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Going Home

5: 1-8

Going home DIG: What does Paul mean by comparing an earthly body to a tent? What is he saying about the state of our life on this earth? How can you balance longing for heaven with the need to accomplish God's purposes for you here on earth? What are some of the ways you seek to maintain an eternal perspective? How are you walking by faith and not by sight?

REFLECT: What is your attitude toward death? Not that you want to die, but does it feel like you would be going home, or are you, in some way, still clinging to this world? Are you looking forward to a trade-in on your used body for a new, eternal one? How so? What legacy has been passed on to you from your family regarding how their death is approached?

The day of our death will be better than the day of our birth.

As **he** wrote this letter, **Paul** was facing **death** on a daily basis. Hostility swirled around **him**, animosity was constant, and so was the reality and threat of opposition and deadly persecution. Both unbelieving Jews and Gentiles sought to take **his** life, viewing **him** as a danger to their religion (**Acts 13:50** and **18:13**), their economic prosperity (**Acts 19:23-27**), and even to their political stability (**Acts 17:6**). **The apostle's** sense of imminent **death** comes through repeatedly in **Second Corinthians (1:8-10** and **4:7-12)**. How did **he** face the reality that **he**, like a soldier in the front lines, constantly lived on the brink of **death**?

Some might have expected **Paul** to tone down **his** fearless preaching of the Good News, since it was **his** preaching that enraged **his** enemies and thus jeopardized **his** life. But the more hostility and persecution he faced, the bolder **Paul** became. **He** never wavered from proclaiming the truth. Because **he** faced **death** confidently, that triumphant outlook caused **him** to write: **For me, life is the Messiah, and death is gain . . . I am caught in a dilemma: my desire is to go off and be with Messiah for that is far better (Philippians 1:21 and 23).**

Knowing that, believers should not fear **death**. **Death** merely releases **us** from the relatively dilapidated **tent, our earthly body (5:2)**, in which we now live and ushers **us** into a room in the house of **the eternal Father** in the heavenly city. That does not mean that we should be foolishly reckless or careless with our lives because our **bodies** belong to **God (6:19-20)**. We should long for heaven like a prisoner longs for freedom, like a thirsty person longs for a drink, like a sick person longs for health, like a hungry person longs for food, like a poor person longs for a payday, and like a soldier longs for peace. Hope and courage in facing **death** is the last opportunity for **us** to exhibit our **faith** in **ADONAI**, to prove our hope of heaven is genuine and to further develop our confidence in the promises of **God**. From this passage **four motives** for facing **death** confidently emerge.¹²⁷



The next body is the best (5:1): For we know. How do we know? Because we **trust the Word of God**. No believer has to consult a fortune-teller, a Ouija board, a spiritist, or a deck of cards to find out what the future holds or what lies ahead on the other side of death.¹²⁸ This initial **for** points to the explanation this verse will provide for the implications of previous verses (**to see link click Ba - Renewed Day by Day**), which are closely connected. To **know** something, in the sense expressed here, means more than having information, or having a theoretical understanding of some concept. Rather, **Paul knows** about the resurrected **body** because **he** knew **the** resurrected **Messiah**.¹²⁹ **Paul's confident** assertion **for we know** indicates that believer's glorified **bodies** are not a remote possibility or a vague wish because **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** has been given as a down payment, guaranteeing our future.

Paul longed for **his** glorified **body** not primarily because it would be free of physical weakness and defects, but because **it** would be free of **sin**. **The tent of the body is sin's home**, causing **Paul** to lament: **I am bound to the old sin nature, sold to sin as a slave (Romans 7:14); sin is housed inside me (Romans 7:17b and 20b); and What a miserable creature I am! Who will rescue me from this body bound for death (Romans 7:24)? The apostle** longed to serve, worship, and praise **ADONAI** in absolute purity, freed from the restrictions of **his** fallen, **sinful flesh**. That is the best feature of the reality of the resurrection.¹³⁰

Paul was a **tentmaker (Acts 18:1-3)**, and here **he** used a **tent** as a picture of our present **earthly bodies**. For we know that **when the tent which houses us here on earth is torn down**. The **earthly tent** is synonymous with our **body (4:10)**, our **mortal flesh (4:11)**, and our **outer man (4:16)**, as well as the **clay jar (4:17)**. **Tent** life is a ready metaphor for our brief sojourn in this world, and depicts the instability, and thus vulnerability, of our mortal existence. And the verb **torn down** is particularly appropriate for the image of striking a **tent**, or the reference to physical **death**.¹³¹

After **death** dismantles believers' **earthly tent**, **we have a permanent building from God (5:1a)**. The assertion "**we have**" brings up the question, "When do **we have** it and what do **we have**?" Do we receive an interim **tent** at **death** and have to wait for the coming of **Messiah** and **the first resurrection** before we receive our resurrection **bodies**? I think not. It is more likely that **Paul** understands the believer to receive **the resurrection body** immediately at **death**. It would be a small consolation to know that this **heavenly dwelling** is only another partial fulfillment of what is to come and that we must wait in limbo until the Second Coming. Kind of a "heavenly purgatory." Such an interpretation seems to contradict **Paul's** statements in **Philippians 1:23-24**. With the prospect of **death** looming over **him**, **he** confesses that **his** personal preference is for **death** (something **far better**) because **he** will be with **Messiah**. We can surmise that it is also **better** because it will bring an end to **his** earthly conflict (**Philippians 1:29**), **sorrow piled on sorrow (Philippians 2:27)** and affliction (**Philippians 4:12**). But **he** concludes that **his** personal desires will be overruled by **Ha'Shem** because of the necessity of **him** returning to **the Philippians** to strengthen **their faith (Philippians 1:24-26)**. Therefore, "the present tense" **we have** means that there is no homeless interlude between the destruction of our temporary **earthly tent** and receiving our **eternal heavenly Tent**.¹³² **Paul** had only two conditions in view since **4:16**, the temporary and **the eternal**.

A building not made by human hands, to house us in heaven (5:1b). Perhaps the most definitive use of the phrase **not made with human hands** is **Hebrews 9:11**, "When the

Messiah appeared as the High Priest of the good things that are happening already, then, through the greater and more perfect Tent which is not not made by human hands.” The description implies “not made by human effort or ability,” and speaks of something only **God** can do. **Paul** gave a more extensive teaching on the resurrection of **the dead** in **his** previous letter (see the commentary on [First Corinthians Dq - The Resurrection of the Dead](#)).

The next life is perfect (5:2-4): But **in the meantime, in this tent, our earthly body, we groan** longingly **with desire to have around us the home from heaven that will be ours (5:2)**. Those who love **the Lord** yearn for the next life **when this perishable body must be clothed with imperishability and what is mortal puts on immortality (First Corinthians 15:54a)**. **Paul** was weary of the frustrations, disappointments, limitations, weaknesses, and sins of this present life and longed for **the sons of God to be revealed (Romans 8:19)**. When **we** put on this new **eternal body, we will not be found naked**. To be **naked**, then, is to be only a soul without a resurrected **body**. **Yes, while we are in this earthly, temporary body, we groan with the sense of being oppressed**. It is the crushing burden of sin that **we** experience in **our** physical **bodies** that make **us** yearn for **our** spiritual **bodies**. Repeating **his** disdain for soul **nakedness**, **Paul** emphasized again that **it is not so much that we want to take something off, but rather to put something on over it; so that what must die may be swallowed up by the fulness and perfections of eternal life (5:3-4)**.¹³³

The next existence fulfills God’s purpose (5:5): Moreover, what is yet the future was **prepared by God** in the past and unfolds according to **His** plan and will. In eternity past, **ADONAI** sovereignly chose believers for salvation (see the commentary on [Romans Ae - My Position on T.U.L.I.P. or Calvinism](#)); in time, **He** redeemed **us** and in the future **He** will give **us** resurrection **bodies**. The phrase **for this very purpose (5:5a)** emphatically states that **we** obtain **our** glorified **bodies** in fulfillment of **God’s** sovereign plan from all eternity past. **Paul** wrote similar words to the believers in Rome (see [Romans Cl - Our Bodies and Redemption](#)).

But how can we be sure that we shall one day have new **bodies** like the glorified **body** of our **Lord**? We can be sure because **the Ruach** lives inside of **us**. Further reinforcing **the apostle’s** confidence in facing **death** was the knowledge that **YHVH** has **given us His Spirit as a pledge (5:5b)**. **Paul** mentioned **the sealing of the Spirit** earlier in **his** letter (see [An - God’s Seal of Approval](#)). Thus, **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh** dwelling the believer’s **body** is the “down payment” that **guarantees the future** inheritance, including a glorified **body (Ephesians 1:13-14)**. In modern Greek, the word translated **guarantees** means

“engagement ring.” The True Universal Church, made up of **Jews** and **Gentiles (Ephesians 2:14)**, is engaged to **Yeshua Messiah** and is waiting for **the Bridegroom** to come and take her to **the wedding** (see the commentary on **Revelation Fg - Blessed Are Those Invited to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb**).¹³⁴

The next dwelling is with the Lord (5:6-8): Therefore, we are always confident when facing death, we know that so long as we are at home in the body, we are away from our home with the Lord (5:6), The people of God can be found in one of two places: either in heaven or on earth (Ephesians 3:15). None of them is in the grave, in hell, or in any “intermediate purgatory” between earth and heaven. Believers on earth are at home in the body, while believers who have died are absent from the body. Believers on earth are absent from the Lord, while believers in heaven are present with the Lord.

Just as the nine months you spent in your mother’s womb were not an end in themselves but a preparation for life, so this life is preparation for the next. If you have a relationship with YHVH through Yeshua, you don’t need to fear death. It is the door to eternity. It will be the last hour of your time here on earth, but it won’t be the last of you. Rather than being the end of your life, it will be the birthday into eternal life. In that sense, the day of our death will be better than the day of our birth, because the first time we were born into sin. But when we die, we will awaken into the glorious presence of Messiah.¹³⁵ The Bible says: **This world is not our home; we are looking forward to our eternal home in heaven (Hebrews 13:14).**

Dear Heavenly Father, Praise you that our Hope of heaven is a for-sure hope. Heaven is certain for those who love and worship Yeshua as Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9-10). That is such a comfort. We know that we are going home to be with You. In this world of uncertainty, Your love is joyously certain. It is a solid hope, a rock of refuge. The truth of heaven is so strong that nothing that happens in this world can touch Your Almighty power to take Your children to their heavenly home to live with You forever! Messiah’s words are always true, for He is Truth (John 14:6). He said that He was preparing a home for those who love Him! I am going to prepare a place for you . . . I will come again and take you to Myself, so that where I am you may also be (John 14:2c, 3b-c). Thank You for your great love. We love You and rejoice in serving You, even when it is hard, for our eyes are on You and our eternal home with You! In Yeshua’s holy name and power of His resurrection. Amen

The parenthetical statement: **For we live by trust, not by what we see**, explains how believers can have fellowship with and serve an invisible God in this life. Such trust is not a

wishful fantasy or a vague superstition, but a strong **confidence**, grounded in the truth of Scripture (5:7). **Trusting is being confident of what we hope for, convinced about things we do not see (Hebrews 11:1).**

Paul concludes the passage with the triumphant declaration : **We are confident, then, and would much prefer to leave our home in the body and come to our home with the Lord (5:8).** He was always positive toward the future despite the constantly looming reality of **death**. To **prefer to leave our home in the body and come to our home with the Lord** is to understand the brief, temporary time we spend on earth only as alien's and stranger's experience, while heaven is our true and permanent **home**.

The reality of **death** faces every believer who **dies** before **the Lord** raptures **His** Church (see the commentary on **Revelation [By](#) - The Rapture of the Church**). Those who look forward to receiving their **glorified bodies**, to the perfections of **heaven**, to the fulfillment of **God's** purpose for them, and to living forever in **His** presence, will be able to say triumphantly with **Paul**, "**Death, where is your victory? Death where is your sting**" (**First Corinthians 15:55**)?¹³⁶