



Philippians 1:22–30

Lesson 5 — The Blessed Hope

According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, *so* now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by **life, or by death**. For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a **strait betwixt two**, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: (Philippians 1:20–23)

The strait in which Paul is placed the candid reader will see is **betwixt living and dying**. If left to make a choice there, he knew not which he would choose; he wished to lie passive in the hands of Christ, and let the event come, *life* or *death*, that would tend most to *further* the gospel. But he had a desire for what? To live? No. To die? No: but “to DEPART and be with Christ.” Well, say you, that was death. No, it was something far better than living in the flesh, in a mortal body, or dying. If he continued in the flesh, “bonds and afflictions” were his portion. If he died, (“the dead know not anything.”) he would not be in a condition to receive a reward, but would only rest in hope; but there was something he did desire, that was worth obtaining, “to *depart* and be with Christ,” not by death but bodily. (J. N.

Loughborough, *An Examination of the Scripture Testimony Concerning Man's Present Condition and His Future Reward or Punishment*, p. 91.1; 1855)

If you claim that the strait in which Paul is placed, is betwixt living here in the flesh and departing [i.e. dying] and being with Christ, then you make him contradict himself; for he says of those two betwixt which he is in a strait, “which I shall choose, I wot not,” but he did “desire to *depart* and be with Christ. . . . Here is his strait, whether to live here and preach the gospel, or to die a martyr and *thus* further the gospel. Which he should choose he did not know, but he had a desire for something better than either, *to depart and be with Christ*. By death? No: he desired something better— TRANSLATION, and a change to immortality. He had the history, though brief, of good old *Enoch*, who “walked with God 300 years and was not, for God took him.” And of *Elijah* who “was carried up by a whirlwind into heaven.” He desired to be a partaker of this blessing and their joys, “to *depart* and be with Christ.” Paul did not desire to *die*, or to be *unclothed*, [2 Corinthians 5:4,] but he desired to become immortal. We may learn definitely in regard Paul’s desire, by reading 2 Corinthians 5:1–10. (Ibid., p. 91.2)

⤵ 1 Corinthians 15:51—sleep

⤵ 1 Thessalonians 4:13—sleep

Nowhere in the Bible can we find any hint of any other means by which people can be with Christ. Either they must be alive when the Lord comes, so that they may be taken up bodily into Heaven, as was Elijah, or, if they have died, they must be raised from the dead, and then be caught up with those who never died. Now since Paul said (Philippians 1:22) that he did not know which he should choose, life or death, and yet he said that it was far better to depart and to be with Christ; and since he knew that there was no way that men could be with Christ except by the resurrection of the dead and the translation of the living, both of which take place only at the coming of Christ, there is only one conclusion open to us, and that is, that Paul longed intensely for the coming of the Lord, and for translation. (E. J. Waggoner, *The Signs of the Times*, February 25, 1889, page 120.4)

Elijah was a type of the saints who will be living on the earth at the time of the second advent of Christ and who will be “changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump,” without tasting of death. 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52. It was as a representative of those who shall be thus **translated** that Elijah, near the close of Christ’s earthly ministry, was permitted to stand with Moses by the side of the Saviour on the mount of transfiguration. In these glorified ones, the disciples saw in miniature a representation of the kingdom of the redeemed. (*PK 227.2*)

They beheld Jesus clothed with the light of heaven; they heard the “voice out of the cloud” (Luke 9:35), acknowledging Him as the Son of God; they saw Moses, representing those who will be raised from the dead at the time of the second advent; and there also stood Elijah, representing those who at the close of earth’s history will be changed from mortal to immortal and be **translated** to heaven without seeing death. (*PK 227.2*)

In the desert, in loneliness and discouragement, Elijah had said that he had had enough of life and had prayed that he might die. But the Lord in His mercy had not taken him at his word.

There was yet a great work for Elijah to do; and when his work was done, he was not to perish in discouragement and solitude. Not for him the descent into the tomb, but the ascent with God's angels to the presence of His glory. (*PK 228.1*)

By faith Enoch “was translated that he should not see death; ... for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” Hebrews 11:5. In the midst of a world by its iniquity doomed to destruction, Enoch lived a life of such close communion with God that he was not permitted to fall under the power of death. The godly **character** of this prophet represents the state of holiness which must be attained by those who shall be “redeemed from the earth” (Revelation 14:3) at the time of Christ’s second advent. Then, as in the world before the Flood, iniquity will prevail. Following the promptings of their corrupt hearts and the teachings of a deceptive philosophy, men will rebel against the authority of Heaven. (*PP* 88.3)

But like Enoch, God's people will seek for purity of heart and conformity to His will, until they shall reflect the likeness of Christ. Like Enoch, they will warn the world of the Lord's second coming and of the judgments to be visited upon transgression, and by their holy conversation and example they will condemn the sins of the ungodly. As Enoch was translated to heaven before the destruction of the world by water, so the living righteous will be translated from the earth before its destruction by fire. Says the apostle: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.

(Ibid.)

Why were they so specially singled out?
Because they had to stand with a wonderful truth right before the whole world and receive their opposition; and while receiving this opposition they were to remember that they were sons and daughters of God, that they must have Christ formed within them the hope of glory. They were ever keeping in view the great and blessed hope that is before them. What is it? It is an eternal weight of glory. Nothing could surpass it. (5LtMs, *Ms 13*, 1888, par. 41)

Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand. (*The Review and Herald*, March 9, 1905)

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the **firstfruits** unto God and to the Lamb.
(Revelation 14:4)

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. (1 Corinthians 15:23)

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." 1 Corinthians 15:17, 19.

God says, “My son, give me thy heart, thy time, thy talents.” [See Proverbs 23:26.] He wants no unbelief, no stinginess. He wants you to give Him the **firstfruits of the life**—love, faith, strength. Reveal that faith which works by love and purifies the soul. Cease to live for self. Live wholly for God. Give Him the best hours of the day and the best energies of the being. If, laying down every selfish aim and interest, God’s people would give Him the best of all they have, if they would seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, they would rise higher and higher in Christian nobility and liberality.

(16LtMs, *Ms 173, 1901*, par. 16)

“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God;” “the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” “The dead in Christ shall rise first: 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 Corinthians 15:51, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–18.

(Ibid.)

Nowhere in the Sacred Scriptures is found the statement that the righteous go to their reward or the wicked to their punishment at death. The patriarchs and prophets have left no such assurance. Christ and His apostles have given no hint of it. The Bible clearly teaches that the dead do not go immediately to heaven. They are represented as sleeping until the resurrection. 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Job 14:10–12. In the very day when the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl broken (Ecclesiastes 12:6), man's thoughts perish. They that go down to the grave are in silence. They know no more of anything that is done under the sun. Job 14:21. (*GC* 549.3)

Blessed rest for the weary righteous! Time, be it long or short, is but a moment to them. They sleep; they are awakened by the trump of God to a glorious immortality. “For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible.... So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” 1 Corinthians 15:52–54. (*GC 549.3*)

As they are called forth from their deep slumber they begin to think just where they ceased. The last sensation was the pang of death; the last thought, that they were falling beneath the power of the grave. When they arise from the tomb, their first glad thought will be echoed in the triumphal shout: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” Verse 55. (*GC* 549.3)

Christ is coming with clouds and with great glory. A multitude of shining angels will attend Him. He will come to raise the dead, and to change the living saints from glory to glory. He will come to honor those who have loved Him, and kept His commandments, and to take them to Himself. He has not forgotten them nor His promise. There will be a relinking of the family chain. When we look upon our dead, we may think of the morning when the trump of God shall sound, when

“the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” 1 Corinthians 15:52. A little longer, and we shall see the King in His beauty. A little longer, and He will wipe all tears from our eyes. A little longer, and He will present us “faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.” Jude 1:24. Wherefore, when He gave the signs of His coming He said, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”

(DA 632.3)

So you may put your imagination to the stretch, you may try to the very best of your abilities to take in and consider the eternal weight of glory, and yet your finite senses, faint and weary with the effort, cannot grasp it, for there is an infinity beyond. It takes **all of eternity** to unfold the glories and bring out the precious treasures of the Word of God. (5LtMs, *Ms 13*, 1888, par. 42)

The Blessed Hope

But if I live in the
flesh, this *is* the fruit of
my labour: yet what I
shall choose I wot not.

For I am in a strait
betwixt two, having a
desire to depart, and to
be with Christ; which
is far better:

(Philippians 1:22–23)

For we know that if our earthly
house of *this* tabernacle were
dissolved, we have a building of
God, an house not made with
hands, eternal in the heavens. For
in this we groan, earnestly desiring
to be clothed upon with our house
which is from heaven: If so be that
being clothed we shall not be
found naked. For we that are in
this tabernacle do groan, being
burdened: not for that we would
be unclothed, but clothed upon,
that mortality might be swallowed
up of life. (2 Corinthians 5:1–4)

From a superficial reading of vs. 6–8 some have concluded that at death the soul of the Christian goes immediately to be “present with the Lord” in heaven and that because Paul ardently desired to be with the Lord (v. 2), he welcomed death. But in vs. 3, 4 Paul describes death as a state of being “naked,” or “unclothed” and not a state of being clothed with his heavenly house. He wanted, if possible, to avoid this intermediary state of death, or of being unclothed, and rather desired to be “clothed” with his “house ... from heaven.” In other words, he hoped to be translated without seeing death (see on vs. 2–4). Elsewhere (1 Cor. 15:51–54; 1 Thess. 4:15–17; 2 Tim. 4:6–8; etc.) Paul has made it certain that men are not “clothed” with immortality individually at death, but simultaneously at the resurrection of the just. (*SDA BC*, slightly edited)

Or, to restate it in this way: In 2 Cor. 5:2–4 Paul has already declared that “life,” obviously meaning immortal life, comes when one is “clothed upon” with his “house ... from heaven” at the resurrection (see on v. 4), not in the “naked,” or “unclothed,” state of death. In v. 8 he expresses the desire to be “absent from the body” and “present with the Lord,” but it is obvious that being “absent from the body” does not mean being disembodied (“naked,” or “unclothed”), for in vs. 2–4 he has stated clearly that he does *not* desire this intermediate state and would avoid it if at all possible.

(*SDA BC*)

To have “life” (v. 4) and to be “present with the Lord” (v. 8) thus requires possession of the “house ... from heaven” (v. 2). Careful scrutiny of Paul’s statements thus clearly and decisively rules out any possibility of a state between death and the resurrection in which, as disembodied (“naked,” or “unclothed”) spirits, men go to be “present with the Lord.” Compare Rom. 8:22, 23; see on Phil. 1:21–23. (*SDA BC*)

Yea, I think it meet, as
long as I am in this
tabernacle, to stir you
up by putting *you* in
remembrance;
Knowing that shortly I
must put off *this* my
tabernacle, even as our
Lord Jesus Christ hath
shewed me. (2 Peter
1:13–14)

For we know that if our earthly
house of *this* tabernacle were
dissolved, we have a building of
God, an house not made with
hands, eternal in the heavens. For
in this we groan, earnestly desiring
to be clothed upon with our house
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this tabernacle do groan, being
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Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Titus 2:13–14)

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Glorious appearing. Or, “appearing of the glory.” The phrase “blessed hope” is in apposition with “glorious appearing,” or “appearing of the glory,” that is, the appearing [of the glory] constitutes the blessed hope.
(*SDA BC*)

And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: (Revelation 6:16)

And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

(Revelation 4:2–3)

And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. (Revelation 5:6)

And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: (Revelation 6:16)

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. (Revelation 3:21)

The Lamb of God is represented before us as “in the
midst of the throne” of God. [Revelation 5:6; 7:17.]
(13LtMs, *Ms 7*, 1898, par. 15)