

II Corinthians - Lesson 05

II Cor. Chapter 5

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Memory verses for this week: *1 Pet 5:2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, ³According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.*

Introduction: Last week in Chapter 4, we studied about what the true gospel message is all about. Paul had been faithful to preach the gospel consistently with truth and sincerity. He told us that if the gospel be hid, it is hid from those who are lost and deceived by Satan.

In Chapter 5, Paul explains why he was not frightened by death. He knew he would be immediately ushered into heaven and the presence of the God he served. From there he branches into the Judgment Seat of Christ. He then touches upon his motivation—love of Christ and the thrill of seeing men’s lives changed. We all are ambassadors for Christ.

I. The Future Body and Home of the Child of God

2 Corinthians 5:1 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. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

Paul looked beyond the prospect of death to what lay beyond. His reference to the “earthy house of this tabernacle” refers to our physical bodies. He speaks of them being dissolved. When we die physically, we have a dwelling place in heaven which is not physical but spiritual and eternal. He no doubt is referring back to his comment in I Corinthians 15:44-45 regarding the spiritual body waiting in heaven.

Paul knew if it came down to having “this tabernacle” dissolved by death, he still would have a heavenly building waiting him in heaven. He would have a resurrected body which will endure forever. The resurrection body is not a body built with hands but one built by God. Verse 2 speaks of how we realize the weakness of our bodies and groan as we anticipate our resurrected body.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,

even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 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: 17 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. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Cor. 15:42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: ⁴³It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: ⁴⁴It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

Paul makes further distinction between our present physical bodies and the one waiting in heaven. He refers to our present, physical, earthly body. In it we certainly groan.

II Cor 5:3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4 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.

The thing we groan for is not death, but we long to have our bodies transformed. As a man advanced in years and who had suffered much, Paul knew of what he wrote. He longed for the day when his spirit and soul would be clothed with the spiritual body awaiting him in glory. His use of the analogy of clothing regarding our bodies is instructive. The real person, our soul and spirit, resides in a temporal body likened unto a tent.

The day is coming when that old worn-out garment will be laid aside and the new one put on. There is no fear of being unclothed (without a body in heaven). He concludes the thought by noting, For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon.

In this life (in our physical bodies), we do sigh as we are weighted down with the problems and afflictions thereof. His goal was not to be freed from this body, but to receive a better one—a heavenly spiritual body and ultimately an incorruptible body of flesh and bone. The blessed hope for God's people is that our mortal body will be swallowed up by a body which has life eternal in its length and vitality in its character.

There is little mentioned in God's word about what takes place between the time we die and when we go to be present with the Lord. I believe the moment our eyes close in death, we open to be present with the Lord.

Philippians 1:23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

II Cor 5:5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. 6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

We see that as an assurance that God will fulfill this promise of future glory, He has even now given us the Holy Spirit to give us confidence that it will come to pass. Verse 6-8 speak of how when we are home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. But we would much rather be absent from the body and be home with the Lord which is far better.

Paul has arrived at the height of his point. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. The word translated as confident (yarrew tharrheo) also has the sense of 'good courage' or 'good cheer.' Though he and his associates, more often than they preferred, faced death from their adversaries; they remained of good cheer. Their spirits were not deflated. Though troubled on every side, they were not distressed. Though persecuted, they were not in despair.

Recall in Chapter 4:8-18. He knew that "whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." Our human bodies are the only 'home' we know. While we are present there, we are absent from the Lord. Our God-given instinct is preservation of life in our body. It is our earthly home. When such time comes that we depart this life, the better home is awaiting above. While we are present here, we are absent from the Lord.

II Cor 5:8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

Paul concludes, We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. He was encouraged and looked forward to the day when he absented his body and arrived present with the Lord. No soul sleep or interim purgatory for God's people awaits. When we die, we are immediately present with the Lord. The realization of this profound conclusion led to a major decision in Paul's mind. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. Together, the thought is that he pressed on in the ministry to be pleasing to Jesus Christ.

II Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. We touch upon a

major New Testament eschatological truth—the Judgment Seat of Christ. Historically, the Greeks awarded the respective winners of the Greek games at a bema. It was a seat, usually set upon a platform, upon which a judge sat. In the Roman world, a bema was the seat of justice upon which a judge would issue his judgments in a court of law.

For example, Jesus Christ stood before Pilate's bema (John 19:13) and Paul at the bema of Festus (Acts 25:6). However, the former sense clearly is what is in view here. The remainder of the verse makes that clear. The judgment seat of Christ is a time when Christians will stand before Him. It is not a judicial hearing, but rather more in the character of an awards' ceremony. We will stand before the judgment seat of Christ in order that we may receive that for what we have done in this life (in our body), whether it is good or bad.

The disposition of our salvation is not in view. That was settled at Calvary. Throughout the New Testament, various rewards are mentioned ranging from crowns, to mansions, to positions of rank and rule in Christ's coming kingdom. There also is mentioned inheritance. It is at the bema that these rewards for faithful service will be awarded or their loss noted. The various crowns mentioned in the New Testament will evidently be awarded at the bema along with other commendation in the coming kingdom.

We see that we all (saved Christians) will have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We will not stand there to determine our salvation, only the saved are here at this judgment seat. This has to do with receiving rewards for what we have done in the body for the cause of Christ. The determination of going to heaven or hell is made in this life.

Romans 14:10-12 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. 12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

II. The Motives of the True Gospel Ministry

II Cor 5:11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your

consciences. 12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

Paul says in verse 11 “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” It is not coincidental for Paul to mention this in the immediate context of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Standing before Jesus Christ face to face, even in a non-judicial venue, will be an awesome experience. The prospect of not having been pleasing to Him, of suffering loss in that day, or of not hearing Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant,” are all grounds for the fear of the Lord.

The focal point of Paul’s service was in persuading men. Throughout his ministry, Paul had sought to persuade men to turn to Christ. He had persuaded confused Christians of the error of their ways, not to mention his Corinthian brethren. Shifting his focus back to his Corinthian skeptics, he continued, but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. God knows our heart and our motives. It is manifest to Him. Paul hoped he also was “manifest in your consciences.” God understood his motives. Paul hoped his skeptical Corinthian brethren did as well.

The fact that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ is an indication of the first motive of the true Gospel ministry. This motive is “the fear of the Lord.” We know the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Because of this fear and the knowledge of the terror of the Lord, we persuade men to turn to God. Though many attack and criticize Paul, he needed no defense because God knew his true motives. Paul does not intend to praise himself, but wishes to tell what the Lord has done both for and through him.

J. Vernon McGee had these comments on verse 12.

In other words, if you are declaring the full counsel of God, you can do it in a loving manner. You don’t have to bring down thunder and lightning. However, we need to recognize and we need to state very clearly that men are lost. If we do say that, we are not commending ourselves; that is, we are not trying to become popular. I am always afraid of the soft-soap type of thing we hear today. There is so much today that goes the way of psychology, how to become a well-adjusted human being. May I say to you that if you are without Christ, it is not a psychological adjustment that you need. You are a hell-doomed sinner, and you are on the way to hell. What you need is Christ!

It may not make me popular to say this to you, but it is the Word of God. We don’t commend ourselves to you. We don’t want you to glory in us. The important thing for us to do is to declare the whole counsel of God. Our motivation to get out the Word of God is a recognition of God’s judgment. That is the thing that would arouse many a sleepy church

member today.

II Cor 5:13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. 14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15 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. 16 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.

Critics at Corinth had apparently accused Paul of being 'beside himself,' that is, out of touch with reality. He responds, For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. In responding to his critics, he points out: regardless, they were serving God.

Paul became all things to all men that he might reach some. Paul was not mad, but a man who was about the Father's business. The message that needs to be preached is that Christ died for the sinner. We need to know him not in the head, but in the heart. We need to know Jesus as our own Risen Lord and Savior.

The Apostle now touches upon another major motive for his ministry. For the love of Christ constraineth us. Christ's love for Paul was reflected back in his love for Christ. It was another major motive pressing him on in the ministry. It impelled him to continue. Here is why." Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." His logic is as simple as it is forceful. If One (Jesus Christ) died for all, it follows therefore that all were dead (under the sentence of spiritual death).

In verse 15, Paul now shifts from that which is profoundly doctrinal (the substitutionary death of Christ) to that which is profoundly practical (our dedication to Christ as a result). Because Jesus Christ died for us, we ought not therefore live unto ourselves, but unto Him which died for us. The doctrine of the substitutionary death of Christ must stir total dedication to Him in day-to-day living. Love for Christ ought to constrain us to serve Him. The essence of carnality is living unto self. The essence of spirituality is living unto Christ. It is clear how Paul had so lived. To continue to live for self in light of what Christ has done for us reveals the spirit of ungratefulness.

Christ changed Paul's entire perspective of living. Having come to realize what Christ had done for him, Paul no longer saw things from the perspective of the flesh. He no longer lived unto himself. He momentarily returns his focus to Jesus to further his illustration. Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Paul, prior to his conversion, had known of Christ from a fleshly perspective. He had viewed Him as a mere man. However, in turning to and trusting Him as Lord and Savior, Paul no longer knew Him that way.

III. The Saved Person Becomes a New Creature in Christ

II Cor 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

As a result, a major conclusion is at hand. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Whereas Paul had formerly lived for himself, he now lived for Christ. Where he had formerly lived in the flesh, he now lived in the Spirit.

Where he had formerly viewed things from a carnal, humanistic point of view, he now saw them in light of the cross. He was a new creature. He had been born again. All the old habits, attitudes, values, and thinking was in the process of fading away and his new life in Christ was sprouting forth. Like a vibrant new stalk in the spring, pushing up beside the dead brown plant of last season, new life in Christ is a transformation from the inside out. All of this is from God. It is His work. Moreover, He hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.

We were alienated from God by wicked works, being dead in trespasses and sins; yet in Christ Jesus, He reconciled us to Himself. It all is of God and by God. His mercy and grace are beyond comprehension. It is He who has reconciled us to Himself through His Son Jesus Christ. Moreover, He hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. Though the greater principle of sinful man being reconciled to God is rooted in Him and His great love to us whereby He saved us; nevertheless, He has delegated to us the ministry of reconciling others to Him. He has given to us the charge to bring others to Christ and thence to God. It is called evangelism, witnessing, preaching, and soul winning.

When we get saved, we have a new desire in the heart. We have become a new creature in Christ, and all the old things have passed away. As baptism so clearly pictures, the old man has died, and the new man has risen to walk in newness of life. Jesus has reconciled us through Jesus Christ. To reconcile us to God, He has brought us back to proper relationship with the Heavenly Father. We could not on our own do this, but we have an advocate with the Father who can.

I John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: ²And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

II Cor 5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of

reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The ministry of reconciliation given to us is even as God worked through Christ in reconciling the world unto Himself by not accounting their sins unto them. Paul here touches upon the doctrine of justification. As our sin was imputed (accounted) to Christ and not to us, it enabled us to be reconciled to God.

God therefore has given to us that word of reconciliation. It is to persuade men to turn to Christ, trusting Him as Savior (recall verse 11). In so doing they are justified and thus reconciled to Him.

An ambassador represents another. God has appointed us as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. He addresses others through us. What a privilege! Our message in essence is, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. As ambassadors witnessing Jesus Christ to others, our message essentially is to urge (persuade) others on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. The very core of the principle of justification is here presented and the great substitutionary work of Christ is in view.

God made Jesus to be sin for us. He, the sinless One, who never knew sin and had the iniquity of us all laid on Him. God imputed to Him our sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. It is the very heart of the great doctrine of justification.

We are ambassadors for Christ. An ambassador is a high minister of state who represents one country in another land. You and I represent our heavenly country. If an ambassador fails to properly represent his home country, the chief justice calls him home. How well do we represent our heavenly home? Verse 21 tells us that Jesus who knew no sin, became sin for us. Because of Christ, we may be made righteous to God.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be

blessed.