

Paul was one of the most brave, most resilient persons in world history. It is helpful for us to learn from Paul how to stay encouraged and be resilient Christians. We can be in awe of the apostle, and if we could ask him how he did it, he would give us these verses. There is gold here. How was Paul so cheerfully optimistic, given all that he was facing? Answer: Since Paul had the Spirit of God, Paul remained cheerfully optimistic, and Paul's one goal in his life was to please God. In other words, Paul was ready to serve the Lord, and Paul was also ready to die for the Lord, whichever the Lord had for him.

That brings us to our main point: **Since we have the Spirit, we are of good courage, and we aim to please God!**

Previously, Paul wrote about two metaphors 1) our souls having bodies as tents, and 2) our souls having clothing. Now, Paul introduced a third metaphor about our souls having homes. Three metaphors: tents, clothing, homes.

We are at home in the body, and we would rather be at home with the Lord in heaven. So, Paul can write whether we are at home or away from home.

These are all words Paul uses to talk about death and the afterlife.

Building on what Paul wrote in verse 5, that God has given us the Spirit as a guarantee of more to come, Paul drew attention to the important benefit – that we have a permanent source of encouragement! We have a confidence in our future salvation that cannot be diminished, no matter what happens.

What is the gain of having the Spirit? The spirit is the guarantee of our future salvation. We always have good courage!

1. We are of good cheer because we live by faith, not by sight. (v.6-7)

Verse 6, the word “therefore” points back to verses 1-5, and verse 5 in particular. Did you notice the inherent contradiction? In verse 5, God “*has given us the Spirit,*” yet in verse 6, “*we are away from the Lord.*” Paul removed the inherent contradiction with this explanation in verse 7, “*for we walk by faith, not by sight.*” Paul tells Christians to look at life with faith, rather than looking at life with physical observation. Trusting in God is all-important, rather than the way things appear when we look around with our physical eyes. In these ten verses, Paul is contrasting the physical with the spiritual. Earthly tent vs. heavenly dwelling. Unclothed vs. clothed. Mortality vs. life that swallows. Away from the Lord vs. with the Lord. in the body vs. away from the body. Sight vs. faith. Bad deeds done while in the body vs. good deeds done while in the body.

So, the physical appearance of things stands in stark contrast with the daily walking by faith and completely trusting in Jesus Christ.

The external picture we observe is passive and passing, while the internal quality of trusting is active and lasting. So, we focus our attention on the one, and

not the other. We focus our attention not on visible things which are temporary, but rather on invisible things that are timeless.

The apostle Peter had the same outlook. 1 Peter 1:8-9, *“Though you have not seen [Jesus], you love [Jesus]. Though you do not now see [Jesus], you believe in [Jesus] and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”*

In other words, we live by faith, not by sight.

“now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” 1 Cor. 13:12.

We are living by faith. We are journeying by an expectation of how our existence will be completed, and in what way our troubles will be resolved.

The writer to Hebrews put it this way in Hebrews 11:1, *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

We know that something great and grand is coming. We know that the difficulties here will reach a beautiful conclusion.

2. Our attitude is good in this life, even though we prefer to be at home with the Lord. (v.8)

One basic truth about reality is that we can only be in one place at a time, geographically. Our bodies are either in New York or Milwaukee, not both places. This gives rise to the classic question that detectives ask, “where were you on the night of...” If you can prove that you were somewhere else than the scene of the crime, then you could not have committed that murder. The basic truth is that we can only be in once place at a time geographically.

In the same way, our souls can only be in once place at a time – we are either *“...at home in the body”* (v.6) or we are *“...at home with the Lord”* (v.8). Our souls are either at home in the body here on earth, or after we have left earth, and after we have left our earthly body as the home for our souls, then our souls are at home with The Lord in heaven, and we get our heavenly dwellings.

Which place do we Christians prefer?

Verse 8b, Paul answered by writing, *“...we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”* Why? Because of our love for the Lord. We would prefer and would love to be near Jesus, and to be with the Lord in heaven. It is relational. We want to see Jesus in person! We want to see the glorious face of Christ, which we talked about when we studied chapter 4, verse 6, that God *“...has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*

Even though we have the Spirit of Christ dwelling within us now, we would prefer to see the face of Christ Jesus in person. God gave us the guarantee or downpayment of the Spirit, and that is the guarantee that we will get to see Jesus.

When this world is done, and we are all in heaven, we will see Jesus, and we will be with the Lord. We do not now have that.

But we know it is coming, so we maintain a good attitude while we journey through this world. We cannot have in the current time and in this world, the access to God that we will have in the future. We are confident that it is coming. Verse 6, *“We are always of good courage.”* Verse 8, *“yes, we are of good courage...”* verse 1, *“We know that if our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens...”*

What is it that enables Christians to remain encouraged in pain and difficulty? The thing that enables Christians to remain encouraged is certainty about the future.

Example – when the recipients of this letter looked at Paul’s life, they were not impressed or encouraged. Paul’s life did not have much to show for all of Paul’s effort. Paul looked weak. Paul was weak. Paul had no power, no money, no possessions. Add to that the fact that Paul was suffering, in pain, almost died, and Paul the apostle had the appearance of a grand failure. When they looked at Paul and Paul’s ministry by sight, they saw it as a failure. However, when they looked at Paul and Paul’s ministry by faith, they saw God’s power. They saw God upholding a weak man, and they saw a weak man trusting in a strong God. They saw a man walking by faith. They saw a man who, no matter what happened to him, was always of good courage. They saw a man who preferred to leave this world and go to heaven, but a man whom God had assigned to remain in this world a bit longer, in order to benefit them – the church in Corinth. They saw a man called to suffer, called to write this letter, and a man determined to do what God assigned him to do. They saw a weak man filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. They saw a man in whom what is mortal was being swallowed up by everlasting life. They saw a man who was being chiseled by God, and fitted for heaven.

3. We remain encouraged because we live in order to please the Lord. (v.9-10)

Verses 9-10, *“So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”*

Since salvation is by grace, then how does any Christian receive what is due him? Isn’t that dropping out of grace-based religion, and going right back to works-based religion?

The answer is that Paul thought of this life as a time for truth and genuineness to be revealed. SI - the medicine has been applied to the disease, and now the bacteria will be placed under the microscope. Who is winning the disease or the medicine? When it is placed under the microscope, the truth is revealed.

That is how Paul views this life. During this life is when we are under the microscope. During this life is when truth is revealed.

In the future, as we all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, the truth will be revealed about whether or not we have saving faith. The truth will be revealed about whether or not we had the Holy Spirit. The genuineness of our living by trusting in God will be exposed. Of course we do not earn our salvation by our deeds. Of course, we do not maintain our own salvation by our own works. Yet, every person will be evaluated based on our faith, our living by faith. Those who have true faith are living by that true faith. Our lives will line up with what we truly believe. Now is when we are being tested! Now is when we are under the microscope. Now is when we see who is winning, the disease or the medicine – our sin or the grace of God, our discouragements or the faith that has been given to us?

We are saved by faith alone, but that faith is never found alone, it is always found along with actions that faith-filled people do. Those who have actually placed their faith in Christ will live in a certain way. What is that way? It is living in the certain way of fixating on pleasing God. Because God is already pleased with us in Christ, we want to please God in Christ.

Philippians 2:12-13, *“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”*

It is God who makes us want to please God.

It is God who enables us to work for His good pleasure.

It is God, by His Spirit within us, who encourages us as we live by faith.

For the whole time that we are in this world, we make it our goal to please the Lord.

We genuinely want to honor or please God because He saved us, because we are His children, and because we will live forever with the Lord. Just as a young student seeks to please a kind and encouraging teacher or a young player seeks to please a kind and encouraging sports coach, so we seek to please the Lord in everything that we do in our time on this earth. Because we hope to be with the Lord, it does not lead us to spend our lives in this world being dreamy or lazy or distracted. Rather, we have purpose. We have a goal. We deeply desire to please the Lord, and that keeps us encouraged.

Conclusion.

Paul was ready to serve the Lord, and also ready to die for the Lord.

That is the same for each Christian.

We are ready to serve the Lord, and also ready to die for the Lord.

Which will it be?

Whatever the Lord determines! Whatever God has for us!

Whatever pleases God! We are not to end our own lives, and so we press on with what God has for us, day by day!

Every right thinking Christian prefers to go home to live with the Lord in heaven, and every right-thinking Christian is eager to serve the Lord while we are on assignment in this world.

Romans 8:23-25, *“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. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”*