Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord
Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5
Code: BQ011411

“Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:6–7)

In verses 6–8 Paul reached the pinnacle of heavenly anticipation. He looked forward to his new, glorified body, the perfection of heaven, and the eternal fulfillment of God’s plan. But beyond all of that was the wonderful reality that death would usher him into the presence of the Lord. **Therefore** points back to the foundational truths Paul expressed in verses 1–5. On the basis of those truths, Paul was **always of good courage** in the face of death. His **courage** was not a temporary feeling or a passing emotion; it was a constant state of mind. He faced death cheerfully, with complete confidence. It was not that he did not love the people in his life, but he loved the Lord more. Life for Paul was a race to finish, a battle to win, a stewardship to discharge. Once the race was over, the battle won, and the stewardship discharged, Paul saw no reason to cling to this life. The only reason for him to remain on earth was to serve God, and he stated his readiness to leave when that service was complete:

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Tim. 4:6–8)

The reality of life in this world for believers, however, is **that while we are at home in the body** (living in the flesh) **we are absent from the Lord.** Believers communicate with the Lord through prayer and study of the Word and have communion with Him through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Yet there is still a sense in which they are separated from God and long for that separation to end. Psalm 42:1–2 expresses that desire: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?” “Whom have I in heaven but You?” the psalmist asked rhetorically. “And besides You, I desire nothing on earth” (Ps. 73:25). Paul longed for the day when he would “always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17). That sense of separation caused Abraham to look for “the city … whose architect and builder is God” (Heb. 11:10) and the Old Testament saints to acknowledge “that they were strangers and exiles on the earth” (Heb. 11:13). It is only in heaven that believers will have intimate, unbroken fellowship with God (?cf.? Rev. 21:3–4, 22–23; 22:3–4).

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