

Countryside

Bible
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Absent from the Body

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord”. 2 Cor. 5:8 KJV (NIV except where noted)

This verse is often quoted to prove that at death Christians immediately go to heaven in a disembodied state.

Such an idea may seem plausible only if we isolate this and similar phrases from Paul’s introduction. Paul began by explaining his desire is to be absent only from this present body in order to be *“clothed with our heavenly dwelling”* (body).

“ . . . because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, . . . ”. 2 Cor. 5:4

He likens our present mortal bodies to an *“earthly tent”* and *“tent”*. In contrast to this frail, temporal and dying body he likens the body Christians will receive to a *“building”*, *“eternal house in heaven”* and *“heavenly dwelling”* (twice).

Indeed, when we die this present earthly (mortal) body is *“destroyed”* (verse 1). That in itself is not what Paul desires. That condition is likened to being *“unclothed”* and *“naked”* (having nothing). To the contrary, Paul desires the opposite of *“unclothed”* and *“naked”* (dead). He desires to be *“clothed”*, dressed up, so to speak, in our *“heavenly dwelling”*.

“Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked”. 2 Cor. 5:2-3

Paul had endured physical hardships, physical abuse and now old age. He knew, as we all do to one degree or another, what it means to “groan” in this present mortality. Even as he complained -

“What a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death?” Romans 7:24

He is not teaching something different in this second letter from the first letter where he explained their hope in the resurrection (Chap.15). Notice the many similar expressions.

“And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven”. (1 Cor. 15:49)

At the resurrection we will be “clothed” with our new body.

For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory”. 1 Cor. 15:53-54 (*“what is mortal may be swallowed up of life”* 2Cor.5:4)

This happens not at death but –

“... at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable . . .” 1Cor.15:52.

Our hope is not in becoming a disembodied spirit. Our hope is to have a new body, a substantial body a “glorious body”. For that we must wait for Jesus to come from heaven.

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” Philip. 3:20-21.

Considering the context and a few other texts bearing on the subject it is reasonable to conclude that Paul was expressing his desire to be absent only from this body (this mortal body) and present with the Lord, because to be present with the Lord is to be in possession of a body like His.

“... we know that when He appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” 1John 3:2.

It will be a substantial body. After His resurrection Jesus said -

“Behold my hands and feet, that it I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have” Lk.24:39, KJV.

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www.countrysidebiblechurch.org

www.mindspring.com/~anthonybuzzard/articles.htm or

www.comingkingdom.org/ATCmag.html