thing – it means you have left your fleshly body and this evil world and are with the Lord.

The apostle Paul had the right perspective on life for he knew what happened after death. Life was very difficult, was extremely challenging for Paul. He wrote, *"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed"* (2 Cor. 4:8-9). How could Paul say this? Because he understood the present *"is Christ"* and the future "*is gain"*,

that death immediately led to an infinitely better life. (Phil. 1:21). Paul was convinced of this glorious truth, that *"momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory, far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are seen are eternal."* 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

What follows is 2 Cor. 5:1-10, verses that continue this theme, that sum up Paul's thinking about life and death. Paul was groaning, was burdened, was tired and weak, but he persevered, he patiently and joyfully kept going. How did he do it? Paul knew he was living in a mortal body, an earthly tent, that his outer man was growing old, was decaying (2 Cor. 4:16; 5:1, 4), but he also knew he would be living in a heavenly and immortal body, and he was really looking forward to that.

Paul also knew that God had purposed and planned out both his life on earth and his eternity in heaven. (2 Cor. 5:5). He understood that *"these whom He* (God) *predestined, He also called, and these whom He called, He also justified, and these whom He justified, He also glorified"* (Rom. 8:30). Paul saw the outline of his life, the big picture, what God had already drawn up. Even though he experienced severe hardships, he was convinced that God *"causes all things to work together for good to those who love God… for those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son"* (Rom. 8:28-29). For Paul, the best was yet to come, for he was certain that he would be transformed and conformed, that he would receive a glorified body, like that of Jesus. *"We eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory."* Philippians 3:20-21

Paul was at home in his earthly body, but he knew where he was going, that he would soon be at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:6-8). Surely, he was encouraged by the truth that death was not a stopping point, but a sending point, for it would result in the angels immediately taking him into Jesus' presence. Paul was a godly man, a man of faith, a man of

courage and good cheer, and a man of hope, and if you asked Paul whether he wanted to live or die, he'd say, *"die!"*, for that meant being with Jesus, which is what he wanted more than anything else – *"having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better"* (Phil. 1:23). I *"prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."* 2 Corinthians 5:8

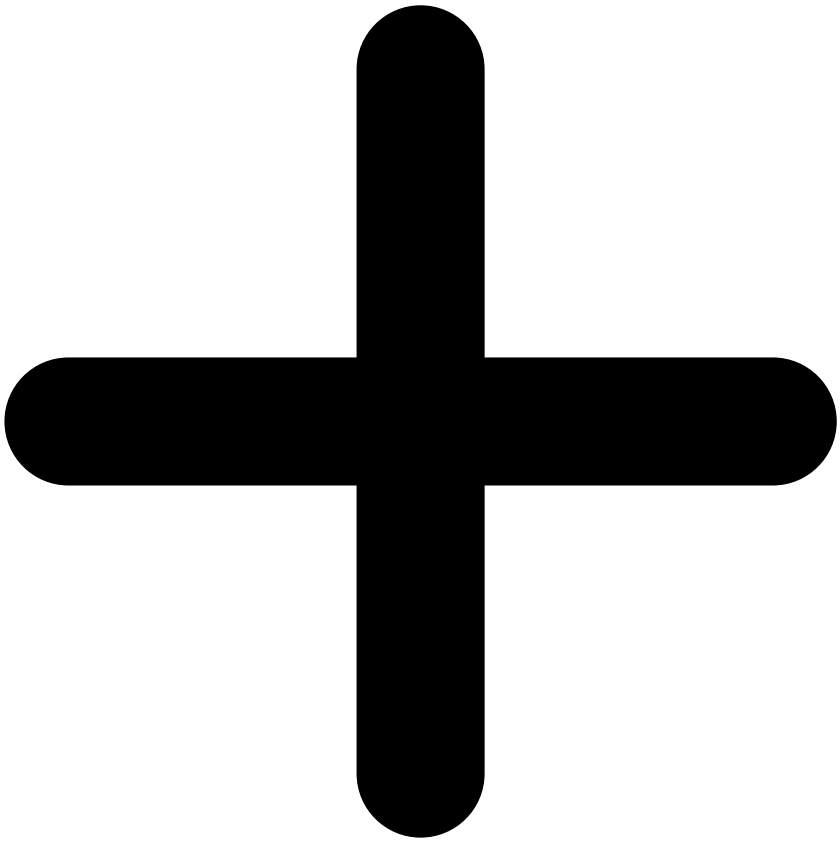
Paul kept walking by faith, kept believing God's truth and obeying His commands. Like Abraham, he trusted God for his future – he too *"was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God"* (Heb. 11:10). Paul's singular ambition, his ultimate and eternal goal, whether on earth or in heaven, was to please God, was to live for Him, to only do that which would glorify His Father. *"To Him be the glory forever."* Romans 11:36

Something that motivated Paul to please his Lord was that he knew he would appear before the judgment seat of Christ. At the end of this age, he knew he would be judged by Christ for what he had done on earth, whether good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:10). That's when Christ would present rewards, for *"each will receive his own reward according to his own labor"* (1 Cor. 3:8), and Paul wanted to be rewarded, to be recompensed, for that would mean he had pleased His Savior. He wanted to hear Christ tell him, *"Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your Master."* Matthew 25:21

So what does your life look like? How are you living for the Lord?
* Do you love the Lord and have a desire to please Him, to do all that He wants you to do?
* Are you walking by faith, are you trusting God's word and obeying His commands?
* Do you see death as a good thing? Do you long to be at home with your Lord, to literally be with your Creator, Savior, Friend, Husband, King, the One who loves you far more than anyone else?
* Do you know that your burdens are to cause you to think about your

future, when you'll be out of your weak body and this wicked world, and with the Lord Jesus?
* Do you realize that the trials you go through, the aches, pains, tears, conflicts, weakness, tiredness, mourning, heartaches, struggles, suffering, difficulties, disappointments, and spiritual battles, are nothing compared to the eternal weight of glory you will receive in the future?
* Do you think about that time when you will appear before the judgment seat of Christ? Are you looking forward to receiving your rewards, and giving God all the glory, and being with Him forever?
"When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." Colossians 3:4

P.S. My good friend just left this earth and went to heaven, and is now *"at home with the Lord."* God gave him a good life, a wonderful family, and many special friends. And now he's in the best place – and I am so happy for him. I do look forward to joining him someday. Here are two encouraging articles that relate to this: *"Being in Heaven with Jesus, and the Believers, and in a New Glorified Body"*, and *"'Why Do Believers Die?' – A Memorial Service Message".*



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