

Absent From The Body, Present With The Lord

February 3, 2008 - Pastor Ronnie Wolfe

2 Cor 5:8 *We are confident, [I say], and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

The Bible says in Heb 9:27 *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:* So, we know that we are going to die. But while we are still living, we are in this body. Let's read 2 Cor. 5:6 *Therefore [we are] always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:* As long as we are living, we are not only in this body, but we are absent from the Lord; that is, we are absent from the Lord in a physical way.

Certainly the Lord is always with us, and we have him living in our hearts; but we cannot touch him or talk to him physically. I long for the day when we can see the Lord as he is. We will, you know. Turn with me to 1John 3:2 *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* What a sight that will be and what communion we will have!

But first, we must be absent from the Lord to be present in the body. Adam was created with both body and soul. It is a great mystery how God does this. Many theologians have debated how it is that the soul and the body come to be together. Is the soul created first and then added to the body, or is the body created first and then a soul created to put into the body? Are all souls already created from the beginning and then put into bodies as they are created through procreation?

The soul Creationist believes that God creates a soul separately from the body but perhaps at the same time and places the soul in the body. However he does it, isn't it a wonderful thing that

God does in creation? The Traducianist believes that the soul and the body are both created through birth, and the soul is passed down from the parents to the child. Whichever way it is, God has performed a wonderful thing.

But we must realize that we have a physical part and a spiritual part. Some even divide the soul and the spirit of a man and make the man have three parts. 1 Thes 5:23 *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and [I pray God] your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Others say that only the word of God can divide the soul and the spirit. Heb 4:12 *For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

But we do not need at this time to burden ourselves with this. We are at home in the body at this time, and we cannot move from this body to some other body. Did you ever wish that you had someone else's body? Did you ever want to look more handsome or prettier? Did you ever want to be as strong as someone else or have hair like someone else? Well, you might as well forget it. You are in the body you have, and you cannot change that.

One of the lessons here is that we have the body that we do, and God is not going to change it. In fact, we will have this body throughout all eternity, although this body will be made new, as we will mention later. If you are small, then God wanted you to be small. If you are built large, then God wanted you that way. If you have a slow metabolism, then God wanted you that way. If you have a fast metabolism, the God wanted you that way. If you are handicapped, then God wanted you that way. If you are young, God planned for you to be young now, but you will not be young forever. It will not be too many days until you will be as old as I am, and that won't

be a pretty picture.

Are you old? Then do not wish to be young. Gen. 25:8 *Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full [of years]; and was gathered to his people.*

And do not look down upon old people. One of the blessings of Israel was to have old men living among them, but a curse was not to have old men among them. 1 Sam. 2:32 *And thou shalt see an enemy [in my] habitation, in all [the wealth] which [God] shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever.*

But let us now go back to our main subject of being absent from the Lord. While in this body, we have temptations from the world; because this body we have is made from the dust of the earth. It has a mundane and worldly attitude in its brain. God made this world for us, and we are accustomed to being here and living here. Our bodies fare very well in the world, and our bodies get accustomed to all of the good things of this life.

The implication here is that, as long as we are in this body, we are absent from the Lord, absent in a physical way, but also absent in a spiritual way. Before the Lord saves the soul, the body and soul both love the things of the world. We enjoy the pleasures of living; we even enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. This can be a very comfortable existence. If you have good health, love life, are active; you may really enjoy living in this body of yours even though you are absent from the Lord.

But when the Lord comes to you through the preaching of the Gospel, convicts you of your sins, and regenerates you, giving you a new life in your soul, then you no longer feel at home in the world. You must live in the world, but you will not enjoy the things of the world as much as you did before the Lord gave you new life.

In this body, then, you have a battle after you are saved. Rom. 7:14 *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.* Your body now wants to do some things that your soul does not want to do. Your soul has been saved by God's grace, but your body is still carnal, sold under sin. Your body communicates with this world through friends, education, philosophies, religions, communications such as TV, movies, books, etc. Your body wants to be satisfied, but your soul is not satisfied with these worldly things. Do you suppose that is why so many Christians are unhappy?

Notice what Paul did to his body. 1 Cor. 9:27 *But I keep under my body, and bring [it] into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.* With the Spirit of God resting in his bosom, the apostle Paul kept his body under subjection. Greek scholars say that this means that Paul beat his body black and blue, not physically, but by way of restraint. The Bible tells us that we should do all things with temperance. 1 Cor. 9:25 *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they [do it] to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

While we are here at home in the body, we have a lot of work to do. We cannot allow our bodies, including our minds, to be persuaded by all the fancies the world has to offer. Many people fall victim to riches, fame, even pornography and other lusts. But this body needs some discipline. After all, when you are saved by God's grace, you become a disciple; that means you are to live a disciplined life. Doesn't the Great Commission say that we are to "make disciples"?

But loneliness comes in this body, especially for Christians who know their souls are saved but their bodies are not. We long for the Lord's presence. John echoed the desire of every

believer when he said in Rev. 22:20 *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.* This is why we love to study the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This is why we study the scripture—to know more about the place where we will be one day. We are at home in the body, so we need to know more about the place where we will go when we die. 1 Cor. 2:9 *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

So we read, we study, we pray, we work for the night is coming when man can work no more. Jesus said in John 9:4 *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.* Believers will not be completely satisfied until they work for the Lord. The body may be satisfied, but the soul will not be; and when the body is satisfied and the soul is not, we have one very disappointed and discouraged individual.

I do not know how long I will live. It may be another day or 25 more years. But I am persuaded that I am not going to allow this world to discourage me from laying hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12). My eyes are fixed Psalm 57:7 *My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.* When your heart is fixed on Jesus Christ and upon Heaven, there is little that will discourage you. Life seems worth living, and time goes so quickly.

As you search the Lord daily and fix your heart upon Christ and Heaven, the world seems to fade away a little. It seems to be a little less important—those new things, the gold and silver, the fame, the glory of mundane pleasure. They all seem to take on a gray shadowy hue. They are there, but they are faint. They do not have their former luster. So, it isn't so bad after all to be at home in the body and absent from the Lord.

But to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Like a flash of lightening, like

a bolt of thunder, one day I will leave this old earth. I will leave this body, and I will be in the presence of the Lord, and I shall see him as he is. He is the *Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace* (Isaiah 9:6). *Yea, he is altogether lovely* (S of S 5:16). Yes, I will see him there. He will be the Sun that shines throughout all eternity. Rev. 22:5 *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.*

Just as the sun brightens the horizon in the early dawn, so shall we who are his children be brought to Heaven where a new day will shine. 2 Pet. 1:19 *We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:*

When my dead body lies silent in the grave, the day will have dawned for me. That is when I will see Jesus physically for the first time, and I will see him as he is, not as he was. He will not be the carpenter's Son; he will not be riding on an old long-eared mule. He will not be beaten by his enemies; he will not die on a cross; he will not need to lie in a tomb; he is alive! He will be alive forever. Rev. 1:18 *I [am] he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

Yes, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. What a wonderful promise that is! And I have a promise that I will be there in Heaven with Jesus. John 6:40 *And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.* I am persuaded of this, as was Timothy. 2 Tim. 1:12 *For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have*

committed unto him against that day. I have no doubt where I am going when I am absent from this body. Good-bye, world, good-bye. You can have this old body for a while, while I go to Heaven to be with Jesus for a little while until that day when he comes again and restores my soul with my changed body that I may once again be at home in the body but NOT absent from the Lord. One day both body and soul will be with Jesus.

Phil. 3:21 *Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.* Then we read in I Thess. 4:16 *For 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: 17 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.*

Do you want to go with me? Are you ready to go to Heaven when you die? What do you need to do to be ready? Why am I ready to go? Here are some very simple things that must be done before you can go to Heaven to be with the Lord.

(1) Luke 13:3 *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* You must repent, turning from your sins and hating your old earthly self. This verse says that, if you do not repent, you will likewise perish. To perish means to go to Hell and suffer eternally.

(2) Acts 16:31 *And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.* As you repent from your old sinful self, you are turning from your sins to the Lord, Jesus Christ, seeing him die in your place on the cross, dying, being buried, and resurrecting from the dead.

(3) Rom. 10:13 *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* As you

turn from your sins and believe on Jesus Christ, your first impulse will be to call upon him as your Savior. Tell him what you feel, how you are sick of your sins and need him more than anything in this world. Through faith he will hear you, and he will give you eternal life. John 10:28 *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand.* Now you know that you have eternal life, for John says in 1 John 5:13 *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

(4) Now that you know you have eternal life through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, you should confess him before men. Matt 10:32 *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.* As you confess the Lord before this congregation, you should submit yourself to scriptural baptism, a baptism in water which signifies that you are already born again, picturing the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

(5) You will be added to the church after baptism. Acts 2:41 *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added [unto them] about three thousand souls.* There would be nothing greater today than to know that you are saved, confess your sins before this congregation, and come into this church by baptism.

Now! Are you ready to be absent from the body and present with the Lord? How about being ready today. Trust Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, and you will be ready. Matt 24:44 *Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*