

## 2 Corinthians 5:1-11

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*Please explain 2 Corinthians 5:1-11.*

In these verses Paul is discussing God's people's glorious future. He acknowledges that although we suffer and are afflicted in this world, we have a great hope. He uses several word pictures to discuss that hope.

1. *A Tent*: In verse 1 the image of a tent (NKJV) represents our brief earthly human existence. The "house" from God represents how we will live in eternity. Living now in bodies that are subject to sickness and death--the tent--we groan and look forward to being able to live in our heavenly dwellings.

The image now changes from a dwelling to clothing.

2. *Clothing/Naked*: Paul proceeds to describe our earthly existence as clothing. He mentions two possibilities: To be clothed or to be unclothed, that is to say to go through the experience of being naked before being clothed. "To be clothed with" means that our present mortal existence will be "swallowed up by life" (verse 4, NKJV). Christians will be transformed at Jesus' return, not when they die (1 Cor. 15:52).

Nakedness is a figure of speech that refers to death. Those who die are naked in the biblical sense of being dispossessed of everything, even of their existence (cf. Job 1:21). In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul used the term "naked" in the context of the resurrection: "What you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere [naked] grain--perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body" (verses 36-38, NKJV). The naked grain is the one that, like the tent, will dissolve. To be naked is to be dead.

3. *At Home in the Body*: Now Paul uses the image of a home. To be at home in the body represents our lives in this world, our natural condition. But according to Paul being in that natural condition means that we are "away from the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:6, NIV). There is a separation between the Lord and the believer in the sense that they exist in different spheres of being--the earthly versus the heavenly. But the distance is not absolute. While we live on earth we walk with the Lord "by faith, not by sight" (verse 7). "To be at home with the Lord" (verse 8, NIV) means to enjoy full personal fellowship with Him in His immediate presence, in heaven. This will take place at the resurrection (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

4. *Away From the Body/Not at Home in the Body*: Now Paul expresses his desire to be away from the body (his earthly home), in order "to be at home with the Lord." He is not wishing to die in order to be with the Lord. He already rejected the idea of dying. He is repeating what he said in 2 Corinthians 5:2: He would like to move from one mode of existence to the other without experiencing death. He even explains that we will be judged on the basis of our earthly existence ("the things done in the body," verse 10, NKJV).

Paul ends this passage by saying: "Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him [the Lord]" (verse 9, NKJV). The Christian's joy in this world and in the world to come, in this life and in the future, should always be to please the Lord. The idea of a bodiless soul or spirit is not found here, but is read into it by those who believe that Christians go to heaven when they die.

The following outline shows the three stages between life now and life when Jesus returns:

**Present Earthly Life**

1. A tent
2. Clothed
3. Walking by Faith
4. At home in the body
5. Away from the Lord
6. Pleasing God

**Intermediate State--  
Death**

1. Tent dissolved
2. Naked

**Eternal Future Life**

1. Eternal house
2. Clothed
3. Living by sight
4. At Home With the Lord
5. Away from the body  
(our earthly existence)
6. Pleasing God

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