

***“Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians —
Paul the Man, the Messenger, and His Message, All of Grace”
Part 4***

Review:

- ***For Paul and for Us, Our Eternal Prospect of Glory Is Always Transforming***
- ***The Indwelling Spirit, Our Present Reality, Confirms Our Heavenly Glory***
- ***The Context of Our Current Condition Is Our Future Judgment!***

- ***For Paul and for Us, Our Eternal Prospect of Glory Is Always Transforming***

2 Cor. 5:1-4

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:

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.

- ***Paul reveals the details for our eternal future and they are important! Take them to heart. These details were important to the Holy Spirit who inspired these words, the reason being that they would be a powerful and transforming blessing for the Corinthians, and, by application, for all those who would thereafter hear or read them. May we take them as spiritual food therefore and be eternally blessed by them.***

- ***The words in verse 4 summarize this teaching:*** “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.” ***So the faith led to knowledge and that to a statement of his resurrection hope and specifically to the bodily resurrection hope expressed in these words: “... that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” The spirit cries out within each of us believers too. We, like Paul, “groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”***

- ***Will we receive this teaching, this truth that transforms? For Paul writes so powerfully here that it is our eternal prospect of future***

glory, resurrection glory, that is always transforming. Or have we already forgotten the words ending chapter 3?

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

- *The Indwelling Spirit, Our Present Reality, Confirms Our Heavenly Glory and that spirit cries out within each of us believers regarding the word and work of Almighty God for us — and that we know therefore “that all things do work together for our good”, whether here in this life but also for eternity. Amen.*

2 Cor. 5:5-8

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:)

8 We are confident, *I* say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

- *So faith is the key, not sight. Paul’s example of faith should be our example when we are under stress and our burdens are great. If Paul with his constant trials even unto death can be our example, and he says he has been appointed as such by the Lord, then our sufficiency is also in the Lord and his word of promise. He writes that the promises of God written here are the truth for us as well. They are for us and therefore that is the content of our faith today. That is his teaching here. Amen. Will we take God at his word? That is his constant desire.*
- *Are we willing as Paul was, even to be with the Lord? If we are, what difference does it make in our living today? Any testimonies?*
- **The Context of Our Current Condition Is Our Future Judgment**
 - *We have now been taught here of what our future will be. That is assured by Almighty God. But now Paul addresses our current condition. He writes here that for him all things about his current state, his condition “now”, have been changed by his expectation of rewards for faithful service even unto death if so ordained. Let’s read of that in verses 9-11:*

2 Cor. 5:9-11

9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

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.

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.

- ***The Judgment Seat of Christ is ahead for all — rewards or loss ... What foundation are we building upon? Our works? The church? Our families? Certain teachers and preachers? Or on Christ himself, the only true and authentic foundation that will endure?***

1 Cor. 3:9-11, 14-15

9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

...

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 [*the loss of rewards*]: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

1 Cor. 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

- ***So we see why we cannot judge others well at all. For we cannot know “the hidden things of darkness” or “the counsels of the hearts” for only the Lord knows those. But take full note of the rest of the verse for it is most important: “... then shall every man have praise of God”. Amen. So for every believer there is glory ahead by his grace even though there is also the matter of rewards and they are going to be based on our “building”, whether on the true and authentic foundation or on a false and inauthentic foundation. The one is the true Christ, the other is the false one. ONE IS BASED ON THE FULLNESS OF GOD’S ABUNDANT GRACE WHILE THE OTHER IS***

NOT. Which will it be for us.

Our Outline Today:

- ***Our Great Gift of Salvation Encourages Our Acceptable Response***
- ***Our Response In His Acceptable Time Must Always Reflect His Grace***

I. Our Great Gift of Salvation Encourages Our Acceptable Response:

[READ] 2 Cor. 5:14-16

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.

- **Verses 14-15** - “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.”: ***So knowing the love of Christ for sinners and the ultimate motivation our Lord had in coming for us, we should be encouraged to in every way “live unto him” that died for us all and then rose again for our justification (Rom. 4:25). But not every response to this challenge is “acceptable” ... The apostle now will explain himself in the next verses beginning in verse 16:***
- **Verse 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.”: ***The focus has now shifted. Christ saw us all as sinners and therefore as dead in our trespasses and since But nonetheless, he gave himself for us, thereby leaving heaven’s glory, coming into this sin cursed world, and dying the most cruel death of all. And need I say even more, that he not only died the most cruel dearth, he also, in so doing, bore in his own body our sin burden before Almighty God. But Paul’s point here is that it was his love for us sinners (in eternity past) that motivated him. As Paul wrote in Philippians 2, this is also to be our motivation:***

[READ] Phil. 2:1-9

1 If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.

3 *Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

- *So the question for us all is this then: “Are we so motivated as Christ was, as Paul was?” And if not, why not? Perhaps we have never grasped onto what Paul wrote here about the love of Christ. These verses are intended to be a help for us then in evaluating the purity of our love. What do they say exactly?*
- *He writes that, if we “know Christ after the flesh”, we do not properly know him! And if so, we cannot know others either since we are not seeing them as Christ sees them, as dead until made alive again. There is much to ponder here, isn’t there? What does he mean by “knowing after the flesh” versus correct knowledge. The surely correct kind of “knowing” then would be “according to the spirit of resurrection as he writes elsewhere, for example, in Romans chapter 1:*

[READ] Rom. 1:1-6

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:

- *He writes differently here but it is to the same end and it is the same truth. Let's continue to the next verses which will help us to understand his point here even better:*

[READ] 2 Cor. 5:17-21

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;

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 *[not in Gk.]* by us: we pray you *[not in Gk.]* 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.

- *This like many is a VERY LARGE "THEREFORE". The teaching here is bold and written in the most absolute of terms: "new creature", "old things are passed away", that is, the things of the flesh referred to earlier in verse ; "All things are become new"; "All things are of God ... who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ".*
- *So Paul is recognizing here how complete and all sufficient the work of Christ for us sinners was and is. It is a different world then that believers are now a part of: "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*
- *The consequence is that there is a ministry of reconciliation given to Paul and by implication all of us — if we would receive it, and this requires a different view of sinners than what we might normally have:*

2 Cor. 5:19-21

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.

- *Here we see clearly stated what the Lord's view of humanity is, that the world has been so reconciled to God through Christ's all-sufficient work as our substitute that our sins and transgressions are no longer being counted! Furthermore, he writes here that this is true for the whole world of sinners.*

But he writes also that it is still necessary for sinners to "be reconciled"! So we do not have universal reconciliation here as some teach, whereby all are actually saved eternally, but that this additional step of reconciliation is still required. The rejection of the good news concerning Christ IS STILL BEING COUNTED, that is, and therefore the message of that reconciliation must still go forth. And so he continues with that here:

- *And so the message of reconciliation goes forth in verses 20 and 21: Be reconciled to God. All the world has been reconciled through Christ and his finished work. But that is not the end of the story. It is still incumbent on each sinner to "be reconciled to God". We must know Christ after the spirit and not merely after the flesh for salvation to be a reality. Amen. This is a weighty message indeed and the burden of sharing it truthfully was Paul's and is ours as he writes in our next verses here:*

II. Our Response In His Acceptable Time Must Always Reflect His Grace:

[READ] 2 Cor. 6:1-2

1 We then, as workers together *with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

- *A conclusion must be drawn therefore: Receive not the grace of God in vain, that is, without the full and complete result. The message of grace must go forth.... This is a reference to Isaiah 49 which Paul must have held dear.*

- *There is so much to consider here, isn't there? The issue is the unbounded grace of God through Jesus Christ and our response to "so great salvation" that has brought us like the Corinthians into the family of God, sinners of the Gentiles without a hope in the world, and now the very saints of the living God.*
- *So what is the focus of Paul's teaching here? It is that our mind regarding the lost should be as Paul's was and that was as Christ's was: That sinners must be saved to receive the blessings of God. Otherwise they are doomed to destruction. If we see them that way it would change our view entirely, he writes. "Christ after the flesh" is how we see him no more, and so we also may see them not after the flesh but as Christ sees them, as still in need of his glorious salvation. And thus we should be speaking as Paul did.*
- *Now, and we will save these words for our next meeting, before reaching the section of the letter with the strongest exhortations of all, Paul agains returns to his own testimony as apostle of the Gentiles, as the one God has chosen, as the one who knew most intimately how God was working under his unlimited grace. These words are intended to be your example. Are they?*

[READ] 2 Cor. 6:3-10

3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

4 But in all *things* approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

10 As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

- *Paul's testimony comes again to the fore here in so many ways.*
- *This is one of the most descriptive passages in any of his letters about his sufferings and trial for the sake of the gospel of grace. He truly is our example. I often wonder about how many ministries of this truth suffered similarly. Have we?*

Application / Conclusions: