

More Beyond!
2 Corinthians 5:6-8
Part 3

When Spain extended her conquests and controlled both sides of the Mediterranean at the Straights of Gibraltar (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 in the minds of the Spanish and basically everyone else. But then an Italian named Columbus, sailing under the flag of Spain, discovered the “New World,” which inevitably led Spain to strike the negative “NE(E)” from her coins, leaving the words “PLU(U)S ULTRA(A)”—MORE BEYOND!

This 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 once again revisit **2 Corinthians** and the passage that we began to examine several weeks ago, or in other words all we have to do is to revisit **2 Corinthian 5:1-10**.

In this passage Paul is continuing to defend himself against the charge that his boldness in proclaiming the gospel, and the truths related to the gospel, had been excessive or in other words, his proclamation of the gospel and the truths related to the gospel, had crossed a line of propriety that he should not have crossed.

Paul in defending himself against this charge in **2 Corinthians 5:1-10** is once again explaining to his readers and to us why his boldness was not at all inappropriate but rather was in fact perfectly appropriate.

And this brings us back to our study of **2 Corinthians 5:1-10** and to the question that we are seeking to answer. And what is that question?

How did Paul's confidence in the glorious future that awaited him beyond the grave express itself in the here and now? First of all, Paul's confidence expressed itself internally in terms of what he felt.

In other words, Paul's confidence in the glorious future that awaited him beyond the grave expressed itself through an intense longing (2 Corinthians 5:1-5). We saw this intense longing in **2 Corinthians 5:1-5**.

So now let us now read **2 Corinthians 5:1-5** and see if this is not so. And what do these verses say? They say this. **“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.**

If we have accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior then we need to understand this very basic truth: that even if we die, or in other words even if our earthly tent is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, or in other words an immortal, imperishable body awaiting us in glory. And if we understand this truth and have embraced this truth it should produce in us a deep personal longing or groaning, as we through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us as a pledge, are reminded of this great truth and the certainty of it.

So, what is the very first thing, the very first unseen thing, that Paul mentioned in **2 Corinthians 5:1-10** that awaited him beyond the grave that helped explain his boldness? The very first thing was the future reception of an immortal, imperishable body; a belief so strong that it created within him a deep personal longing for it.

So do we have this same belief? Do we believe that beyond the grave there is an immortal, imperishable body awaiting us? If we do, and if we are in

fact walking in the Spirit, then it should produce in us something very similar to what was produced in Paul. And what would that be? It would be a deep personal longing to be clothed with our building from God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

But Paul's confidence in the glorious future that awaited him, or in other words his belief in the "More Beyond" did not simply produce in him a deep longing or groaning to be clothed with the immortal, imperishable body that awaited him. Paul's confidence expressed itself in another way as well. And what was this?

Paul's confidence in the glorious future that awaited him beyond the grave expressed itself in unflinching courage (2 Corinthians 5:6-8).

Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 5:6-8**. And what do these verses say? They say this. **"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."**

In **verses 1-5** Paul has made it clear to us how his confidence in the glorious future that awaited him beyond the grave expressed itself through a deep personal longing, and now in **verses 6-8** he is expanding on what he had just shared. We know that he is expanding on what he had just shared by his use of the word **"therefore."**

In other words, Paul's confidence that this glorious future would in fact take place did not only express itself in a deep personal longing but in something else as well. And what was that? Let us go back to the verse. And what does it say? It says this. **"Therefore, being always of good courage."**

So, what we do learn from the very first part of **verse 6**? We learn this: that not only did Paul's confidence in the glorious future that awaited him express itself in a deep personal longing but it also expressed itself in always being of good courage.

Because Paul was confident about the glorious future that awaited him regardless of what he might have to suffer in the cause of Christ, even if that was death, he was always of good courage. This is what he is telling us.

And certainly I think we all have to agree, in light of what we know about him, that he was one of the bravest, most resilient men in the history of man. When he said that he was always of good courage, I think that we would all have to agree that he was not kidding. He was! And hopefully this same unflinching courage would characterize our lives as well and for the same reason.

And what would that reason be? The reason why his life was characterized by an unflinching courage as well as a deep longing to be clothed with the immortal, imperishable body that awaited him beyond the grave was that he chosen to focus on the “ULTR(A) PLU(S),” the “More Beyond!” And this is what we need to do as well, for as we do this, not only will we find ourselves being filled with an ever increasing deeper longing for that future glory but we will find ourselves always being filled, like Paul, with courage.

But now let me make this very clear to you. When I speak to you about focusing on the “More Beyond,” or in other words on the glorious future that is awaiting us beyond the grave, this is not just about focusing on getting a new body that is immortal and imperishable that is spoken of by Paul in **verses 1-5**. It is far more than that.

Let us continue to read **verse 6** and see if this is not so. And what does it say? It says this. **“Therefore, being always of good courage [knowing not only that we have an immortal and imperishable body awaiting us beyond the grave, but also], and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.”**

Paul’s courage is enhanced by the knowledge that to be at home in the body is to be away from our real home, which is with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6).

This is very important for us to understand. Not only are we presently dwelling in substandard temporary housing that is subject to various physical and spiritual breakdowns, but even more importantly we need to understand that as long as we occupy these fatally flawed human bodies we

will be absent from the Lord. Isn't this what the verse says? **“Knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.”** Living in this fleshly body is not nearly what it is cracked up to be.

I know that at this present time that this fleshly body is presently providing us a home but let us not get too excited about this home. Not only is it very flawed but it is also true that as long as we occupy this home we will be absent from the Lord.

Do you believe these things? Hopefully you do since these things are true. These bodies will fail us and will be troublesome to us, both on a physical and spiritual level, but even more importantly we need to understand that as long as we occupy them we will in fact be absent from the Lord.

Now having said this I want to make sure that we do not get confused. Paul, by saying **“that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord,”** did not mean to undermine our belief in the spiritual presence of Christ in our lives. And Paul would be the first one to acknowledge this.

What did he say to the Galatians in **Galatians 2:20**? This is what he said. **“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”** So did Paul believe that Christ was not spiritually present with him or would not be spiritually present with us as true followers of Christ? Absolutely not! This was not what Paul believed.

So if Paul was not denying the reality of Christ's spiritual presence in his life nor His current spiritual presence in our lives in the person of the indwelling Holy Spirit by what he said in **verse 6**, then what was Paul saying in **verse 6**?

When Paul told the Corinthians that to be home in the body was to be absent from the Lord, he was reminding them that life in this world is not the believer's final reality. It is a reality but it is not their final reality.

And how was Paul able to declare this so confidently? How was Paul able to so confidently declare that to be home in the body was to be absent from the Lord?

Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 5:7** and what did Paul say? He said this. **“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”**

In this life it is faith that gives reality to the things that are still hoped for and assurance concerning things that are not yet seen (Hebrews 11:1). This is how Paul was able to say what he said in **2 Corinthians 5:6** and to say it so confidently.

So, what is Paul’s point in introducing this thought about faith at this point in our text? His point is this: that during this period of absence, the blessed realities of the life to come must be accepted by faith. We cannot yet look on their actual form or appearance. But just because we cannot at this point in time look at their actual form or appearance does not make them less real to those who have faith, which was the case with Paul. These things yet to come were real to him.

Do this mean that we, who by the grace of God possess faith like Paul, are acting irrationally? Absolutely not! Our faith is very rational.

The ministry of Christ has been thoroughly witnessed and reported by reliable observers. And the Holy Spirit through His filling ministry has brought inner conviction and assurance. To walk by faith therefore is very rational to the person who knows God.

Paul, having emphasized in **verse 7** the key role of faith in making the blessed realities of the future real to us in the present, will now in **verse 8** return back to the thought he introduced in **verse 6** that explained his unflinching courage.

So now let me now read for you **verse 8** and see if this is not so. And does it say? It says this. **“We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”**

Yes, it is true that even now in a spiritual sense, through the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit, we enjoy the presence of Christ. But this is not our final reality.

One day, immediately after our earthly tent is torn down, we will enter into the presence of Christ and we will be able to look into His face and we will

be able to see Him as He is in all of His glory surrounded by the heavenly hosts. This is the reality that awaits every true disciple of Christ. This is our final reality.

So let me ask you a question. What Paul prefer? Did he prefer to remain as he was in a fleshly substandard home that was extremely problematic that prevented him from entering into the physical presence of Christ or did Paul prefer through death to leave fleshly substandard home behind so that he might enter into the physical presence of Christ? He declared his preference clearly. He preferred to be absent from the body so that he might be able to be at home with the Lord.

Paul's ability, by the grace of God, to focus on his preference to be absent from the body so that he might be at home with the Lord filled him with unflinching courage (2 Corinthians 5:8).

And doesn't this make sense. When trials and troubles came into Paul's life threatening his very physical existence it only reminded him of what was waiting for him beyond the grave.

But we should not make the mistake of thinking that just because death might have been for something that he welcomed, knowing that it would mean he would be with Christ, it did not mean that he was with reckless abandon seeking it.

May the confidence that God has given us in the glory that is awaiting us beyond the grave express itself in unflinching courage.