

2 Corinthians 5:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened:
not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that
mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Analysis

For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened—Paul intensifies the groaning motif: *stenazomen* (στενάζομεν, present tense, "we continually groan") and *barounmenoi* (βαρούμενοι, "being weighed down/burdened"). The present participle emphasizes ongoing oppression under mortality's weight. Yet Paul clarifies: **not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon**—the goal is not escape from embodiment but its transformation.

That mortality might be swallowed up of life employs the vivid metaphor of *katapothē* (καταποθῆ, "be swallowed/consumed completely"). This echoes Isaiah 25:8 ("He will swallow up death in victory") and Paul's use in 1 Corinthians 15:54. Life (*zōē*, ζωή, resurrection life) doesn't merely replace death but completely devours it—a total, irreversible victory. Mortality is not shed like a garment but overwhelmed by life's superior power.

Historical Context

Isaiah's prophecy of death's destruction was central to Jewish eschatological hope. Paul applies this to individual believers, not just corporate Israel. The metaphor of swallowing suggests complete absorption—death won't simply cease but will be utterly consumed by resurrection life. This connects to Christ's own resurrection, the firstfruits of this cosmic reversal.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's burden under mortality differ from escapist worldviews that merely want release from physical existence?
2. What does it mean for mortality to be "swallowed up" by life rather than simply ended—how is this victory more complete?
3. In what ways do you experience the "groaning" of mortality even while living with resurrection hope?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	γὰρ	οἱ	ὄντες	ἐν	τῷ	σκήνῳ	στενάζομεν
For	G1063	G3588	we that are	in	G3588	this tabernacle	do groan
G2532			G5607	G1722		G4636	G4727
βαρούμενοι	ἐπειδὴ	οὐ	θέλομεν	ἐκδύσασθαι	ἀλλ'		
being burdened	for that	not	we would	be unclothed	but		
G916	G1894	G3756	G2309	G1562	G235		
ἐπενδύσασθαι	ἵνα	καταποθῇ	τὸ	θνητὸν	ὑπὸ	τῆς	
clothed upon	that	might be swallowed up	G3588	mortality	of	G3588	
G1902	G2443	G2666		G2349	G5259		
ζωῆς							
life							
G2222							

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 5:2 (Parallel theme): For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

Isaiah 25:8 (Parallel theme): He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

2 Peter 1:13 (Temple): Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;

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