

Absent from the Body

Commentary for September 19, 2013 — Does It Equal “Present with the Lord”?

QUESTION: Could you comment briefly on 2 Corinthians 5:8? Thank you.

ANSWER: Look at the fuller context than just the one verse. Let us start at verse 5:

“Now he that has wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body [i.e., dead], and to be present with the Lord.”

• **2 Corinthians 5:5–8**

Being **“present with the Lord”** will not occur until the resurrection.¹ This Corinthian passage DOES NOT SAY, “to be absent from the body **IS** to be present with the Lord.” Nor does it say we will have a spiritual body when we are absent from the body, meaning the physical body. In other words, no equivalence is being expressed regarding being absent from the body and being present with the Lord. Verse 8 says, **“we are confident ... and willing ... to be absent from the body, AND to be present with the Lord.”** In other words it says, “to be absent from the body **AND ALSO** to be present with the Lord.” This is not saying “sudden death, sudden glory.” No spiritual body is mentioned anywhere in this passage.

The word “absent” in verses 6 and 8 is the same Greek word rendered **“at home”** in verse 6, and the Greek should be rendered consistently as **“at home.”** If it is the same in Greek, why not in English? The Concordant Literal Version renders 2 Corinthians 5:4–10 consistently:

“For we also, who are in the tabernacle [of the body, see verses 1–3], are groaning, being burdened, on which we are not wanting to be stripped, but to be dressed, that the mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Now He Who produces us for this same longing is God, Who is also giving us the earnest [the surety, the promise] of the spirit. Being, then, courageous always, and aware that, being at home in the body, we are away from home from the Lord (for by faith are we walking, not by perception), yet we are encouraged, and are delighting [we desire] rather to be away from home out of the body and to be at home WITH THE LORD. Wherefore we are ambitious also, whether at home or away from home, to be well pleasing to Him.

For all of us must be manifested in front of the dais of Christ, that each should be requited for that which he puts into practice through the body, whether good or bad.”

• **2 Corinthians 5:4–10, Concordant Literal Version**

Note the timeframe in verse 10; it is the time of judgment **“in front of the dais.”** The *dais* is the judgment seat of Christ. God the Father judged Christ after His resurrection. We will have

¹ There is no consciousness in death. You cease to exist. The apostle Paul likens it to sleep. See below.

our judgment, as He did, after our resurrection to immortality with our NEW spiritual body.

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so [we believe] them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep.

For [because] the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first [they are dead; they are not alive]: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be WITH THE LORD.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

• 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18, KJV

“**With the Lord**” at the end of the passage is the same phrase used in 2 Corinthians 5:8 above, and it is used on the same sense. These are the only two times this phrase is used with regard to the resurrection. Of course, that “**Lord**” is Christ. We will not be “**with the Lord**” before that time of resurrection. The dead believers do not come from heaven with Christ. They are raised from the dead by God through Christ at His coming.

“Knowing that he [God the Father] which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.”

• 2 Corinthians 4:14

This verse clarifies the expression of 1 Thessalonians 4:14: “**them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.**” This is awkwardly expressed in the King James Version.

Sleep is used by Paul as a figure of speech for death. It denotes an unconscious state of being. Paul uses this beautiful figure of speech to comfort the Thessalonian believers who have lost loved ones in persecution.

“Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we [who are alive] **shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”**

• 1 Corinthians 15:51–52

So Paul was precise in 2 Corinthians 5:8: when death comes, the next conscious moment after death will be the resurrection and being “**with the Lord.**”

Reread Dr. Martin’s chapter 16, “[Resurrections from the Dead](#)” in *Essentials of New Testament Doctrine* for further understanding.

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