

## **Death Is Not The End Of The Story**

Of all the fears that plague the heart of man, none is greater than the fear of death. It is our greatest fear, the sum of all other fears. We are afraid to die. Life is short and so uncertain James 4:14, “whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away”

Moses said to the Lord in Psalm 90:5-6, “You carry them away like a flood; They are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up: In the morning it flourishes and grows up; In the evening it is cut down and withers.”

The statistics on death have not changed. One out of one person dies. Does death win in the end? On this side of the grave it's hard to tell. Left to our observations, we don't know much beyond the familiar words of Ecclesiastes 3:2: “a time to be born and a time to die.” Death is not the end of the story for those who know the Lord. The Bible tells us what lies ahead for those who know Jesus. As we come to 2 Corinthians 5:1-5, we discover wonderful truths that give us hope as we face death with all its dark fears.

### ***The Certainty Of The Resurrection Body***

“Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands” (v. 1).

Surely the most important part of this verse comes in the first three words. “Now we know.” Death itself confronts us with many mysteries. No one who reads these words can say with certainty how much longer they will live. Every single breath we take is a gift from God. We are not guaranteed another day, much less another year.

As to what happens after we die, science has nothing useful to tell us. The great researchers have no certain knowledge about what happens a minute after we die. We will not get the answer from philosophy or from history. If you visit a cemetery, all you know for certain is it is full of dead people who once were alive. Try as you might, you cannot divine from studying the dead what happens when we die. There is speculation, and then there is revelation. Paul says there are some things we can know with certainty.

We will one day trade in our tent for a building. Think about the difference between a tent and a building. Tents are temporary and flimsy, easily torn, and meant to be replaced. A building is strong, built on a foundation, and not meant to be moved. Someday we will give up our tent and replace it with a building made by God Himself. That fact tells us something important about death. Death is not the end ... it is a trade-in. One day we will trade in our broken down bodies for a new body. Look what Paul says about that new body.

It is from God. It is not made with hands. It is eternal. It is heavenly, not earthly. That's what Paul means when he says, “We know.” Lots of things we don't know about the future, but this much is certain. We won't have to live in tents forever. Someday our

“tent” will be replaced with a “building” made by God, and that will be a glorious spiritual end to an inglorious physical life.

### ***The Nature Of The Resurrection Body***

“Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (vv. 2-4).

What will the coming day of resurrection be like? We can find three answers in these verses.

First, it is like putting on an overcoat. When Paul says we long to be clothed, he uses an unusual Greek verb that means something like “to be clothed upon.” It has the idea of putting on an overcoat, which is literally a coat put over (or upon) the body.

Second, it is the answer to our groaning. We groan because of a job we hate. We groan because of unfulfilled dreams. We groan because our bodies break down. We groan because our friends disappoint us. We groan because we live in a fallen, mixed-up, messed-up, broken-down world, and we ourselves are broken down. So we look for a better day and a better place, and we dream of a better world where there is ... No more cancer. No more abuse. No more hatred. No more hurricanes. No more crime. No more sadness. No more night. No more sickness. No more death.

Third, it removes our deepest fears. Among all the fears associated with death, one of the greatest must be that we will die alone and forgotten. As sad as death seems, how much worse it must be to die in some distant place with no one around to give you comfort. How blessed we are if we can die with our loved ones gathered by our side. Oftentimes that is not possible because death comes unbidden to our door. We may end up dying in some lonely place despite our best plans. What is the current condition of believers who die before Jesus returns? The clearest thing we can say is that they are “with Christ” and “with the Lord” in Heaven. Paul says as much in verses 6-8. We don’t have to worry about our loved ones who died in Christ. They have passed into paradise: “And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented” (Luke 16:22-25). Paul says that the dead in Christ will rise first when Christ returns (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). That’s the moment when those who die in Christ receive their resurrection bodies. When we die, we will not die alone because we will be with Jesus forever. And if we should live to see Christ return, we will receive our resurrection body at that very moment. Either way, we have a hope that death cannot shake.

One question remains. Paul, how can you be so sure?

### ***The Guarantee Of The Resurrection Body***

“Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (v. 5).

First, we were made for something better than this. Sometimes we look at the world around us and wonder, “Is that all there is?” To which Paul answers a resounding, “No!” We were made for something better than the sadness we see in this world.

We will have a new body — not the same as before. We will have a new body — not just renovated or reconstructed. We will have a new body — but our identity will not change.

We are made for a new life and a new body and a new existence with the Lord. God Himself has made us for this purpose. Our future does not hang on our own desires but on the eternal purpose of God who called us to be His children. Not even death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Second, God has guaranteed our future resurrection. Here, then, is a hopeful thought for anyone who has buried a loved one who died in the Lord. How do we know that we will see them again? The answer is, it all depends on where we look. You can go to a cemetery and you’ll see lots of death because that’s what cemeteries are all about. Lots of people being buried; not many being raised from the dead. In fact, the last resurrection took place 2,000 years ago. So how do we know there is a future resurrection? There are two solid answers to that question.

The first answer is that God raised His own Son from the dead. This is the objective ground of our faith in the coming day of resurrection. If God would not leave His Son in the grave, He will not abandon those who trusted in His Son. Death cannot win in the end because our Lord conquered the grave.

The second answer is that He gave us the Spirit as a sacred deposit, as mentioned in verse 5. Some translations say “down payment,” “earnest,” or “pledge”. When you buy a house, you put down a sum of money called “earnest money.” It’s a small amount that legally binds you to pay the full amount later. That’s what God has done through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit that revealed in scripture that we will be resurrected is the “earnest” or “pledge” of our future resurrection. God signed on the dotted line and said, “I will raise from the dead all who have trusted in my Son.” And then He made the pledge through the gift of the Holy Spirit. What should this truth do for us today? I think primarily it changes the way we look at death. We have it all wrong.

We think we’re going from the land of the living to the land of the dying, but in truth, we’re going from the land of the dying to the land of the living. The man who wrote this passage in 2 Corinthians 5 returned to the dust of the earth a few years later. Every

Christian who has ever lived has died eventually. But, thank God, it's not the last word.  
We can believe and have confidence in this.

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