

2 Cor. 5:1 part 2 – Union with Christ

People of God, in the 2nd letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul writes to comfort to God's people who are in the midst of any affliction. He says:

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

The greatest affliction we experience is of course is the affliction of death. He comforts us by letting us know that we can be confident that God will deliver us from death, when he raises us from the dead. As he said in 2 Cor. 1:8-10 –

“⁸For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

There are at least 4 reasons for why we can know that when we die, it will be our deliverance from death, and that God will raise us from the dead and give us a new resurrection body.

Reason #1 – Old Testament Tent Symbolism.

Reason #2 – Because we are United to Christ in His Resurrection.

Reason #3 – Because we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling.

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Reason #4 – Because the Spirit has been given to us as a guarantee.

Last week we looked at reason #1. Paul describes our physical bodies as a tent, and he says that *"we know that when this tent is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."*

Just as a tent is a temporary dwelling, until we can move into a more permanent and durable habitation, so too is this body like a tent in comparison to the eternal house that we will move into upon our death.

The Second Reason Paul knows that we will enter into our heavenly building after we die and this tent is destroyed is because this is what happened to Jesus, and we are united to Christ in His death and resurrection.

Our union with Christ is the key to Paul's theology and his understanding of our salvation. One of the best places to understand this is to look at Romans 6, where he says this:

³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Paul understands that our in baptism we have been united to Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, and therefore what happened to Christ is true of us as well.

A HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS

Keep that in mind as we examine a particular phrase Paul uses in 2 Cor. 5:1, which is our sermon text. He says, *“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”*

This phrase, *not made with hands*, is a unique phrase that is used a few times by Paul. Something that is “Not made with hands” is Heavenly and spiritual and eternal reality. Something “made with hands” is earthly and physical and temporal. It is the type or copy or shadow of the reality.

For those who are uncertain about what I mean when I speak of type and reality, or type and anti-type, it is important to understand that this is the important for much biblical theology.

The first real place where we encounter this idea is when Moses goes up onto Mt. Sinai where he receives the law of God. But he not only received the law, he also was given the details concerning how to build the tabernacle. In Exodus 25 it says that God showed Moses the pattern of the tabernacle on the mountain. The pattern is the heavenly tabernacle. It is the real and true tabernacle, and the one that Moses built on earth is the copy, the shadow, and the type of the heavenly tabernacle.

As Paul again explains in Hebrews 8:5 - *⁵The priests serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.”*

Now this is important because Paul uses this phrase “not made with hands” when he talks about the Heavenly Reality of the our

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resurrection body, which he refers to as a house, or a building. We should think of any old house, but rather, the house of God, the Heavenly Temple.

Now this phrase, ‘Not made with hands’ first shows up in the gospel of Mark 14:58. And I think Paul is actually quoting this verse from Mark’s gospel to substantiate his point about our Heavenly resurrection body.

In Mark 14:58, Jesus is at his trial, and his accusers were trying to condemn him, and one of the things they said about Jesus is,

“We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’”

What is being spoken of here, of course, is Christ’s death and resurrection. The body that Jesus received at his incarnation is a temple that is “made with hands.” It is earthly, of this creation. Temporary and susceptible to decay and death and destruction. The Jews will tear down this temple made with hands – when they kill him. But in three days Jesus will build another temple “not made with hands” when he rises from the dead. Thus, Jesus calls his resurrection body “a house not made with hands” and equates it with the Heavenly Temple.

This is where Paul gets the phrase “made with hands” “not made with hands” from. Therefore, when he says, *“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly body is destroyed we have a building from God, eternal in the heavens, a house not made with hands”*, we need to understand what he is saying. The reason we know that when we die we will enter into our Heavenly Temple Building of a

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Resurrected Body that is not made with hands, is because Christ built it in his own resurrection body.

Paul knows that we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, a house that is not susceptible to death and decay and destruction because Jesus' resurrection body is his eternal heavenly temple not made with hands, and it is not susceptible to death, decay, and destruction.

So, if Jesus entered into his house not made with hands after he died, then we also will enter into our house not made with hands after we die, because we are in union with Christ in his death and resurrection. For our whole salvation, from beginning to end, is because we are in Christ.

Consider also what Paul says in Ephesians 1: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,*

Just as God the Father chose us to be in Christ before the foundation of the world, in eternity past, God the Father also chose to bless us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

Thus, all the spiritual blessings that Christ accomplished for our redemption in His Death and Resurrection and Ascension, including, but not at all limited to, our resurrection body, is ours in Jesus Christ.

God the Father chose us to be in Christ before the foundation of the world, but it is through baptism and faith that the Holy Spirit

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unites us to Christ, or places us into Christ to give us those heavenly spiritual blessings in Christ.

PRESENT POSSESSION

Now, because we are united to Christ who has his resurrection body in Heaven, Paul concludes in 2 Cor. 5:1, that we also now have, present tense, *"a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."*

For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God. We have it right now. One commentator states it like this:

“it is a future possession which is so real and assured in the apostle’s perspective that it is appropriately spoke of in the present tense.” Another commentator notes that the condition of our inheritance of our resurrection body is “future in conception, but the conclusion is a present reality.”¹

In other words, our Union with Christ puts us in possession of **our Resurrection and glorified body – NOW**. Which is quite an amazing thought. We talk about our salvation of being past, present, and future. We have been saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved. And the future aspect we tend to speak of, naturally in a future sense. We will get our resurrection body.

But because our resurrection body is in Christ, and because Christ has his temple made without hands, and because we are in Christ, Paul is certain that we have possession of it right now.

¹¹ Paul Barnett, NICNT, 2nd Corinthians, 257.

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Which is why Paul says in Romans 8 *those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*³⁰ *Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified* (past tense). He speaks of our future glorification as though it had already happened. As if we were already glorified and have the possession of our resurrection body, right now.

How can that be? Our resurrection body was secured for us in eternity, when God chose us to be in Christ, before the foundation of the world. And so whatever is true of Christ, is true of us.

Wherever Christ has gone in his redemption, we have been there too. We have been united to Christ in his incarnation in His mother's womb, as a boy during childhood, in his baptismal waters in the Jordan, in His temptation in the wilderness, in his earthly ministry and perfect covenant faithfulness, in his suffering and death on the cross, in his tomb, in his descent into Hades, in his resurrection from the dead, and in his ascension into Heaven to sit at God's right hand.

All that is Christ's, and all that Christ accomplished in His body and now possesses in his resurrection body, is ours now. In as much as Christ has it, so do we, because we have been chosen In Christ.

This is why our Lord Jesus poured out his Spirit on to His Church, in order to unite us to himself in every aspect of his redemption that he accomplished in his person by the power of

the Holy Spirit. So that, all that is Christ's, is now ours, by faith and baptism.

INDESTRUCTIBLE

But by saying we have it now, is also just another way of simply stating that what we have is permanent and indestructible. Unlike the house that IS made with hands, the temporal body that is subject to decay and corruption and death; we have a house that is eternal and that is indestructible and will never decay or corrupt. Our glorified bodies will never be destroyed, never fade away, never die. We have it now, because we never have to worry about it being destroyed.

As Peter says:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

The guarantee of our present possession of our resurrection body in Heaven is promised to us by the words of Jesus. Before Jesus resurrected and ascended to Heaven, he said he was going to prepare a place for us. Jesus said, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.² In my Father's house are many abodes. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

DO NOT LOSE HEART

Therefore, the application of all this, is two fold. First, as Jesus just said, is, *“let not your hearts be troubled.”* And as Paul says, *“Do not lose heart”* and *“always be of good courage.”*

When you are in the midst of affliction, when your body is dying, when you are growing old and your mortality is weighing heavy upon you, when you are sick and dying in bed, take comfort to know that when God determines that it is time for you to take off this tent, you have a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens in Christ.

What else do you have now that has been confirmed to you in such a way as your resurrection body? What do you have now on this earth that that has been guaranteed that you will possess forever even after you die? Nothing. For we brought nothing into *this* world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. But what we do have, our resurrection body in Christ, is being kept secure for us in Heaven until the day of our redemption. So do not let the sufferings and sorrow and sadness of this life steal away your hope. Death is your servant, for it serves Christ. And it is through death that you will be given the hope of your salvation.

BODY COUNT

Secondly, because you have your resurrection body now, you should live in this body in such a way that you are already glorified, and you should abstain from sin. One of the best things about dying is, that we will never sin again. Sin will be eternally removed from us, so that we will not even be able to sin. But Scripture constantly speaks of our currently salvation experience

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now, as though we have already died, and already live in our resurrection body.

Going back to the Romans 6 passage,

⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹²Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Let me read v. 13 again -

¹³Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

Paul encourages us to consider that we have already died, and already have come to life in Christ, and therefore we ought to live in our bodies now, as though we are resurrected. And therefore, we ought not to sin in our bodies.

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Or as he says in Galatians 2:20, a passage that everyone ought to memorize:

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Thus John Calvin says:

“Since Christ has purified us through the baptism in his blood, we should not become defiled by fresh pollution.

“Since Christ has united us to his body as his members, we should be anxious not to disgrace him by any blemish.

“Since Christ, our head, has ascended to heaven, we should leave our carnal desires behind and lift our hearts upward to him.

“Since the Holy Spirit has dedicated us as temples of God, we should exert ourselves not to profane his sanctuary, but to display his glory.

“Since both our soul and body are destined to inherit an incorruptible and never fading crown, we should keep them pure and undefiled till the day of our Lord.

This is what Jesus Christ died to accomplish. So do not make the cross of Christ of no effect in your life by living according to the sins of your flesh. Instead, I encourage you, people of God, to awaken out of your slumber and sleep, and recognize the great evil of your own sin that remain in your heart, and how its desire

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is to utterly destroy you and prevent you at every turn from inheriting the hope of the resurrection.

Your indwelling sin, is likened as the old man. Now he has been crucified in Christ. He is dead. He no longer exists. Mike Shover doesn't exist anymore. That guy is dead. And yet, he is like a zombie who keeps coming back in his undead state in order to make me captive to sin.

So what I have to do, what you have to do, people of God, is put to death the old man of sin that still dwells in you, and put to death the deeds of the flesh, by the power of Spirit.

I know some of you play video games like Call of Duty. And the whole point of Call of Duty is to kill as many people as you can, and try to die the least amount of times possible. I encourage you to consider your spiritual life like that. The goal of your new life in Christ is stack bodies and to get a massive body count.

What do I mean? Everyday your old sinful flesh rises up to tempt you. A hundred times a day in a hundred different ways, you are tempted to sin. Recognize that is the nature of the game – sin and the devil and the demons want your soul to die and go to hell. So, you need to kill them before they kill you. And when you resist temptation, and overcome evil with good, that's a body. The lusts of your flesh rises up and tempt you to immorality – what are you going to do? Kill it. Body count. Kill the old sinful man who still lives in you.

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You are feeling impatient and about to yell at your wife or kids, kill that, and add to your body count.

You are tempted to lie and manipulate in order to make life easier for you – kill that sin, stack those bodies. Your pride rises up within you and tempts you – stack ‘em high. Your co-workers are using foul language, and you start to let your mouth go and start using foul language with them – kill that sin. Someone is mean and disrespectful to you, and you want to let them know what you think about them – nope – body count.

The goal is to kill sin more times than it kills you. Because that is what you have been saved for – to no longer live according to the flesh and its lusts and sins and impurities, but to live according to the Spirit and put to death the deeds of the flesh. You have already died and have risen again in Christ. So live like it. *The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever* – 1 John 2:17 says.

So live in such a way that you possess right now your resurrection life, and put to death the sin that remains within you.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.