

In Psalm 73, Asaph laments the fact that while he suffers, the wicked prosper and seem to be free from the burdens common to man (v. 5). What are these burdens? For us they likely include sickness, financial struggles, hunger, loss, fear, worry, loneliness, disappointment, and hopelessness (to name a few). And though many in this world devote their energy on alleviating these burdens and making their lives comfortable, either by honest or dishonest means, they will never be able to eliminate them completely. And in the end of the psalm, we see a confession that even in the midst of suffering it is ultimately always still better to be near to God. Likewise in 2 Corinthians Paul speaks to those experiencing the burdens common to man, and explains how all our troubles are far outweighed by the eternal glory that awaits those who draw near to God through Jesus Christ (4:17). Dealing with all the struggles common to mankind is hard enough, but following Jesus and proclaiming Him in this hostile world is even more difficult. Paul dealt with these struggles, and it was discouraging. But he tells us that we don't want to lose heart because the eternal glory that awaits us is well worth all the difficulties we face. Now in chapter 5, he talks more about this eternal glory.

The glory of which Paul speaks is the resurrection of the body. The gospel message is not that we believe in Jesus and go to heaven. If that were everything then what are we waiting for? Our hope then would be just to die and go to heaven. But the hope of Christians is not to die, but to live. We will live in new transformed bodies. God meant for us to have both a spirit and a body, not just a spirit floating in heaven. Our hope is that Jesus comes before we die to give us this new body. The apostles expected Jesus to come in their lifetimes, and when it looked like He wasn't going to come back so soon, they still had hope. Now that we are 2000 years closer to His return, we should long for it all the more.

The eternal house Paul speaks of in v. 1 is our new bodies. He describes it as being of God, in heaven, and not built by human hands. These phrases convey the same sentiment, that this new body will not be affected by the burdens common to man. It will be so different than the bodies we have now, which are cursed with death and illness. We can temporarily alleviate this suffering with medicine, but we must ultimately accept these problems as a part of the human

experience, because they will only get worse as we age. As far as technology has improved in the last 50 years, we still haven't been able to dramatically prolong life. Our hope is therefore not in this body, but in the new body that was promised. In the meantime we groan (v. 4) as we await the redemption of our bodies. This groaning is also mentioned in Romans 8:23-26. We should hope, long, and groan for Jesus' return. Our hope is not in medicine, though sometimes it provides relief. We have no hope in our present body which is bound to death. We hope for an eternal body.

In v. 4 when Paul says that what is mortal is swallowed up by life, he doesn't mean that the new body is just a shell covering the old. Rather the new devours the old and the old is no more. It is a transformation. Just as Jesus' body was gloriously transformed beyond recognition during the resurrection, so our bodies will be transformed. This is what we, and even those who have died and whose spirits are in heaven, are all waiting for. We all want to be clothed in new bodies.

Paul mentions in v. 5 that the Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing what is to come. The Church has been waiting 2000 years for Jesus' return. It's easy to question whether it will ever happen. So God gave us a down payment, a deposit, and promises to bring the rest later. Ephesians 1:13-14 also describes the Holy Spirit as a deposit. It's like an engagement ring, given as a promise of the marriage to come. God already gave us eternal life by sacrificing His Son for us. He doesn't have to give us this deposit. But it's by His infinite grace that we have His Spirit inside us. We don't deserve any of it. Therefore, though we may be suffering now, let us eagerly long and pray for Jesus' return, with full assurance that He will come soon.