

2Cor. 5:1 ¶ For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

This chapter starts with a declaration of a very precious promise--the believer has a future beyond this lifetime. Our earthly house/tabernacle is our body of flesh and blood that will eventually decay and be destroyed; it is only a temporary dwelling place for the true essence of who we are in soul/spirit. At the rapture we look forward to dwelling in a "building" made by God, a permanent heavenly house of flesh and bone that will endure for eternity.

2Cor. 5:2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

2Cor. 5:3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

"in this" = our earthly house/tabernacle

I liked Webster's definition for *groan*, "to strive after earnestly," and from the Greek "to pray inaudibly." It is truly my desire, and I am sure the desire of every child of God, to be in possession of our resurrection bodies and free of this body of flesh and blood and the sin nature that is part and parcel of it. Until then we will continue to struggle with the flesh as so vividly expressed by Paul in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 7:15-23 "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 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. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

Until that time we are to continue to strive earnestly to run our race with patience and work out our salvation as we pray without ceasing for God's empowerment through the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 12:1 "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us...."

Philippians 2:12 "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

1Thessalonians 5:17 "Pray without ceasing."

Paul is very clear in stating that our future heavenly body is a reality. Other scripture affirms that those heavenly bodies will be clothed in white.

Revelation 3:5 "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

Revelation 7:9 "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...."

Scripture declares that everyone in heaven is properly clothed.

Revelation 19:14 "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

2Cor. 5:4 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

I think Paul is saying that our desire is focused beyond death. It's not that we are so eager to die as we are eager to put on our new clothes. I talk so much about wanting to go to heaven, that my family has accused me of having a death wish—and that is so far from the truth. I am just eager for what awaits me beyond death. I am eager for my mortality to be changed to immortality, for this body of corruption to be changed to one of incorruption, for this body of shame to be raised to glory, and for this body of weakness to be raised in power.

1Corinthians 15:51-53 "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

1Corinthians 15:42-44 "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

2Cor. 5:5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

I think Paul is saying that it is actually God that has planted this desire in us by allowing us to get a foretaste of that wonderful future through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in and through us. The Greek for *earnest* states specifically that it is a pledge given in advance as security of the rest that is to come. This is actually another wonderful verse regarding the security of the believer.

2Cor. 5:6 Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

2Cor. 5:7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

Paul is basically saying that it is this confidence in what awaits us in heaven that motivates us in this lifetime. Once we get to heaven we will no longer be walking by faith; we will "see" the Lord.

Much to the chagrin of those who want us to prove the truth of scripture using the flawed scientific method established by man, our faith is the only proof we need. No, we can't show you visible evidence for this truth, but God has affirmed it in our being through His Word and His Spirit. The writer of the Hebrews actually defines our faith as "evidence," and the excerpt that follows is from that journal.

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

"faith" = persuasion, i.e. credence; moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher

"substance" = a setting under (support...assurance (objectively or subjectively):—confidence

"hoped for" = to expect; from a root that states "to anticipate, usually with pleasure"

"evidence" = proof, conviction

I thought it was important to understand these words as we prepare to understand the faith of the individuals that are singled out for reference in this "honor roll" of believers. Most of the words are used in a different context of understanding today. We think of *substance* as something that can be seen and touched. We use *hope* to indicate desire or something wished for, but not necessarily with confidence of attainment. As with substance, we think of *evidence* as tangible or discernible by sight or reason.

In the Greek these words are more rooted in a person's being and state of mind. I'm not sure I'm saying it the right way, but the meanings of these words are not rooted in the tangible. To the person of faith, however, their persuasion/conviction of the truth is the very foundation upon which he/she lives life—a foundation just as solid and firm as any tangible/material foundation for any structure can be. Their faith is rooted in what cannot be seen. This faith, however, is not blind faith. There is a wealth of evidence in scripture, in history, and in the creation to support their faith.

2Cor. 5:8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

In light of all that precedes this verse, the believer is confident and looking forward to being absent from the body and present with the Lord.

Note that he did not say absent from the body and waiting in a sleep state for the resurrection. The believer is confident that he/she will go directly into the presence of the Lord at death. He is not concerned with having to go to purgatory to work out penance for sins that have already been covered by the

blood of Jesus or to make our souls ready for heaven. Jesus has already clothed us in His righteousness; there is no further preparation that needs be done.

2Cor. 5:9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

“Wherefore” – In light of our future resurrection and life in the presence of God....

Paul is saying that what motivates him and those who serve with him is to be accepted of God, to bring Him pleasure (from the Greek). In fact, their desire is focused on pleasing the Lord for the rest of their existence—in their present lifetime and in the future throughout eternity. In context “present or absent” is a reference to life and afterlife.

2Cor. 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in his body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be good or bad*.

This verse goes on to clarify the motivation that drives Paul and his team. They understand that every believer is going to appear before the “judgment seat of Christ.” I’ve always believed this to be a reference to the judgment for determining rewards earned by believers since this letter is directed to believers. In light of the wording of verse 11, I think the reference may be broader.

Scripture is clear in declaring that believers will face a “judgment” to determine rewards.

1Corinthians 3:11-14 “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.”

Scripture is also clear in stating that every person will face judgment before the Lord and will be judged according to his works.

Matthew 16:27 “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”

Revelation 20:12-13 “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”

This is a description of what we normally call the great white throne judgment at which every unbeliever will be judged according to God’s law.

The believer's eternal destiny is also based on his works. Thankfully, our faith in Jesus Christ is the work that will result in a declaration of righteous and without guilt before God's law.

John 6:28-29 "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

Romans 4:5 "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

2Cor. 5:11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

It was this reference to motivation resulting from "the terror of the Lord," that makes me think the address also has application to judgment for eternal destiny. His whole ministry is focused on spreading the gospel so that men might be saved through faith in Christ and not have to fear this judgment.

Paul is basically saying that he knows that God knows the motive of their hearts as they serve Him. I think the next part can be taken two ways:

- He expects the Corinthian believers to recognize that his motives are pure as well.
- He wants the Corinthian believers to have a clear conscience before the Lord concerning their own motives.

I think maybe this wording reveals that Paul was thinking of both judgments—the one to determine the reward for believers and the one to determine eternal condemnation for the unbeliever. His desire is that men be saved so as not to have to face God's judgment in terror, and he is concerned that believers will be found to have works deemed worthy of reward because they were done with pure motives.

2Cor. 5:12 ¶ For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to *answer* them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

As I read through the different translations, I think Paul is saying that the Corinthians can be proud of the example that Paul's ministry team shows forth by how they serve God. They are not looking to garner the admiration of men; they are serving to give God pleasure. They are focused on ministry, not on making a name for themselves. Oh that this would be the heart of all who profess to be serving God today! Sadly, many assess the success or effectiveness of a ministry by the world's standards based on outward appearance. Paul is saying that the true success of ministry is found in the condition of the heart of the servant.

2Cor. 5:13 For whether we be beside ourselves, *it is* to God: or whether we be sober, *it is* for your cause.

After reading this verse through a few times, I think I might paraphrase it this way: We may be considered Jesus freaks, but our heart is to see people saved and growing spiritually through the ministry of the Spirit in their lives.

2Cor. 5:14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

2Cor. 5:15 And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

I liked the CJB translation of these verses: "For the Messiah's love has hold of us, because we are convinced that one man died on behalf of all mankind [which implies that all mankind was already dead], and that he died on behalf of all in order that those who live should not live any longer for themselves but for the one who on their behalf died and was raised." [brackets mine]

I believe it is a significant issue to get man to realize that he is dead in sin, to understand that physical life and spiritual life are distinct from one another. "We," every true believer, understands that Christ died for all who are/were spiritually dead; and the scripture clearly declares that all men are born sinners and spiritually dead through Adam.

Psalms 14:1 "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good."

Romans 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...."

1Corinthians 15:22 "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

In verse 15 Paul goes on to reference those that live; in other words, they had to experience a new birth to new life. This is just as Jesus taught Nicodemus.

John 3:3-7 "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Jesus goes on to tell Nicodemus that this life comes through faith in Him.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

This leads directly to the truth Paul declares in verse 17 below. He also concludes that those who receive this new life would want to live that life in service to and giving pleasure to the one who died and rose victorious from the grave to give them that life. Everyone who truly recognizes the blessing that is theirs through God's precious gift of salvation and the great sacrifice of His Son

that made it possible should also feel compelled by God's love to share that truth with others.

2Cor. 5:16 ¶ Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

"Wherefore" – Based on the preceding truth...

Paul is stating that from this time forward the believer should consider each person from a spiritual perspective, not according to the flesh, according to worldly perspective. The world looks at people from a perspective of rich or poor, ethnicity, position or influence, etc. That was part of the problem for Jesus during His ministry. Many, such as Saul/Paul, focused on Him as just a man and did not accept His declaration that His spiritual identity was rooted in God. Since the resurrection, many more along with Paul now knew Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah, their Savior. It is important to understand that every person has worth as a creation in the image of God, and that God is no respecter of persons when it comes to determining our spiritual destiny.

Genesis 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him"

Acts 10:34 "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:"

Our desire should be to share the gospel to encourage every person to accept God's gift of salvation.

2Cor. 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

"Therefore" – Since we are now looking at men through spiritual eyes....

Every person who has placed his/her faith in Christ as Lord and Savior is a new creature "in Christ." While still serving in this body of flesh on planet earth as we await the coming of the Savior, we will continue to fight the sin nature that is part and parcel of this mortal, corrupt, natural body. However, "in Christ" we are empowered through the indwelling Holy Spirit to overcome sinful worldly fleshly desires and to see things anew with spiritual eyes of understanding.

1 Corinthians 6:19 "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

1 John 5:4-5 "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Galatians 5:16-17 "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

2Cor. 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

After reading through this several times, I think the "all things" is a reference in context to the things that the believer possesses as a new creation in Christ. Everything associated with our new life in Christ is "of God." This new life is possible only because He chose to reconcile us to Himself through the gift of the willing sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ.

When I looked at the Greek for *reconcile*, it stated "to change mutually...reconcile." That was a bit confusing, so I looked up the meaning of *mutual*; it stated, "...having the same specified relationship to each other." That immediately clicked in my mind to the verses that declare believers to be sons of God and joint-heirs with Christ; we have a mutual relationship with Jesus before God the father.

1 John 3:1 "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

Romans 8:16-17 "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;"

Reconcile is defined as "...to restore to friendship; to bring back to harmony; to cause to be no longer at variance...." This connected with my first thoughts upon reading this verse; our salvation restores the harmony and fellowship with God that was lost when sin became part of our nature. Through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ as the atonement for our sin, we are justified (just-as-if-I'd never sinned).

Romans 3:24-26 "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

How do we as believers participate in the ministry of reconciliation? By sharing the gospel with others so that they too may turn to Christ in repentance and faith and become new creatures in Christ.

2Cor. 5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

It is important to note that though it was man that needed reconciliation, it was God that took the initiative to provide for that reconciliation before the foundation of the world. That provision was to come through the willing sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, God in flesh.

1 Peter 1:18-20 "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of

Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world...."

I think it is also important to note that this provision for reconciliation was made for the *world*, all of its inhabitants (from the Greek). Because Christ was our sacrificial lamb, His blood cleanses us from all sin and declares us innocent before God.

1 John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

It is this good news of reconciliation, the gospel of salvation, that we are privileged to tell others; in fact, we are *committed* (appointed....ordained, purposed) to share this "word of reconciliation."

2Cor. 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

That we are *ambassadors* follows naturally with the truth that we are committed or appointed to share the gospel message. An ambassador is a "minister of the highest rank sent to a foreign court to represent there his sovereign...." according to Webster. We are sons of God sent to the lost world to testify of the truth of God and His kingdom. We are God's personal representatives to plead with sinners, the lost world, to turn to Him in repentance and faith to become new creatures in Christ, to be restored to fellowship with God the Father.

2Cor. 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

"For He" = God the Father

"hath made Him" = Jesus Christ His Son

"sin for us" – As carefully taught throughout the Old Testament, Christ became the innocent sacrifice for our sin; He suffered the judgment of God that we deserved.

"who knew no sin" = Jesus Christ, the lamb without blemish or spot as stated in the verses from 1Peter above.

"that we might be made....in Him." – In Christ we have been declared righteous and just as stated in the verses from Romans 3 above. That is just an amazing truth! By grace through faith, I, with all my sin, am seen as innocent and pure by God through the shed blood of His Son.

Ephesians 2:8 "For by grace are ye saved through faith...."

Romans 4:11 "And he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; **that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:**"

Philippians 3:9 "And be found in him [Christ], not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:"

Romans 5:1 "Therefore being **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"