

More Beyond!
2 Corinthians 5:1-5
Part 1

When Spain had extended her conquests to the ends of the then-known world and controlled both sides of the Mediterranean at the Straights of Gibraltar (or also known as the “Pillars of Hercules”), her coins pictured the Pillars framing a scroll inscribed with the Latin words – “NE(E) PLU(U)S ULTRA(A) or in other words **“No more Beyond.”** The pillars, or in other words the “straights of Gibraltar,” gated the end of the earth. But “in 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue” and discovered the New World. The proud nation then admitted her ignorance and struck the negative “NE(E)” from her coins, leaving the words “PLU(U)S ULTRA(A)” – **“More Beyond.”**

The changed perspective reflected in the coinage of Spain started a revolution in world culture, global economy, and geopolitics.

And in a similar way the lives of those who embrace Christ as their Lord and Savior should also unleash a similar revolutionary dynamic in respect to themselves when they, through faith in Christ, change their spiritual world view from **“no more beyond”** to **“more beyond.”**

And if there is any doubt about this all we have to do is to consider the words of Paul to the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 5:1-10**. And this is exactly what we are going to do over the next several weeks. So now let me read these verses for you and see what they say.

“For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2) For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, (3) inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. (4) For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. (5) Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. (6) Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord– (7) for we walk by faith, not by sight– (8) we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home

with the Lord. (9) Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

So let me ask you a question. Did Paul, based on these verses, believe that there was in fact, in respect to himself and others like him, more beyond the grave? And what is the answer? The answer is of course he did! He believed that beyond the grave there was a very special future awaiting him, a glorious future. So now let me ask you another question. Did this expectation of a very special future awaiting him beyond the grave impact the way he lived in the present? And what is the answer? Absolutely! And the very same thing should be true for us. If we, like Paul, believe that there is in fact, through faith in Christ, **“more beyond”** the grave or in other words a very special future awaiting us, this expectation and certain confidence should impact the way we are presently living our lives just as it did Paul’s life.

So now let us take a closer look at **2 Corinthians 5:1-10** and see if this is not so as we examine what Paul had to say about what he believed awaited him beyond the grave and how this belief changed the way he lived.

And what is the question that we will be seeking to answer as we examine these verses? How did Paul’s confidence in the glorious future that awaited him beyond the grave express itself in the here and now? His confidence expressed itself in several different ways.

First of all, Paul’s confidence in the glorious future that awaited him beyond the grave expressed itself initially through an intense longing (2 Corinthians 5:1-5). We see this intense longing in **2 Corinthians 5:1-5.**

This morning my hope for this message is that we might not only appreciate better the nature of Paul’s intense longing for the glorious future that awaited him beyond the grave but that we might also better understand why this very same kind of intense longing should be our life transforming longing as well.

So how does this section of verses begin? Let me read for you **verse 1**. **“For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”**

Now notice how the verse begins. It begins with the word **“for.”** The word **“for”** ties what Paul had just said to the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 4:13-18** to what he is about to say to them in **2 Corinthians 5:1-10**.

So, what did Paul just say to the Corinthians? Paul had just said to the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 4:13-18** that his bold speech was the product of what he believed. Or in other words, Paul told the Corinthians that it was what he believed that allowed him not to focus on the things that were seen, such as his sufferings, but on the things that were not seen, such as the eternal weight of glory that was being produced through his afflictions.

This was Paul’s explanation for why he and his associates were speaking so boldly in **2 Corinthians 4:13-18**. It was his faith in unseen things, such as Paul now begins to detail for them as well as for us, in **2 Corinthians 5:1**. And what does this verse say? **“For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”** So, what was the first unseen thing that Paul mentioned in **2 Corinthians 5:1** that he believed produced such bold speech?

In seeking to answer this question we will begin by trying to understand what Paul meant by the expression **“earthly tent.”** The “earthly tent” that Paul described as “our house” refers to our physical body and connotes something sufficient for its purpose yet transitory and subject to wear and tear. This metaphor of a tent to describe our earthly body emphasizes our brief sojourn as the followers of Christ in this world, and depicts the instability, and thus vulnerability, of our mortal existence.

So, what did Paul say about our “earthly tent,” our mortal flesh? **“For we know that if the earthly tent [our unstable, vulnerable and mortal flesh] which is our house is torn down [or in other words “dies,” which we have every reason to believe that it will], we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”**

So, what is Paul referring to when he spoke of this building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? If “the earthly tent” refers to our earthly body, then this “building from God, a house not made with hands” most likely refers to a spiritual body or in other words to our future individual resurrection body.

This is supported by the words of Paul to the Corinthians in **1 Corinthians 15** when he refers to our future individual resurrection body as a body “from God” in **1 Corinthians 15:38**, “as spiritual” in **1 Corinthians 15:44,46**, “as imperishable” in **1 Corinthians 15:42, 52-54**, and finally “as heavenly” in **1 Corinthians 15:40,48-49**. For us to conclude that Paul is referring to any other body other than our future individual resurrection body spoken of in **1 Corinthians 15**, here in **2 Corinthians 5:1**, I believe would be an unreasonable stretch.

So did this confidence come from? Paul’s confidence that he, after death, had a resurrection body awaiting him was the by-product of a deep longing that he described as **groaning** (2 Corinthians 5:2-4). So let us now look at this deep, personal longing more closely.

Initially, Paul described the nature of this groaning as intrinsically positive (2 Corinthians 5:2-3). We see this initial, positive description of his groaning in **2 Corinthians 5:2**. So now let me read this verse for you to see if this is not so. **“For indeed in this house [or in other words in our earthly tent] we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven [or in other words our resurrection body].**

Clearly this verse describes a positive groaning. He is deeply longing for something to happen, or in other words, he is deeply longing or groaning while in his earthly tent or house to be clothed with his dwelling from heaven or his resurrection body.

Now I would suppose that most of us here would think that Paul was longing for his resurrection body because he just didn’t want to continue to suffer all that he was suffering in his earthly body, which I am sure in a very real sense is true, but this is not the reasoning that Paul puts forward here in our text for his deep longing that he had to put on his resurrection body.

So now let us read the very next verse and see what it says. **“Inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.”** So there it is.

Paul longed to be clothed with his dwelling from heaven, because he knew that in putting it on would mean that he would not be found naked (2 Corinthians 5:3).

So now what does that mean? Does that mean that he longed for his resurrection body so that he would not have to be one of those in **1 Corinthians 15** who after their death will have to wait to receive their resurrected body until the rapture of the church? No! This makes no sense at all.

Paul was not at all concerned about when he would receive this body or how he received it. All Paul was concerned about was that he received it. And why would I say this? I would say this because this has been Paul’s focus all they way through **2 Corinthians 14** and now into **2 Corinthians 15**. Therefore when Paul spoke of his deep longing to be clothed with his resurrection body so that he would not be found naked, he was not talking about his deep longing to avoid the intermediate state between dying and receiving his resurrection body. This had very little interest for Paul since he knew whether he died before the coming of the Lord or lived until the coming of the Lord that he would be with the Lord and that was just fine with Paul in either case.

Let me read for you **Philippians 1:21** and see if this is not so. **“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is [scary thing knowing that if I die before the Lord comes, I might have to wait to receive my resurrection body until the Lord returns. No! This is not what he said. Rather he said, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is] gain.”**

So if “not being found naked” is not referring to the intermediate state between a believers death and when they receive their resurrection body, then to what does it refer?

Being “found naked” is a metaphor for being under God’s judgment (Genesis 3:1-7; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:21-55).

In other words, the “nakedness,” in view of this passage, is an allusion to Adam’s experience in **Genesis 3:1-7** when he, under the judgment of God,

discovered himself to be naked. This connection can easily be made based on what Paul says in **1 Corinthians 15:21-55** when he, speaking of the resurrection, talked about how in Adam all die, but in Christ all shall be made alive.

So why was Paul longing to put on his resurrection body? Paul had a deep longing to put on his resurrection body, because putting on his resurrection body was equivalent in his mind to being saved or in other words not being condemned at God's final judgment.

Though Paul believed that he was saved and that a personal, individual, resurrection body awaited him in heaven, a dwelling from God not made with hands, he did not take anything for granted. For Paul, he would not be satisfied until he crossed the finish line, and the finish line for Paul in this text was when he received his resurrection body when God's eternal redemptive plan for his life was complete.

Paul, after initially describing the nature of his groaning as intrinsically positive in 2 Corinthians 5:2-3, then described it as intrinsically negative (2 Corinthians 5:4). Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 5:4**. **“For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.”**

Clearly this verse describes a negative groaning. Or in other words, here in this verse he is not deeply longing for something to happen, but not to happen. He was deeply longing not to be found unclothed or in other words “naked.” This is just another way of saying what he had just said in **2 Corinthians 5:3**, but this time he simply put it in a negative way rather than in a positive way.

But the point remains the same. He desired to put on his resurrection body, because in his mind putting on his resurrection body, prepared for him by God in Christ, was equivalent to him being saved in terms of it's ultimate expression, which Paul makes clear to us at the end of **2 Corinthians 5:4** when he said, **“So that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.”**

“Swallowed up by life” alludes to Isaiah 25:8 and is also cited in 1 Corinthians 15:54 and refers to that future time of resurrection when death will no longer be a threat and every past vestige of it obliterated.

So let me ask you a question. Should we fear God’s final judgment! We should. And why should we? We should fear God’s final judgment because Paul did. And so much so that he, in his earthly body, groaned within himself that he on God’s final judgment day would not find himself naked but clothed standing beside Christ in his own personal individual resurrection having his mortality finally swallowed up by life.

And now we come to **2 Corinthians 5:5**. And what does it say? **“Now He who prepared us for this very purpose [or in other words for this transformation when mortality will be swallowed up by life] is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.”**

What an interesting verse. The reason Paul groaned so longingly for his resurrection body is God Himself and God’s gift of the Holy Spirit which had been given to him as a pledge (2 Corinthians 5:5). And why was this pledge given to Paul and to every other true believer?

The Holy Spirit was given to Paul for many different reasons, but one of those reasons was to remind him that one day he would receive an immortal, imperishable resurrection body that God had prepared for him.

So every time Paul was made aware of the Holy Spirit’s presence in his life, such as when the Spirit supplied Paul with the power not only sustain his ministry as a servant of the new covenant but to even advance his ministry, in spite of all that he was suffering, it reminded Paul of the glorious future that awaited him.

What did Paul say in **2 Corinthians 4:17**? **“For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.”** But he would not have been able to say this if it had not been for the Holy Spirit manifesting Himself to Paul in the midst of his darkest moments, even when he was despairing of life itself.

But the Holy Spirit did manifest Himself to Paul just as He will to us if we would simply humble ourselves before the Lord and seek to His will in all things.

And as He manifests Himself to us, what will happen? Every time the Holy Spirit manifests Himself to us we will find ourselves longing for even greater manifestations of His power, not only to sustain us but to transform us, and there is no greater moment of transformation that awaits us then when we, by the power of God, are clothed in our immortal, imperishable resurrection body that God has prepared for us in Christ Jesus.

Before we came to Christ and accepted Him as our Lord and Savior, we had nothing to look forward to beyond this world. But that all changed when we accepted Christ.

Hopefully, for everyone here this morning, you know that because of your faith in Christ and Christ alone for your salvation that there is more beyond. There is an immortal, imperishable resurrection body prepared for us by God awaiting us.

Therefore, in light of this, may God give us the grace to humble ourselves before Him so that His Spirit might cause us to deeply and intently long for the glorious future that awaits us beyond the grave.