

2Corinthians 5:6-10; 14-17

It is a Better thing to be Away from the Body and at Home with the Lord

Nunawading and Waverley, 13-6-21

Dear friends in Christ,

When I came to Australia in the 1970s I was terribly homesick. I wasn't used to the smell of gumtrees and felt nauseas for several weeks. The sound of crows cawing each morning was so foreign. In South Australia, where I spent the first five years, the heat, even in March was too much. I visited my uncle and aunty in Minyip and couldn't get over how flat things were and how the summer sky was a blinding, pale blue. The cities felt too large and the distances too great. Now, I love all these things and couldn't imagine leaving. This is my home.

Are we looking forward to **our heavenly dwelling**, like a spiritual home sickness? It sounds a bit pious to say but are **we are confident and consider it a better thing to be away from the body and to be at home with the Lord**. I think we can be too comfortable with our life here. Don't get me wrong; of course, we should rejoice in what our Father provides us with: 'home and family' as Luther mentioned in the first article of the Creed, our work and work mates, friends and this wide brown land. However, this passage challenges us to think **it is better to be at home with the Lord**. The opposite of this would be a total preoccupation with everything that is going on while here in our physical existence. Life is more than our medical conditions, our houses and holiday homes, Facebook and footy. Discovering more of our world through travel is good but it is not the end, not our destination. Christians know there is a far-off country, of white sandy shores filled with God's redeemed people rejoicing in Christ and filled with the everlasting joy of the Spirit.

Paul speaks about **being confident** that we can indeed be with our Lord in eternity. Right there is another challenge for us. Do you ever catch yourself wondering if it is true that when you die and the darkness comes that there will be the glory, infinite love and smiling face of our Lord Jesus awaiting you? Are you confident about this? It seems amazing to us that the apostle could say positively: **we walk by faith and not by sight**. He gave up on sight, that is, what his eyes could see, the shapes and forms of this world. By faith, he was able to see through them all to what is beyond. Can we do that?

What supports our faith? We have the testimony of creation; the universe proclaims the attributes of God. We have the testimony of our own inner experience, that the Holy Spirit has touched us with the truth, we feel new, alive in Christ and the presence of Jesus is inside us. Thus, Paul can say something truly beautiful: **if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation; the old things have passed away and look, the new has come**. In ourselves, we know that we are new creations. But the greatest testimony of them all, is the person of Christ, particularly his crucifixion for the world and his smashing

through the tomb door in victory. **We are convinced one died for all, therefore, all have died.** That is another statement about confidence; **we are convinced.** God has given this world a chance to die and begin all over again but on the foundation of salvation. No longer need people be driven by the economy and the greed that goes with it or be splintering into groups, hating and being hated. Christ ended that way of living and has brought something new. The resurrection is this bursting forth of newness of life that has totally changed our way of seeing things. That is why believing is so much better than our present way of perceiving things. What we see gives us the wrong information; what we believe is the true reality.

The objective of life is to be with Christ. You are confident about this and this is where you would rather be, **away from your life in this body and at home with the Lord.** What now? Is life just a yearning to leave the planet and enter into the spiritual realms? Such a view has nothing to do with Christianity. God entered the world to transform the world, a mission he finally completes at his resurrection. In the meantime, **we no longer view people by their appearance,** rather, we see people around us as potential children of God, with redeemed bodies and minds healed of all the wrong things in them. Rather than using our bodies to do vain and empty things, we use our redeemed lives to serve our world, to love others, and witness to the great future in store for those who believe. **The love of God controls us... Christ died for all, that those living might no longer live for themselves but for him who died and rose again for them.** So, we can conclude that when we experience redemption, we actually want two things: to be at home with the Lord and to stay here to serve our world in love. The better of the two is obviously to be with our Father.