

## What Do I Earnestly Desire?

By Lynn Warner

The following verses outline who is involved in the Rapture – the Lord, the Archangel, and those who are “in Christ.” The verses describe the Rapture as a “catching away” to meet the Lord in the air. And the verses explain that God has ordained the Rapture to comfort and strengthen us, because we are not appointed to wrath but to always be with the Lord. These Scriptures are found in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11.

*“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 KJV).

*“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do”* (1 Thessalonians 5:8-11).

More details are found in other Scriptures, like 2 Corinthians 5. Here, we find that parallels can be found between being born again in the Spirit, dying to the flesh (the old nature), being made alive in Christ, and departing from this earthly life to our Heavenly life, whether by physical death or rapture.

In 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, we read, *“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 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. Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”*

So, in 2 Corinthians 5, we read that our earthly house will be dissolved, and we will be clothed upon with our heavenly house. We are to earnestly desire this heavenly house, to groan for it so that we will not be found naked. We are burdened that mortality may be swallowed up by life. We won't be found naked, or unforgiven, but clothed by His salvation. We have been given the earnestness of the Spirit and are confident in our salvation. While we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord, but our confidence is that when we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord. The exciting part of this message to me is this: we are not only confident, but we are willing to be absent from the body, so we can be present with the Lord. In Philippians 1:8, Paul states, *“for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* Perhaps Paul felt a sense of duty to the Philippians—that his work was unfinished, because he also states, *“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you”* (Philippians 1:23-24). This is a question we can ask ourselves, whether we depart to be with the Lord by death or by rapture. Are we in a strait between two things? What do we earnestly desire? Are we confident and

willing to be with the Lord? Or are we confident and willing to abide in the flesh because of duty to others?

We see from the Scriptures that both the Rapture and death involve departing from this earthly life to our Heavenly life. Either way, we will always be with the Lord, because we are not appointed to God's wrath (to be without God). One difference between the two is that in the Rapture, we enter resurrection life immediately, and we are clothed upon with resurrected bodies. But if we depart this earthly life by death, we will be with the Lord, and we also will be the first to be changed in the Rapture when we receive our resurrected bodies before *"those who are alive and remain"* (1 Thessalonians 4:17a).

Finally, we see in 2 Corinthians 5 that the love of Christ constrains us. Jesus loved us, died for us, rose again, and is alive. All of us are dead. But He gives us new life through the Spirit, if we are born again. If we have this new life, we should not live to ourselves but to Him. 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 describes this and shows us that we are new creatures: *"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

We are to die to our old nature, to "the flesh," and we are to live in Christ. Ephesians 2:10 states, *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* This is a picture of our Salvation, a foretaste of our eternal destiny of being free from sin and death, found "in Christ," eternally clothed upon with His love, forgiveness, and salvation. We are a "new creature." And we are to earnestly desire these things, and to comfort and build up each other; for we are not destined for wrath, but for life.