

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 σκήνῃ στενάζομεν
For G1063 **we that are** G3588 **in** G3588 **this tabernacle** do groan
G2532 G5607 G1722 G4636 G4727

βαρούμενοι ἐπειδή 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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