



DID THE APOSTLE PAUL DECLARE THAT TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY, *IN DEATH*, IS TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD?

By George Lujack

Many misunderstand Paul's statements to mean that Paul desired to be dead, that Paul would *rather* be dead than live in the present, so that he could be present with the Lord. This is not the case at all, for the dead cannot serve or please Elohim (God), the dead know nothing, and Elohim (God) does not rule over the dead.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-9 (NKJV):

So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased *rather* TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY AND TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD. Therefore we make it our aim, WHETHER PRESENT OR ABSENT, to be well pleasing to Him.

Can the dead please and praise Yeshua (Jesus) the Lord?

PSALM 115:17 (NKJV):

The dead do not praise YHWH (the Lord), nor any who go down into silence.

ECCLESIASTES 9:5 (NKJV):

The dead know nothing...

All who have ever died are awaiting the resurrection of the dead in a state of complete unconsciousness, unaware of the passage of time, and cannot praise and worship Elohim (God). The dead do not go to heaven upon death.

What then did the Apostle Paul mean when he declared, "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord?" Paul was speaking of being absent from the body *in prayer and meditation*.

There are three ways to interpret 2 Corinthians 5:6-9:

2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-9 (NKJV) [WITH INCORRECT INTERPRETATION]:

So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body [IN DEATH] and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent [DEAD], to be well pleasing to Him.

In 2 Corinthians 5:1-5, which are the verses preceding 2 Corinthians 5:6-9, Paul describes the current body as a house, a tent, which is to be destroyed and replaced with a new habitation, which is not mortal, but immortal. Tents are temporary dwellings, as are our mortal bodies. A new incorruptible immortal body awaits the dead righteous saints.

It is possible that the Apostle Paul may have been saying, in sum and substance, that for the righteous saints, while in this current body we are absent from the Lord, but we are confident and it is well-pleasing to know that one day we will be absent from this mortal body and be given a new immortal body, at which time we will be present with the Lord.

However, Paul knew that the dead go into a state of unaware sleep until the resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20-20-22,51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16). Therefore Paul could not have been saying that he would rather be absent from the body in death, because the dead do not go to heaven to be with the Lord at the moment of death. The dead go to sleep, in silence, resting in peace, in the grave. The dead must await the resurrection of the dead to be with the Lord.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-9 (NKJV) [WITH INCORRECT INTERPRETATION]:

So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body [OF BELIEVERS] we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body [OF BELIEVERS] and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present [AMONG BELIEVERS] or absent [FROM THE BODY OF BELIEVERS], to be well pleasing to Him.

The Apostle Paul could not have been speaking of being absent from the Lord when at home with the body of believers in 2 Corinthians 5:6-9, because when two or three believers gather together in Yeshua's (Jesus') name, His Spirit is there in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20).

2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-9 (NKJV) [WITH CORRECT INTERPRETATION]:

So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body [IN PRAYER AND MEDITATION] and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent [IN PRAYER AND MEDITATION], to be well pleasing to Him.

The Apostle Paul, when free and when imprisoned, often meditated in prayer by which he was in direct communion with Yeshua (Jesus), who directed Paul to write his epistles. When Paul was in prayer and meditation, He was walking with the Lord by faith, and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Paul's letters are the inspired word of God and he received instruction from Yeshua (Jesus) on what to write when he was *absent from the body in spiritual meditation*.

Paul could not have been saying that he would rather be absent from the body in death (2 Corinthians 5:8), as then Paul would literally be saying that He would rather be dead in the grave than alive in his body.

Paul also spoke of being absent from the body *of believers* and being present with them. We can clearly see this in many of Paul's writings.

1 CORINTHIANS 5:3 (NKJV):

For I indeed, *as absent in body but present in spirit*, have already judged (*as though I were present*) him who has so done this deed.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:1 (NKJV):

I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Messiah (Christ) - who *in presence* am lowly among you, but *being absent* am bold toward you.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:11 (NKJV):

Let such a person consider this, that what we are by letters *when we are absent*, such we will also be in deed *when we are present*.

Note: The dead do not write letters! But Paul, being absent from the body *of believers*, did.

2 CORINTHIANS 13:2 (NKJV):

I have told you before, and foretell *as if I were present* the second time, *and now being absent* I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare.

2 CORINTHIANS 13:10 (NKJV):

Therefore I write these things *being absent*, lest *being present* I should use sharpness, according to the authority that the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.

PHILIPPIANS 1:27 (NKJV):

Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Messiah (Christ), so that whether I come and see you *or am absent*, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel...

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13 (NKJV):

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, *not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence*, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

COLOSSIANS 2:5 (NKJV):

For though I am *absent in the flesh*, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Messiah (Christ).

The Apostle Paul wrote of the *experience* of being absent in many of his writings, therefore it should not be assumed that he was speaking of being absent in death in 2 Corinthians 5:6-9. Paul was absent from his body of fellow believers and absent from his body in prayer and meditation.

Believers are likewise instructed to pray and meditate upon God's word.

PSALM 19:14 (NKJV):

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O YHWH (Lord), my strength and my Redeemer.

PSALM 119:15-16 (NKJV):

I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.

PSALM 119:27 (TLV):

Help me discern the way of your precepts, so I may meditate on Your wonders.

PSALM 119:48 (NKJV):

My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on Your statutes.

PSALM 119:78 (NKJV):

Let the proud be ashamed, for they treated me wrongfully with falsehood; but I will meditate on Your precepts.

The Apostle Paul wrote of being absent from the Lord as we live in this world in our bodies and being present with the Lord when we cut ourselves off from the world through prayer and meditation. Our aim, whether present with the Lord in prayer and in meditation or absent from the Lord in our body as we live in the world, should be to conduct ourselves in a manner that is well pleasing to Elohim (God).

When a believer rightly prays in private to commune with Elohim (God), he or she figuratively becomes absent from the body and the world by closing the eyes and ears, cutting off all physical surroundings, in prayer and meditation. It is made clear through a comprehensive reading of Scripture when comparing other verse examples, that when Paul spoke of being absent from the body and present with the Lord, he was speaking of being absent from the body in prayer and spiritual meditation, not absent from the body in death.