

## 2 Cor. 5:2 - Groaning

Allow me to remind you of where we have been the last couple of weeks. We are in 2 Cor. 5, and in this letter Paul is comforting God's people with the truth that when we die God will deliver us from death by raising us from the dead.

The first reason Paul knows that God will raise us from the dead is because of the progression of the Old Testament story of God's house moving from glory to glory from Tabernacle to Temple, from Tent to Building. The glory of our bodies is like that. Paul says that if this earthly tent of our body is destroyed, we have a building from God.

The second reason Paul gives us for why he is certain that when we die we will be resurrected, is because it happened to Jesus. Christ's resurrection body was a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And because of our union with Christ, we too will receive a new body, a new temple building, new clothing from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Today we will look at the third reason why Paul is convinced that when we die God will rescue us from death by raising us from the dead. And that reason is, that the Holy Spirit groans within us, longing to put on the Resurrection body.

Hear the word of the Lord from 2 Cor. 5 -

*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.<sup>2</sup> For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly*

## 2 Cor. 5:2 - Groaning

*dwelling, <sup>3</sup>if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. <sup>4</sup>For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup>He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.*

How many of you have had the experience of groaning? And I don't mean the type of groaning you children do when your parents tell you to clean the bathroom or do your school work. And I don't mean the type of groaning that says I don't want to be to Adult today.

No, I'm talking about the type of groaning that has a sense of restlessness. This the type of groaning could be described as longing, or yearning, and it even manifests itself in sighing. When something bad happens, the Spirit groans within us. When we desire to be closer to God, but we feel like there is this barrier that stops us from getting closer, the Spirit groans within us. When we sin, and wish we hadn't, we groan and long for the days in eternity when there will no longer be sin in us to keep us from communion and fellowship with God.

When we are persecuted or afflicted or sick, and we desire for there to be peace and wholeness, the Spirit groans within us. I'm talking about those types of groanings: those holy yearnings and longings. Have you ever had that experience? Paul is talking about

## 2 Cor. 5:2 - Groaning

that experience in 2 Cor. 5. And if not careful, we can easily misinterpret what those groanings mean.

I remember when I was still young, and I was just beginning to think about God and Heaven and the spiritual world; And I was fascinated with this idea of escaping the body. I felt as if this body had entrapped the real me, and that the goal of my life was to escape this body upon death and be free from it. And I interpreted those groanings and sighings as my spirit wanting to be free from the body.

Have any of you interpreted your groanings like that, that you desire to be freed from this body of death? For those of you that groan and sigh and wish to be delivered from this body and be set free, it is important for you to know the truth of your experience, so you can rightly interpret it.

The groaning that you have within you, is, first of all, a groaning of the Holy Spirit within you. And this groaning is not to be understood to mean that the Spirit desires to be freed from the body, as though the body were evil. The Spirit is not groaning in you because this body is a prison in which your soul is trapped.

No. Rather, the Spirit within you desires and groans and longs to be without sin. And in as much as this body still is corrupted by sin, the Holy Spirit wants to shed this body. But not so that your soul can be freed from inhabiting a body, rather the groaning is that the Spirit of God desires to be further clothed with another

body. The Holy Spirit longs to put on our resurrection body! It is more like the Spirit is groaning because this house is too small, too limiting, not strong enough, not able to achieve peak holiness and righteousness. And He longs to move into a New Abode.

This is important to understand, and it affects much theology. The groaning you experience is not a desire to be freed from the body, but it is desire to be freed from sin, and to put on another body that is without sin.

In saying this, Paul is explicitly refuting a false teaching that was popular in his day, and sadly is popular still in our day as well. He says, *"For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on, we may not be found naked."*

And he continues further. *"For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened - not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal, may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee."* Paul is interpreting our groaning for us, and he says that the groaning is that we would be further clothed.

Commentators differ here about why Paul is saying these things. I think the reason he says this is because there were those in Corinth who were denying the resurrection of the body.

The Platonists for example, and Gnostics in Corinth taught that salvation was to be set free from the prison of the physical body. But Paul rebukes that idea and instead reinterprets the groaning

within us to mean, that the Spirit desires to be further clothed, not less clothed.

Remember, we are in a tent, and the Spirit within us desires to be clothed in a Temple, in a building, in a house not made with hands. The Spirit wants to go from lesser glory to greater Glory. The Tabernacle is good. But the Temple is better. This body is good, but the resurrection body is better. We groan because the Spirit desires to be further clothed in glory, not stripped naked of His bodily glory.

Now why would these people be denying the resurrection of the body? One reason is because we have been raised with Christ in baptism. We HAVE our resurrection body, which is actually just our spirit. Spiritual resurrection is all that matters.

They might also have interpreted Paul to mean that the resurrection of the dead was a non-physical immaterial existence, because Paul said the dead are raised imperishable, and that flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven. So if flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven, and yet the dead are raised imperishable, that could mean that the resurrection body is a spiritual body, and not a physical body.

Now only if we have been influenced by Gnosticism do we think there is a division between the physical and the spiritual. Yes, it is true, our resurrection body is a spiritual body, but all that means is that it is filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual

does not necessarily mean immaterial, or non-physical. Our spiritual body will be a physical body, like Jesus' body.

For Paul says, if there is no resurrection of the body after death, then Jesus himself was not raised from the dead. And if Christ is not raised from the dead, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. And if in Christ all we have is hope for this life, if all we have is that we have been baptized, and we have new spirits, and we don't have any hope for the next world in a new glorified resurrected body, then we are of all people most to be pitied.

Thus, Paul's desire is to put on the Heavenly Dwelling (mixing metaphors of both clothing and building to describe the resurrection body). He does not desire to be found naked, that is, to be an immaterial disembodied soul, as the Gnostics were teaching. The reason Paul mentions the idea of being not being found naked and unclothed, therefore is because he was correcting a misconception of some that thought that the resurrection was a non-bodily immaterial existence. He instead was arguing against the notion as even being a possibility. The Spirit groans with him, not that he would be without a body, unclothed and found naked at the moment of death, but that he would be further clothed, and enter into a building after shedding his tent.

Thus, Paul is trying to explain how and why it is that the dead who die in the Lord are blessed (Rev. 14:13) and how it is that

## 2 Cor. 5:2 - Groaning

those who die are said to have come to life (Rev. 20:4). Paul is comforting those who are in any affliction, by teaching them to rely upon God who raises the dead (2 Cor. 1:9), and to know with certainty that He who raised Jesus from the dead, bodily, will also raise us with Jesus and bring us into His presence with Him, bodily.

The groaning that you therefore experience, People of God, is not a desire to be unclothed and be freed from the body. It is not a yearning to become a purely immaterial spiritual being. It is not a desire to be freed from the prison of the body. Nor is it correct to say that when a person dies the real them is in heaven and their body is just a shell or vessel that their soul inhabited.

God created us as a body soul composite. The reason death is so sad and so wrong is because the soul is no longer in the body, as God originally intended. Salvation, therefore, in the ultimate sense is for God to reunite the soul and the body together forever.

That which is mortal, shall be swallowed up by immortality. Death shall be swallowed up by Life. We will put on immortality. The perishable must put on the imperishable. Which means, we will be further clothed, not less clothed. We will be eternally embodied, just as Jesus Christ is.

This is the language that Paul uses elsewhere, in Romans 8, when he says,

*<sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup>And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."*

The Heidelberg Catechism asks:

**57. Q. What comfort does the resurrection of the body offer you?**

A. Not only shall my soul after this life immediately be taken up to Christ, my Head,[1] but also this my flesh, raised by the power of Christ, shall be reunited with my soul and made like Christ's glorious body.[2] [1] *Luke 16:22; 23:43; Phil. 1:21-23.* [2] *Job 19:25, 26; I Cor. 15:20, 42-46, 54; Phil. 3:21; I John 3:2.*

The Spirit within us groans inwardly as we await our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. It is in this hope we are saved - the hope of the resurrection and redemption of our body. Take comfort in that, people of God, and do not allow people with lofty sounding arguments strip you of your faith in the resurrection of the body. For there is no hope of salvation without it. Amen.



## 2 Cor. 5:2 - Groaning