

life groups

NorthStar Church

AfterLife Wk 1

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10

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Pastor Scott

MAIN POINT

The Christian can face the certainty of death with confidence in the new life with God that comes next.

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Would you say that you think about death more or less often than the average person? Why?

What do you think is the right way to think about death from a Christian perspective?

What value in the present life is there when you think about death from a Christian perspective?

Death is a certainty for all of us; the only question is when it will happen. For the Christian, we can meet this certainty with confidence. We know when this life is over a better life is waiting for us. We are guaranteed what is to come by the deposit of the Holy Spirit living in us, and we are confident that when we die we will go immediately into the presence of God.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

In what ways do you think God is preparing you for the life to come?

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-5.

Why do you think Paul compared our bodies to tents? How do you see that comparison to be true in your day to day life?

In what ways are you comforted by the knowledge that something better is waiting for you after death?

Paul compared life in our mortal bodies to living in a tent—knowing that living in a palace lies ahead. Our earthly house (body) is just a tent. One day—at death—it will be destroyed, like a torn or worn-out tent. But that isn't the end of the story.

What are the differences between our earthly bodies and our everlasting bodies?

What are the positive aspects of having a temporary body? How does this knowledge make us groan?

How can the pain you feel in your physical body actually point you to have an eternal perspective?

In contrast to the we know of verse 1 is the we groan of verse 2. While we are still living in the physical body subject to decay, there is a kind of moaning or sighing. Paul thought of death as being like stripping off rotten, worn-out rags and putting on the most amazing attire imaginable.

Do you groan more because of the temporary nature of your body or because you wish for Christ's return?

Which kind of groaning is more common? Why?

We groan for the ultimate glory of being clothed with the resurrection. Now, believers are burdened. In the resurrection, the burden will be lifted. In 1 Corinthians 15:54, Paul wrote that when believers receive their resurrection bodies, the saying "Death has been swallowed up in victory" will become a reality. The victory of the resurrection will so completely swallow up death that it will no longer be regarded. Which human beings have confidence that this will surely happen? Only those who have been prepared for it by God Himself.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-10.

What do you anticipate about being at home with the Lord? How will your heavenly home be a better place?

What are the limitations of being "at home in the body"?

Why is "walking by faith" such an important dimension of our experience as believers?

The life of faith in the present will give way to walking by sight after the death of those who have prepared by trusting Christ. As much as believers feel that we are at home in our bodies (after all, what other experience have we had?), there will be an even greater experience of "at homeness" when we are with the Lord Jesus. That truly will be a time to be satisfied beyond all comparison.

Who are the two kinds of people prepared for Christ's return? Who will face God's judgment?

In 2 Corinthians 6:9 Paul apparently thought ahead through time. There will be two kinds of people prepared for Christ's return (and for the judgment spoken of in verse 10). First are those who are at home in their bodies when Christ returns. Second are those who have already died and are away from physical life when He returns.

On what will believers be judged? What can believers look forward to at judgment?

Do you think as Christians we think too much or too little about judgment? Why do we need a balance in that perspective?

Judgment is a reality, both for believers and non-believers. But for the Christian, we can confidently move through life even into death knowing that we have had God's seal of approval on us. This seal isn't based on our good, but on the Holy Spirit that lives inside of us.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Pastor Scott concluded that we have an option, we have a choice. Death can destroy us OR Jesus will deliver us. Which will it be?

What suffering are you or a loved one going through right now? Let's spend time together praying that the reality of heaven will be a great source of joy and comfort.

Why might we be tempted to give up when things are hard? What truth can we hang onto during times when we are being called to persevere through the afflictions?

In what life circumstances can you be most comforted by the knowledge that believers can look forward to eternal life in an everlasting body? How does the knowledge of coming judgment provide you with hope?

PRAY

Close in prayer, thanking God that the sting of death has been swallowed up by victory. Pray that you would live your life with a view of eternity, confident in the saving work of Jesus on your behalf.

COMMENTARY

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10

Paul compared life in our mortal bodies to living in a tent—knowing that living in a palace lies ahead. Our earthly house (body) is just a tent. One day—at death—it will be destroyed, like a torn or worn-out tent. But that isn't the end of the story.

Note the absolute confidence of Paul's conviction, stated by the bold we know. His assurance that some day he will live in a resurrection body—a building from God—was based on the resurrection of Jesus Himself. In describing the eternal, resurrection body of believers, Paul used language similar to the language Jesus Himself used of His own coming resurrection body. His enemies at His trial quoted Him as saying: "I will build another not made by hands" (Mark 14:58; compare John 2:19-22). Followers of Christ may be confident that an everlasting body, fit for heaven itself, is waiting for them.

In contrast to the we know of verse 1 is the we groan of verse 2. While we are still living in the physical body subject to decay, there is a kind of moaning or sighing. It is not that the material world is inherently evil, but that the physical body is inherently temporary. Who cannot but groan as we wait for Christ's return? When we have grasped the reality that there is a house from heaven waiting for us in the resurrection, who cannot but sigh until Christ's promise is fulfilled? (Some Bible students suggest that Paul was talking here about an interim body during the intermediate period between bodily death and the resurrection.)

Many Greek philosophies of Paul's day, following the famous Plato, supposed that the preferred state for eternity is to continue as a kind of naked (disembodied) soul or spiritual entity. Today, some of the world's major religions adopt a similar belief. Even popular music celebrates the notion of nirvana—a dreamy spirit-paradise. Paul found such belief horrifying. He desired to be clothed with his resurrection body. In verse 3 the image of what believers long for shifts from that of an eternal building to that of wonderful garments. Paul

thought of death as being like stripping off rotten, worn-out rags and putting on the most amazing attire imaginable.

For a second time, the apostle referred to the groaning of believers who are in this tent. We groan for the ultimate glory of being clothed with the resurrection. Now, believers are burdened. In the resurrection, the burden will be lifted. Paul was projecting one chief truth for believers: mortality will be swallowed up by life. The New Testament uses the Greek verb translated swallowed in other places in a figurative sense. In 1 Corinthians 15:54, Paul wrote that when believers receive their resurrection bodies, the saying "Death has been swallowed up in victory" will become a reality. The victory of the resurrection will so completely swallow up death that it will no longer be regarded. In a parallel manner, Paul now said that the life of the resurrection body will totally envelop everything that belonged to the mortal, temporary state of earthly existence. It will no longer be remembered.

Which human beings have confidence that this will surely happen? Only those who have been prepared for it by God Himself. This hope does not belong to the natural order but to the supernatural. When we were born again, God gave us the Spirit (see John 3:5-8). Those who have repented and believed the gospel have received the Spirit, for "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (Rom. 8:9). The indwelling Spirit of God is the down payment guaranteeing believers the resurrection. Only three times in the New Testament is the Greek word translated down payment used: here, 2 Corinthians 1:22, and Ephesians 1:14. All three times Paul spoke of the Holy Spirit indwelling believers as the guarantee of future blessings. And if the Holy Spirit of God Himself is "merely" the down payment, how glorious must the full reality be! Although temporary, this life has great value. This life is not to be despised but rather is to be enjoyed as a time of preparation for eternity. This means that every day we can be confident, just as Paul was. Here, the present experience of believers is described as being at home in the body. During this time, we are away from the Lord in the sense that we do not perceive Him with our physical senses. On the other hand, we do enjoy the spiritual presence of the Lord now. Another way of describing the present experience of Jesus' followers is that we walk by faith. We trust in the greatness and goodness of God on our behalf. The Christian life throughout Scripture is characterized as a life of faith, "just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith" (Rom. 1:17, quoting Hab. 2:4). Paul surely wanted the Corinthians to understand that the only way to prepare adequately for death is by faith in Christ.

The life of faith in the present will give way to walking by sight after the death of those who have prepared by trusting Christ. For a time, this will be characterized as being out of the body, that is, during the interim time after death and before the resurrection. Yet this will be a wonderful experience, for it will mean being at home with the Lord. As much as believers feel that we are at home in our bodies (after all, what other experience have we had?), there will be an even greater experience of "at homeness" when we are with the Lord Jesus. That truly will be a time to be satisfied beyond all comparison. Paul did not picture the period between death of the body and the resurrection as a kind of unconscious limbo or state of soul sleep. In another letter, Paul's teaching was that departing from bodily life to be with Christ was better by far (see Phil. 1:23).

In 2 Corinthians 6:9 Paul apparently thought ahead through time. There will be two kinds of people prepared for Christ's return (and for the judgment spoken of in verse 10). First are those who are at home in their bodies when Christ returns. Second are those who have already died and are away from physical life when He returns.

Both groups, however, recognize one central purpose for their existence: to be pleasing to Him. This means that God created us and redeemed us not mainly for our own sakes, but for His sake. God has "wired" us as humans in such a way that the most satisfying, enjoyable life possible is not one of self-centeredness, in which we focus on pleasing ourselves. Rather, the greatest life possible is the one centered on the Lord Jesus,

reflecting back to Him the glory He has shown to us. Both in this life and throughout eternity, all who have entered into a relationship with Christ seek to love Him, to please Him, to honor Him above all (see Matt. 22:37-38). A life pleasing the Lord is possible in this life as we walk by faith; it will be fully realized in eternity as we walk by sight.

Believers are saved by faith, but our works will be judged. This truth is taught not only here, but also in such passages as 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. Believers must all appear so their works may be evaluated. Paul did not state whether this judgment occurs immediately after a believer's body dies (as the context suggests) or whether this will be a general judgment involving many persons at once. It makes no difference as long as we are prepared.

The phrase judgment seat translates a single Greek word (bema) that was used originally of the place from which an earthly ruler gave legal decisions. In two New Testament passages, the phrase refers to the place from which God or Christ will give judgment about humanity. Earthly behavior obviously has an eternal perspective. Those who have been saved by faith will be repaid for the deeds they have done while in the body.