

## **Be of Good Courage**

Westview Church | 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 | Pastor Brett Toney | April 26, 2026

### **Need of Endurance**

Westview, “you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised” (Hebrews 10:36). That exhortation from Hebrews is one for us to hear. In the daily grind of school and work and kids and all the things, we can lose sight of where God is taking us. And in our passage this morning, Paul is going a step further than telling us to *look* to the unseen things of eternity, the weightiness of glory. No, here he *shows* us. We are of good courage because glory is coming and judgment is coming. The feature of the coming glory that he highlights in v.1-5 is the new bodies we will put on. And the glimpse he shows of us standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ in v.6-10 doesn’t lead us to fear but an eagerness to please our Lord. So, even though Satan should strike and trials should come, it is well with our souls. We endure, being of good courage, Church.

### **Glory is Coming (2 Corinthians 5:1-5)**

We are of good courage, first of all, because glory is coming, v.1-5. Paul keys in on one experience of glory we will participate in, namely the new bodies we will put on. We know this is what he is talking about when using this imagery of a tent verses a heavenly dwelling because, v.4, “what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” When we are finally struck down and destroyed in this life, it will be like moving from a tent to a solid home. A tent has its place. It is adequate for a time. But it rips, leaks, and support poles break. That’s like our experience in these bodies, these “outer selves” that waste away, like how Paul describes them in 4:16. But the glory that is coming is not being freed from the physical. There were worldviews in Paul’s day, as there are in ours, that envision the fullest expression of being human as being released from the physical. In Paul’s day, it was Platonism and Gnosticism. In ours, it’s the false gospel of AI

—that my physical self is my biggest problem, and technology will deliver me from this body of death (cf. Romans 7:24).

Paul knows the pain of such a body. He stated as much in chapter four. But the glory that is coming is not one where we will be *unclothed* from a body but *further* clothed, v.4. We groan and lament in the trials of this life, of this body. But the longing of every Christian is to put on that “heavenly dwelling” that can bear the full and eternal weight of glory. It’s not that we will be stripped of a body, floating about as eerie spirit-ghosts. No, it will be as though we are swallowed up by life itself. Such will be the vigor and vitality we will experience. If we will withstand the “eternal weight of glory,” we need to put on the specialty, deep water dive suit to bear up under the 2,400 psi of the ocean. Or, it’s like how C.S. Lewis depicts Heaven in his imaginative book *The Great Divorce*. The earthly tourists that arrive in Heaven find the place to be *more* real, *more* solid than Earth. The grass hurts to walk on. And *they* are the ones who appear as ghosts compared to the more solid people who have been in Heaven awhile.

Paul wrote similarly in 1 Corinthians 15, “This perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality” (v.53). And when that happens, Church, the saying shall come to pass, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v.54-57). So, yes, we are always of good courage. Cancer and old age and car accidents and persecutors can only be the God-ordained means of delivering you from this tent and to your heavenly dwelling. And Christian, you have assurance that God has prepared you for this very thing, v.5. You have assurance because he has even now given you the Spirit as a guarantee, as a downpayment. You will be swallowed up in life because you have received the life-giving Spirit (cf. Romans 8:11).

Work this into your life by reasoning from the greater to the lesser. The greater afflictions that threaten Christians to lose heart and lack courage in the gospel ministry are imprisonments, beatings, and death. That is what Paul particularly has in view (4:7-12, 11:23ff). We don't lose heart in the face of those greater threats because we will be swallowed up by life. So how much more then should we be of good courage in the presence of lesser suffering? Things like being mocked on the neighborhood text thread or shunned from family gatherings. Or the discouragements that come when those you disciple bite and devour one another with criticism and rivalry. Or the drudgery of another day of the same toil. Or a relationship that never was. We don't need to compare our sufferings to those of another, but we see that in *all* suffering, we are of good courage because glory is coming.

### **Judgment is Coming (2 Corinthians 5:6-10)**

And we are of good courage because judgment is coming. This is what Paul shows us in v.6-10. As long as the Lord has us in this life, “we are at home in the body,” v.6. And that means necessarily that “we are away from the Lord.” We are not enjoying his presence—unmediated, fully, physically. No, rather “we walk by faith, not by sight” (v.7). But even though we are not presently with the Lord as we will be one day—that day when we are swallowed up by life like a wide mouth bass gulps up a minnow. Even though we're not there yet, we are well pleased to be “at home with the Lord” (v.8). Just as we are longing to put on our heavenly dwelling (v.2), so we long to be there in our eternal dwelling before his presence. Therefore, v.9, whether here or there, we aim to be pleasing to him.

How does that sentence land on you? “My aim is to be pleasing to God.” The ESV has the aim “to please [God],” but I think more accurate to what Paul wrote is that we *be* pleasing to God. That subtle shift pivots from activity to being—from *doing* things that please God to *being*

someone who is pleasing to God. And that shift actually makes it harder to grapple with. Maybe there's a little minion in your brain that is waving a flag for the doctrine of sin. That little guy is saying, "Whoa! No way can a wretch and worm like me be pleasing to God! 'Those who are in the flesh cannot please God!'" (Romans 8:8). Maybe the residual shame of your habitual sin accuses you, "You!? *You* can never be pleasing to the Most High!" Or maybe its the rules and laws that you grew up under that make you think, "Me?! *I* can never be pleasing to him. God is and will always be disappointed with me."

Brothers and sisters, it is no vain aim we join Paul in making. The only reason we can go on being pleasing to God is that we are already pleasing to him. In Christ, you are pleasing to your Father in Heaven. Did you hear that? In Christ, *you* are pleasing to your Father in Heaven. I don't mean, "Did you hear that *with your ears*?" I mean, "Did you hear that *with your heart*?" In Christ, dear brother, dear sister—you *are* pleasing to your Father in Heaven. John 17:23, Jesus says to his Father, your Father, "[You] loved them even as you loved me." Jesus laid down his life and took it up again so that "the love with which [the Father has] loved [the Son] may be in [you]," Christian (John 17:26). In Christ, you are pleasing to your Father in Heaven. It's why Paul can close this letter with, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and *the love of God*, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (13:14). It's why Paul can say God has given you his Spirit (v.5) and has prepared an eternal, bodily home for you in Heaven (v.1). You are pleasing to God, always being of good courage, and therefore aim to be pleasing to God.

Why then the coming judgment? V.9-10, "So whether we are at home or away we make it our aim to be pleasing to him. *Because* we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ." Given all that Paul has said in the first nine verses, this judgment he speaks of here cannot be a judgment of your justification, Christian. You *will* be swallowed up by life because he has given

his Spirit as a guarantee. This judgment has nothing to do with the false, Roman teaching on “purgatory”—that you might be saved by Christ but need to further atone for your sin before entering Heaven. This judgment is for blood-bought, redeemed followers of Jesus. It is a judgment related to “what each has done in the body, whether good or evil.” What Jesus judges is the measure of accolades and praise with which he adorns his Beloved.

Paul wrote similarly in 1 Corinthians 3, how “each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it . . . If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.” What you build, what you do in the body whether good or evil—it will be revealed on the Last Day at the Judgment Seat of Christ. And you will receive what you are due. What is good and pleasing will be met with reward. What is evil will be met with loss, though you will be saved. Paul wants us to be of good courage, to be pleasing to God, for our future reward in glory. And that reward chiefly is the increased pleasure of God toward us! You *are* pleasing to God, Christian, and he can be *more* pleased with you.

By making it your aim to be pleasing to God *now*, you will have a greater capacity for the reward of enjoying his delight in you *then*.<sup>1</sup> Personify two cups for a moment. Think of one of our little communion cups and one of those obnoxiously large Stanley cups. You fill each one. Now imagine them with a personality—each one brims with satisfaction at being full. The communion cup does not envy the fullness of the Stanley cup because it is full itself. Yet the Stanley has a greater capacity for fullness. A motive for you to be pleasing to God *now* is so that *then* you would be like a Stanley cup, not a communion cup! So put a guard over your lips and restrain their poison; do not use your lips to bless the Lord *and* curse people made in his image (James 3:8-9). Do so for your reward, for an increased enjoyment of your Father’s pleasure! Set

your heart to know the Lord, not being content with half-hearted love (Deut 6:5, 7:9). Do so for your reward, of enjoying him more now *and* then! Forsake all manner of evil, being pleasing to God. Because judgment is coming and it will be to your great loss. Don't settle for a communion cup capacity of your Father's pleasure but in faith seek the Stanley cup size. Always be of good courage to be pleasing to him because judgment is coming.

### **Bodily Communion**

Pulling the threads together of this vision of the coming glory, we get a foretaste of it at the Table—yes, even with these little communion cups. Church, we will be swallowed up by life when we are fully clothed in that body God has prepared for us. We eat and drink at this Table until Christ comes, when he comes in *his* glorious body to see all of us who so believe in him to be likewise clothed. And on that Day—we will be fully and finally home. We will be in his presence not merely by faith but by sight. We will eat and drink not merely in part but in full. And O how pleasing we will be to him. So, be of good courage, Church. You have need of endurance. Glory is coming.

<sup>1</sup> See Jonathan Edwards, “The Portion of the Righteous” (sermon, December 1740), on Romans 2:10, accessed via Third Millennium Ministries, <https://thirdmill.org/answers/answer.asp/file/43280>.