

2 CORINTHIANS 5

Two Crucial Questions About the Christian Life

Student Guides

Daily Bible Reading

Day 1	2 Cor. 5: 1-17
Day 2	2 Cor. 5: 18-22
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The late Jerry Falwell once wrote, "Christians, like slaves and soldiers, ask no questions." This was Dr. Falwell's provocative way of affirming the significance of asking questions. Unfortunately, some people think questions inherently imply suspicion. While it may be true in some respects, many times questions imply not only an intense interest, but also an unquenchable thirst to know.

Of all people, Christians should possess healthy questions coupled with a godly pursuit to find answers, especially answers revealed in God's Word. 2 Corinthians 5 is the perfect example of the Apostle Paul's desire to answer crucial questions Christians might ask.

1. What Happens When Christians Die? (vv.1-4)

The simple prayer children of another generation often prayed at bedtime speaks volumes, "If I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." Not only was the child praying for God's protection, but also expressing his or her future held certainty only with God. What would happen if death came before sleep ended? The Corinthians had a more applicable question concerning the death of believers—not to mention all Christians throughout history (vv. 1-2).

The Apostle gives four realities which take place when Christians die.

- A. *Permanent exchange (vv. 1-5).* Upon death, the physical gives way to the spiritual. Paul focuses on what will happen, not when it happens; content not chronology. Specifically, the Apostle notes the dissolving of "our earthly house of this tabernacle." Paul likens our bodies to a worn out tent. The tent reminds us not only how temporary our life on earth is, but also how fragile it is. Similarly our physical bodies are but temporary vessels not fitted for the long haul of eternity.
- B. *Personal examination (vv. 9-10).* When death comes, Christians will have their lives reviewed by the Lord Himself; we will be intensely examined. This is not the judgment of unbelievers (see Rev. 20), but the examination of the believers.
- C. *Personal experience (vv. 11-13).* Our personal experience in trusting Christ while on earth determines our eternal destination — Heaven or hell. For Paul, the very thought of one day standing before Jesus to give an account of one's life produced an awe-filling reverence. This awe subsequently produced a sincerity of heart in the Apostle Paul, a sincerity which drove him to testify to the saving power of the Gospel. Paul's life was on fire to persuade men.
- D. *Powerful transformation (vv. 16-17).* When Paul was transformed, he gained not only a new vision (v.16), but also morphed into a new creation. Believers have a brand new position (1 Cor. 15:22), a brand new personality, and a brand new potential.

2. How Can Unholy Sinners Relate to a Holy God? (vv. 18-21)

Our first question dealt with what happens when Christians die. While death is the dread of the innumerable masses, death should not perplex the believer. Our second question rewinds the tape to a question which chronologically precedes our first question. While asking what happens to Christians' physical bodies when they die is a good question, we must inquire how the person became a Christian in the first place. In other words, how can a relationship between wicked sinners and a holy God ever take place?

- A. *Notice the miracle of a relationship between unholy sinners and a holy God (v. 18).* Salvation comes from God — “all things are of God”. In other words, He is the source of it. God takes the initiative, each time, every time. He does the reconciling. He is the Reconciler.
- B. *We must notice the meaning of a relationship between unholy sinners and a holy God (v. 21).* In order to reconcile, the substance of estrangement must be removed. From the Divine side, Paul insists something was imputed to the Savior (v.19). Note the Apostle does not yet state what was imputed to the Savior but what was not imputed to sinners — “their trespasses.” So What happened to the sin (v. 21a)? Jesus had no knowledge of sin because He experienced no sin, He nevertheless was made sin.
- C. *We must notice the ministry of a relationship between unholy sinners and a holy God (v. 20a).* No people could hold such a marvelous truth within: God reconciled the world Himself. Thus the message — be reconciled to God!

WRAP UP

Sincere questions are not bothersome to God. No question we may ask is going to cause Christianity to crumble. In fact most any question we may have, the probability is, someone has already asked it! Two questions Paul answered in chapter 5 concerned not only how a righteous God saves a sinful human, but also what happens to the person at death. God promises His children heavenly bliss. Paul's clarion call is applicable: Be reconciled to God!