



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
SERIES: THE BIG FINISH
TITLE: THE FINAL FINAL
SCRIPTURE: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-10
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INTRODUCTION

- Is there a movie character that embodies courage? What about them makes them seem so courageous?

When we think of certain biblical characters, several courageous examples come to mind. Joshua fulfilled what the Lord commanded him to be as he led the Israelites to conquer the Promised Land. God gave him the specific charge to be strong and courageous (Josh. 1:5-9). King David also comes to mind. When everyone else seemed afraid, he stepped up to face Goliath (1 Samuel 17).

It's easy to think of their courage in terms of the battles they fought. Joshua fought against armies larger than his own. David fought against a giant who was twice his size, perhaps even twice his age.

Yet what strikes me as we begin this lesson is *why* they were so courageous. Looking back at those two specific stories, we see that their courage didn't lie

in their personal strength or knowledge of warfare. In fact, their battle plans often didn't make much sense. In both cases, they were courageous because they were committed to following God. Joshua was committed to obeying the Lord, not veering to the right or the left from God's specific commands. In a way, he was more courageous in obeying the Lord than in facing his enemies. David's courage grew as he heard Goliath mock God and His armies. He was more courageous to defend the Lord than he was concerned with slaying a giant.

As we look at our text today, we see another biblical example of courage. In this case, Paul was courageous to share the gospel with the Corinthians amid great suffering. And what was his reason for being courageous? It wasn't because of personal strength or strategic planning, but because of his willingness to live by faith and not by sight, in light of the future resurrection. Paul believed that no matter what hardships he faced—whether in life or in death—the Lord would sustain him or reward him at the resurrection. Nothing that could happen to him in this life would outweigh the glorious reward of heaven. Thus, he was courageous to live for the spread of Jesus' name.

Text

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

- [1] For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.
- [2] For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling,
- [3] if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked.
- [4] For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.
- [5] He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.
- [6] So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord,
- [7] for we walk by faith, not by sight.
- [8] Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.
- [9] So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.
- [10] 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.

Explanation

Context

As we come to these verses, it's helpful to consider the context of the previous chapters. In many ways, Paul is defending his ministry to the Corinthians. It may seem strange that he needed to do so, but apparently several issues needed resolution. First, since he has experienced a number of hardships and trials, some in Corinth questioned Paul's legitimacy. They may have wondered, "Why would God allow His servant to suffer so much?" Second, Paul had some travel plans that got rearranged, which also caused speculation as to why he hadn't come sooner to the Corinthians. In a way, the Corinthians felt slighted. And lastly, there were proponents of the law who had tried to persuade the Corinthians against Paul, advocating a return to the law. It seems as well that these proponents of the law were likely seeking financial gain from the Corinthians.

In response, Paul defends himself as a faithful minister of the gospel. He gives explanation for his delayed visit (2 Cor. 1:8–24). He also commends himself as someone who has ministered without deceit or manipulation (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:1–2). Paul even sees his endurance in the midst of suffering as something that strengthens his message, not weakens it—for it reveals that the surpassing power belongs to God, not to us (2 Cor. 4:7–18).

Therefore, Paul doesn't lose heart in his efforts to minister to the Corinthians. Even though his outer self is wasting away, his inner self is being renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). His hardships don't bring him to despair; they embolden him. Even the threat of death won't silence him. In 2 Corinthians 5:1–10, he explains why he is courageous to share the gospel under the threat of death.

Tents to Buildings; Clothed to Further Clothed

In short, Paul understands that his current body will one day be replaced with a resurrected body. He writes: "For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Paul compares his earthly body to a tent, which is a temporary structure and typically fragile. His heavenly body, in contrast, is a building—durable, strong, and eternal. The difference is striking: the earthly body is weak and temporary; the heavenly body is strong and enduring. No man constructs it; God prepares it for believers, perfectly suited for dwelling in heaven forever.

Paul acknowledges what many of us have already felt: our bodies are failing, and life is full of hardship. We groan. But Paul's groaning isn't complaining or bitterness. Nor is it merely about physical pain. Rather, Paul's groaning is a positive *longing* for heaven. Romans 8:22 puts it similarly: "All creation groans for redemption." Paul longs for salvation to be fully realized.

He then uses a second analogy—moving from buildings to clothing. He refers to "putting on" this building so that we might not be found naked. He clarifies that he doesn't wish to be "unclothed" (disembodied) but rather "further clothed"—meaning, to be clothed with an eternal, glorified body. Paul is emphasizing at the resurrection of the dead, we will not exist as disembodied spirits. Rather, we will receive new, eternal bodies.

While Paul doesn't go into detail here, we've seen more elsewhere. In Lesson 2, we discussed how Paul taught the Thessalonians that the dead in Christ will rise at Jesus' second coming (1 Thess. 4:16–17). He mentioned this also in 1 Corinthians 15:52 (from last week), referencing the resurrection of the dead. While some debate exists around the *timing* of receiving resurrected bodies, most scholars agree that believers will receive their final, glorified bodies at Christ's return. This suggests that those who have already died are still awaiting their permanent resurrected bodies.¹

Through Jesus, it is all possible. And we can be certain that we will receive a new heavenly body. As a down payment or good deposit, God has given us His Spirit as a guarantee.

Good Courage

Paul now turns to his personal conviction: He concludes, "We are always of good courage."

¹ At the same time, those currently in heaven are sometimes depicted as having some sort of bodied existence. The disciples saw Jesus' resurrected body, and He ascended into heaven in it. Moses and Elijah appeared bodily on the Mount of Transfiguration. So, some suggest that perhaps believers in heaven now are given temporary heavenly bodies until the final resurrection. Regardless, we can be sure of the coming reality of new bodies. For more explanation, see Randy Alcorn address the topic at his website Eternal Perspective Ministries (<https://www.epm.org/resources/2025/Apr/14/present-heaven-physical/>).

He knows that as long as he lives in this earthly body, he is in some sense away from the Lord. Not that God isn't with him—of course He is, through the Holy Spirit—but Paul knows that the fullness of God's presence will only be experienced in heaven. And he longs for it, knowing that it is far better.

Paul hasn't physically visited heaven (though references knowing someone who was caught up to the third heaven). It's not as if he went on a preview tour to see the food, lodging, or amenities. And yet he believes in heaven with complete confidence. He believes it *by faith*, not by sight. Undoubtedly, the Spirit in him serves as a guarantee that he fully embraces. That's what makes Paul's courage so incredible—it's not based on a past experience, but on a promise. And that promise is enough.

Paul's belief in the heavenly reality gives him courage in this life. Even if he dies while preaching the gospel, the outcome is heaven—and heaven is far better than anything this world can offer. So he concludes that, whether he lives or dies, his aim is to *always please the Lord*.

Paradoxically, courage for Paul doesn't mean that he is entirely fearless. Courage can be acting boldly despite being fearful. Courage can also be the result of fearing the Lord more than you fear the world. Paul reminds the Corinthians that everyone will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Each person will be rewarded for what they did in their earthly body, whether good or evil. Those who did good will receive a reward. Those who do evil will likely reflect that they did not know the Lord to begin with. Importantly, Paul is *not* teaching that salvation comes through works. Rather, he is affirming a consistent New Testament theme: that believers will be rewarded for their faithful service to Christ (Mt. 5:12; 6:4; 6:19–20; 16:27; 25:21; Lk. 12:33–34; Col. 3:23).

Discussion Questions

- From the text, what comparisons are made between our earthly body and our heavenly body?
- What stands out to you about Paul's perspective in these verses?
- Do you think of yourself as a courageous person? Why or why not?
- Explore in your group the relationship between courage and fear? Do you think they can co-exist in any way? Why or why not?
- Are there certain situations in life that you think you are courageous in and then maybe other situations where you are not?
- Does the idea of dying frighten you? If so, in what way?
- How do you think the Holy Spirit helps us to be courageous?

ALWAYS OF GOOD COURAGE

To close our lesson, I am struck by Paul's description of his courage. He said he was "always of good courage."

The word "*always*" reminds us that no matter the situation, we can choose to be courageous. No hindrance, fear, or hardship is too great for us to walk through with courage. Courage is always an option—and a choice worth making.

The phrase "*good courage*" also stands out. It suggests that courage may come in different degrees or qualities. Just as faith can be as small as a mustard seed—and the disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith—so too can we seek to grow in courage. In fact, we can aim to have *good* courage, *always*.

Most of the time, when we show courage, others notice. Our courage can inspire and encourage others to be courageous as well. In this way, courage is clearly recognized as good. It is an admirable quality and a powerful example. Often, when we are faced with the choice to be courageous, it may feel like we're standing alone. But others are watching. And more often than not, people are willing to join us in courageous action—if we are willing to take the first step.