

(Through the Bible) 2 Corinthians 5

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith emphasizes the Christian perspective on death as a transition to eternal life and the importance of living a life that pleases God.

Duration: 1:11:26

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:12

Topics: "Living By Faith", "Christian Humility"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of seeking recognition and praise from others for our religious actions. He warns against the temptation to draw attention to ourselves and our spirituality in order to receive accolades from people. Instead, the speaker emphasizes the importance of living a life that is motivated by the love of Christ. He encourages believers to let the love of Christ be the driving force in their lives, rather than seeking validation from others. The speaker also reminds listeners of the assurance they have in their salvation through the Holy Spirit and encourages them to walk by faith and not by sight.

Transcript

This time let's turn in our Bibles to 2nd Corinthians chapter 5. Paul talked about how he was constantly facing death for the cause of Jesus Christ. But though he was constantly facing death, various perils, it didn't really trouble him, for he had a correct understanding of death. And I think that this is something that we as Christians need to have, a correct understanding of what death is for the child of God.

And it is because we often do not have a correct understanding, we hear such statements made when a person dies, oh what a shame, he was so young. Oh how tragic, he had his whole life before him, as though death is some tragedy for the child of God. Now, Paul faced death but he didn't worry about it because he knew that if our earthly house, this tent, were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

So, Paul realized that the real me is spiritual, I dwell in a body, the body isn't me, it's the house in which I live, and here Paul reduces it from the house to the tent. Now, whenever you think about a tent, you don't think about a permanent place to live. There's always something very transient and temporary about a tent.

And we should look at our bodies as tents, they are not permanent dwelling places for my spirit. My spirit is dwelling presently in this tent while my house is being prepared. Now, you that have been around Calvary Chapel for any length of time, know what it is to dwell in a tent while we're waiting for the building to prepare.

We dwelt for two years in a tent while we were building this facility. We know that when this earthly tent is dissolved, when my body goes back to the dust, that I have a building of God. It's not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

And so, your contrast, the tent which is always thought of in temporal terms and the building of God not made with hands, which is eternal in the heavens. This tent in which I presently live is a composite of the genes of my ancestry. And I have picked up certain brown-eyed genes and certain bald genes and the physical characteristics and so forth have been passed down to me from my parents and grandparents and all.

So, I become an interesting composite of these combination of genes. But being passed down to me through this progression of generations back to Adam, back to Noah, back to Adam, Noah's family back to Adam. I've received, of course, a lot of interesting type of characteristics, weaknesses and strengths.

But flawed at the best. Because it didn't come to me directly from God. He wouldn't make a mess like this.

But I do have a new building that I'm going to move into. It's a building of God. It's going to come to me directly from God.

It's not made with hands. It's eternal compared with the temporary in the heavens. So, for the child of God, death is moving out of the tent.

And at this point, I'd say the worn-out tent into the beautiful new house, building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. You remember Jesus said to His disciples, Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me.

For in My Father's house there are many mansions, and I'm going to prepare one for you. Now, our minds immediately go to Beverly Hills, perhaps. And some of these beautiful estates, large column porches and all.

And we think, Oh my, you know, the Lord's going to take me by the hand and lead me up Glory Road and we'll turn left on Hallelujah Lane. And halfway down the lane on the right-hand side, He's going to show me this beautiful white home with these large columns in front. And He's going to say, Chuck, that's your new mansion.

Not so. Hate to disappoint you. The new body that I'm going to get from God is not going to need sleep.

So why would I need bedrooms? There are a lot of characteristics of this new body that I'm going to have, that it won't require a house to live in. The mansion that the Lord is talking about is the new body He's got for me. I'm living in this tent.

But one day I'm going to move into a mansion. And one of these days, should the Lord tarry, you no doubt will pick up your paper and read, Chuck Smith died last night. Pastor of Calvary Chapel, etc, etc, etc.

Don't believe it. That's poor reporting. If they're going to tell the truth, they're going to have to say, Chuck Smith moved last night out of a decrepit old holy tent.

Leaky tent into a beautiful new mansion. Hey, you don't need to weep for me because I've moved out of the tent into the house, the building of God not made with hands, you see. Death for the child of God.

And that's why Paul said, hey, you think I'm worried about being bound for Christ? I'm ready to die for Christ. Because he understood what death was to the child of God. It is the moving from the tent into the house.

Now he goes on to amplify that. For in this we groan, or while we are still in these bodies, we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven. These bodies, subject to weakness, subject to fatigue, subject to pain.

In Romans, the 8th chapter, Paul talked about how we groaned, and all of creation was groaning together with us as we were waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God to wit, the redemption of our bodies. That new body, I'm yearning, I'm desiring to have that new body, that building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. If so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked.

Now this completely eliminates any concept or thought of soul sleep. For Paul goes on to declare, for we that are in this tent do groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed. I do not desire to be an unembodied spirit.

Now of course the goal of the Buddhist is to someday progress into nirvana. For all of the problems come to us because of these bodies. And hopefully we will progress from one body into another, into a higher state, until finally we are freed from the body and we enter into that unity, bliss of the eternal spirit and we become an essence.

But that isn't the hope of the Christian. We are going to move out of this old tent into the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And my desire is not to be unclothed, not to be an unembodied spirit, but to be clothed upon with that new body that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Now we have a lot of difficulty in understanding the state of the believer between now and the rapture of the church. Have their spirits gone to be with God, their bodies in the grave awaiting a renewing of that body? It is interesting that Paul the Apostle, when he was talking about the resurrection in his first epistle, likened the resurrection to a seed planted into the ground and dying. But then Paul made an interesting statement.

He said that the body that comes forth from the ground is not the body that you planted because all you planted was a bare grain. And God gave to it a body that pleased Him, so is the resurrection of the dead. Now there are a lot of people that are hoping for some kind of a resurrection of this body in which they are presently living.

I am personally looking for a far superior model, not a renewing or rejuvenating or whatever of this body. I'm ready to move out of the tent. I'm ready to move into the new house, the building of God, not made with hands.

A couple of things. First Thessalonians chapter four is one that people often question because Paul there seems to be talking about the order of the resurrection. And there Paul declares for the Lord himself shall

descend from heaven with the voice of the archangel, the trump of God, the dead in Christ will rise first and we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the air to meet the Lord in the air.

And so shall we ever be with the Lord. And so it brings confusion to them thinking that somehow our spirits may be with God, but there will be a reuniting of our bodies and our spirits at the time of the resurrection. Somehow this body is going to be rejuvenated.

Of course, there are some atheists that have really found some real problems with this. What about a person who has a heart transplant in the resurrection who gets the heart? These bodies are made up of chemicals, molecules, elements, the same 17 elements in the dirt outside of the same 17 elements that make up your body. And when your spirit moves out of this body, this body goes back to dust dust and to dust, I'll shut return spoken of the body, not of the spirit.

As what was a long fellow said, tell me not in mournful numbers. Life is but an empty dream for the soul is dead. That slumbers things are not what they seem.

Life is real. Life is earnest. The grave is not your goal.

Dust out art to dust. Returneth was not spoken of the soul, spoken of the body. No.

Back in the days of the wild West, when a man was buried, where he was shot, the body was buried in the ground, decomposed, went back to dirt and back to the basic chemical elements. Prairie grass grew. The roots went down, took up some of the same chemicals that once made it up a part of a person's body.

The cows grazed, took those chemicals into their systems, created milk, which was drunk by others. And so the chemicals that were once a part of another person's body now become a part of my body. As my body assimilates those chemicals that makes it a part of my body.

So who gets the chemicals in the resurrection? Which body do they get to go with? And in reality, they say that you have a new body every seven years. Anyhow, you know that through this process of rejuvenation of cells and so forth and, and the recreating of the cells that every seven years you actually go through a major change. You're not the person you were seven years ago, chemically speaking.

So which one of the bodies that I've dwelt in during the last 50 plus years do I get? I would opt for one that I had back 25 or 30 years ago. In fact, I'd opt for the one that I had before I injured my knee in college football. That is, if I had to make a choice of this body, but thank God I don't.

I've got a whole new building of God not made with hands eternal in the heavens. Now the Thessalonian believers were troubled because Paul had taught them the fact that Jesus was coming to establish his kingdom. But after Paul left, some of the believers there had died and the rest of them were disappointed.

They said, oh, what a shame. They died before Jesus came. They won't have a chance to enjoy the kingdom now.

How tragic. They can't enjoy the kingdom of God because they died before Jesus came. So Paul was writing this section in chapter four as comfort to those who were concerned over their loved ones who had died before the Lord had come back for the church and established his kingdom.

Now concerning those that have gone asleep in Christ, I'm going to write unto you that you sorrow not as those who have no hope. For we know that if Jesus both died and rose again, so then those that are

asleep in Christ shall he bring with him at his coming. Now the Bible teaches that the Lord is coming for us in the clouds of the air.

When he comes for us, those who are asleep in Christ will be coming with him. For we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord will not precede them which sleep. The word prevent there is a poor translation really as far as our present day understanding of the word.

The Greek word is precede. We are not going to precede those. They have preceded us for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

That's correct. They have risen first. We're not going to precede them.

Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up when the Lord comes with them in the clouds of heaven to receive us. Then we will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord. As Chuck Missler so ably points out on many occasions, God dwells outside of time.

We dwell within the framework of time presently. But one of these days I too will move outside of the time domain. I will no longer be bounded by time for I will move at death into the eternal which is outside of this time dimension.

In the eternal there is no past, present and future. In the eternal there is only present. As God sought to describe it through his name, I am that I am.

Now our minds are so bound by the time dimensions that we cannot even think apart from time, apart from a beginning and an ending. My mind cannot even grasp or conceive the concept of timelessness. But I will as I enter into the eternal.

Now being in the eternal where everything is now in the present, I am, all of time then is bound up in it. And you'd be able to look at the beginning and the ending of time at just one glance, one view, which God can do because he's outside of time. And God proves that he can because he tells you of these things are going to be happening down here, though maybe we are only at this point.

Yet God goes ahead and speaks of things that are going to be taking place out at this point because he can see them as already existing. And God oftentimes speaks of things as existing, though they haven't yet existed in the framework of time because God knows they're going to exist. And so he speaks to them being God as though they already existed.

God spoke of Isaac as existing before Isaac was ever born. But God can do that because outside of time he looks down and as far as God is concerned, Isaac was already born. And I married Rebecca and the whole thing was all complete as far as God was concerned, because he could see the whole thing.

Of course, I'm sort of encouraged by that because God looking at the whole thing speaks of me being glorified. Now that hasn't happened yet, but God spoke of it in the past tense because he's outside of time and he can see that completion of my redemption through Jesus Christ and I've been glorified together with him. That's comforting that God would speak with such assurance of my future.

I'm comforted by that. Because God knows it's going to be. Now, when I die, I leave the time dimensions.

I enter into the eternal where everything is now. So anything that will ever be is already. So you can't say, well, in the future, you know, when the whole body is made up, then the Lord's going to bring me into the heavenly scene because I'm into the heavenly scene.

I've passed into the eternal. I've passed out of time. And so I've left this time zone thing.

I've entered into the eternal. The moment my spirit leaves this body, it is my body that holds me within the time framework in the time dimension. And so those who are asleep in Christ have left the time dimension.

They've entered into the eternal where the completion is already. Now we'll catch up with them when we leave the time zone for we too will enter into the eternal. So he that hath wrought us for this self, same thing is God.

God is, is the one who has created me for this. He is, he has purposed this for us. Who also has given to us the earnest of the spirit, the down payment, so to speak, or as they refer to earnest money, show me you really mean it.

You want to buy my car? Well, look, I've got an ad in the paper, fella. You say you're going to come back in 15 minutes. How do I know what if someone calls me in five minutes, wants to buy the car, has the cash to say you really want to buy it.

Give me some earnest money. Show your intentions. God showed his intention of your full redemption by giving to you.

Now the Holy spirit, of course, Paul refers to this also in the second chapter of Ephesians being sealed with the Holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our redemption, earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. So we are always confident knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord for we walk by faith and not by sight, but we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. That's what I really desire.

Now I know that as long as I am living in this body, I'm at home in this body or this body is my home. I'm absent from dwelling there in the kingdom of God, but I would rather, I'm willing rather to move out of this old body that I might be present with the Lord in his kingdom. So death releases me.

It releases my spirit from this body that it might move into the new house, the building of God where there I will dwell with the Lord forever. Wherefore we labor that whether present or absent, we may be well pleasing unto him. So my desire is that my life might be pleasing to God while I'm living in this body.

And when I ultimately move out of the body, my chief desire is that my life be pleasing to God. Again, that Jesus might be able to say to me, well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou has been faithful in the little things.

Now I will make thee ruler over many enter into the joy of the Lord. The desire, the real driving purpose behind my life is to be pleasing to God. Paul, in writing to the Philippians said that Christ might be glorified in my body, whether by life or by death, I really don't care.

I just want to be pleasing. I want the Lord to be glorified through me. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that which he has done, whether it be good or bad.

Now, this is not to be confused with the great white throne judgment of God in Revelation chapter 20, where the sinners will all appear before the judgment bar of God. That's something entirely different than the believers coming before the Bema seat of Christ. This Bema seat of Christ is much like the Olympics judges seat.

Where the participants in the various contests would come before the Bema seat and the judges would lay on their heads the wreaths, laurel or olive to indicate their success in their particular event. Instead of the gold, silver and bronze medals, they received something far more corruptible in those days of the Olympics. They received these wreaths made out of laurel or out of olive branches and all, and they were placed on their head.

And that's what Paul was talking about, how that they train, they exercise, they discipline their bodies for a corruptible crown, but we are working for an incorruptible crown. But how they put us to shame in the discipline that they exercise for that corruptible crown and how carelessly so often we run the race for the incorruptible crown. The Bible teaches that our works are going to be judged by fire and those works which are wood, hay and stubble will be consumed.

Those works of ours which can survive this fire, we will then be rewarded for. A lot of things that are done in the name of Christ will receive no reward at all in heaven. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, beginning the sixth chapter, said, take heed to yourself that you do not your righteousness before men to be seen of men, for I say unto you, you have your reward.

Our works are to be judged what sort they are or what the motive was behind them. And Jesus illustrated this principle in how we pray, how we give, how we mortify the flesh. There are two ways of praying.

One is to pray to be heard of men and to be known by men as a man of prayer, to receive the approval, favor, awe of men because I am a godly man of prayer. Or there are prayers that are unto God, prayers in the closet, the secret prayers, and I'm not really concerned about man hearing me pray but about God. Now, if I'm praying for the effect that it will have on men, so men will say, oh my, what a wonderful man of prayer.

Then Jesus said, you have your reward. Everybody knows what a wonderful man of prayer you are. But you should rather pray to your father which sees in secret and then your father which sees in secret will reward you.

Now, it all depends on where you want to get your perks. If you want to get them from man now, then you can go ahead and live your religious life in such a way that everyone can see and know what you're doing and all acclaim what a marvelous, wonderful person you are. You can do things in such a way as draw attention to yourself.

Oh, there are several ways by which you may cleverly just call attention to people of the depth of your own devotional life. Even your tone of voice, even the way you sort of get an ethereal look on your face, sort of a saintly look as you begin to talk about things in spirit, you sort of sigh, you know, the Lord has been, you know, and you can get the message across how close you walk with God, how deeply spiritual you really are, the body gestures and all, you know. Subtle little ways by which I let people know how spiritual I really am.

But the problem is, as I am doing that, I'm really fouling up my future. As far as the rewards from God are concerned, my works are going to be judged. I will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

There will be a fiery judgment and those works coming from the wrong motivations will be burned. Those that endure the fire, I'll be rewarded for as the Lord gives to me that crown of righteousness and my position in the heavenly kingdom will be determined much by my faithfulness and to the responsibilities that God has given to me now. Now, do not confuse this with salvation.

Salvation is God's gift to you through your faith in Jesus Christ. By grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourself. It is a not of works, lest any man should boast.

So don't confuse this with your salvation, which many people do. There is nothing I can do of works to enhance my salvation. That's complete.

My righteousness is complete in Jesus Christ. And yet my works are to be judged before the judgment seat of Christ. Then I might receive the reward or in some cases the loss of reward because of the improper motivations behind the works.

So those works which remain after the fiery judgment, they're put in the crucible of fire and they're determined what sort they are. Those gold and silver refined, God will say, well done, blessed, you know, here's your reward. Now you can have Hawaii.

I'm hoping he doesn't say Baghdad. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive for the things that were done in his body according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad. As far as my works for the Lord, knowing therefore the fear of the Lord and the word terror is, is a old English word which has lost its, it's come to a totally new meaning.

The word is, is the fear of the Lord. And I don't think that we really properly understand the fear of the Lord. You see, for many years, I feared that the Lord might hurt me because I had a wrong concept of God.

Now I fear that I might hurt the Lord. And I think that that's what the fear of the Lord really is. The fear that I might hurt him by my failure to do what he wants me to do.

My failure of living up to his expectations or desires. He doesn't have his desires for me knowing therefore the fear of the Lord. We persuade men, but are made manifest unto God.

And I trust also are made manifest in your own consciences for we commend not ourselves again unto you. Now, again, the false teachers that had followed Paul in Corinth, those Judaizers and others who were sort of speaking in a degrading way of the grace that Paul had taught. They also were putting down Paul himself as an authority.

They had challenged his apostleship. He's just some renegade. He's a Jimmy Jones.

And they were saying mean things about Paul. But Paul said, I don't have to have letters of recommendation to you as others need letters of recommendation. You are my letters of recommendation.

Your faith in Christ bears witness to the authenticity of my ministry. You, your faith in Jesus really validates my apostleship. So we are not commending ourselves again unto you, but we give you an occasion to glory on our behalf that you may have somewhat to answer them that glory in appearance and not in

heart.

So for those who were loyal friends of Paul, Paul said, look, I'm writing these things, not that I'm commending myself to you, but when these guys come along and give their, you know, wild stories and reports about me, at least you'll have something to answer them with those men who glory in appearance. And there are unfortunately a lot of those people today who still glory in appearance and not in heart. They'd accused Paul of being crazy.

They said that guy's crazy. It's interesting that, um, Paul on other occasions was also thought to be crazy. You remember when Paul was making his defense before Agrippa, uh, Festus finally cried out, Paul, you're crazy.

You're much learning has made you mad. And so that was something that followed Paul around because he was a radical and his detractors were saying, oh, the guy's crazy. And so Paul said, if I am crazy and that word beside ourselves is a, it means that a person who is to the point of talking to himself.

So I say, yes, I want to go there. Are you sure you want to go there? Yes, I want to go there. Well, why do you want to go there? Well, I just want to go there, you know, and a guy gets to talking to himself.

He's beside himself. There's two persons, you know, and so here I am and here I am and, and we're having a conversation back and forth and, and he's beside himself. So Paul said, if I'm beside myself, it is to God or whether I have a sound mind, it is for your cause.

So, uh, Paul answering the detractors, he goes on to declare for the love of Christ constrain us. Now Paul introduces here the subject of the love of Christ as a constraining force within his life. He's not really talking here about motivations to ministry, though we so often hear this taught as motivation to ministry.

Whenever Paul talked to the love of Christ, he was thinking of one thing, the cross of Jesus Christ. The only way God has ever sought to show or to prove that he loved you was by sending his son to die for your sins. And whenever God wants to declare his love for you, he always declares it through the cross here in his love.

Not that we love God, but that God loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. For God commended or demonstrated his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly for God so loved the world. He gave his only begotten son and always God's love for you is tied up in the death of Jesus Christ for you.

And they never thought of the love of God apart from the cross, because that is God's demonstration, his supreme demonstration of his love. Greater love has no man than this, that a man will lay down his life for his friends. And so as Paul says, for the love of Christ constrains me, his mind is now taken to the death of Christ for mankind.

For we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead. The love of Christ forces me to this conclusion. The fact that he died for all indicates that all men then were dead.

Paul said in Ephesians two and you have he made alive who were dead as the result of your trespasses and sins. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The soul that sinneth it shall surely die.

If those scriptures both be correct, then the assumption must be made that all natural men are dead. That is spiritually dead, which is the separation of a man's consciousness from God. Jesus said, if you live and believe in me, you will never die.

That's why I say, don't believe it. If the paper's right, I've died. I cannot die.

I will move. Yes. Thank God for that.

But I won't die for. I will never be separated from God because of Jesus death for me. Never for a moment will I be separated from him.

And that's what real death is. Physical death, the separation of your consciousness from your body. You're not to worry or be fearful about that.

But what you really need to fear is the separation of your spirit from God for eternity. That's what you ought to be concerned about. Now, it's interesting that the opposite is true in most cases.

Most people are so concerned about their physical deaths, but think nothing of spiritual death. But Jesus said, don't be afraid of those who can kill your body and after that have no power, but rather fear him who after the body is dead, is able to cast both soul and spirit into Gehenna. I send you fear ye him.

So we thus judge. We come to the logical conclusion. If Jesus died for all men, then it must be that all men were dead and that he died for all.

That they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves. Now, that is the mark of the flesh life. Even as there is physical death and spiritual death, there is physical life and spiritual life.

And we have passed from death into life through the work of the Holy Spirit and as the result of the work of Jesus Christ. And you have he made alive who were dead in your trespasses and sins. Now, having come into this new life, I now have a new center and that is God.

The old life of the flesh was centered around me. It was a self-centered life, but Christ died for me that I would no longer be living for myself, no longer living this self-centered life, only seeking to gratify the needs of my own body. But now living a God-centered life, the life of the Spirit in fellowship with God, I am living to satisfy and to please God.

Before I live to satisfy and please myself. The life of the flesh. The life of the flesh creates the mind of the flesh.

If my body is ruling, if I am body, soul and spirit and the body is ruling, then my mind is under the control of my body and what I am thinking about is the body needs. That's what occupies my thinking. What shall I eat? What shall I drink? What shall I wear? If I am living the new life after the Spirit, a God-centered life, then I have the mind of the Spirit and I'm thinking about God and my relationship with him, my love for him, his love for me, worshipping him, aware of him, conscious of him in all the things around me, God-conscious.

Oh, what glory it is to have a mind quickened by the Spirit of God. Heaven above, a deeper blue. Earth around, a deeper green.

Something lives in every hue that Christless eyes have never seen. I never saw that before. The beauty of the flower, the glory of the colors, the fragrance, the mind quickened by the Spirit.

We become aware of God and just all around us as Paul declared ultimately, in him we live, we move, we have our being. And I begin to be aware of that. I'm surrounded by him in my heart, living in worship and fellowship with him day by day.

The mind of the Spirit resulting from the life of the Spirit, a life that is controlled by the Spirit, a life that is a God-centered life. Now, that's why Christ died for you. That you might be freed from the bondage of corruption, the bondage of your flesh.

That you might be able now to live a whole new life in a new dimension, in the dimension of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and joy and peace. Now, for this cause, Jesus died, that we should henceforth not live to ourselves, but live for him who died for me and rose again.

And so as Paul the Apostle said, for me to live is Christ. He said, I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, and yet it is not I, but Christ who is living in me. And the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and who gave himself for me.

That we should no longer live unto ourselves, but now live for him who died for us and rose again. Wherefore, henceforth, know we no man after the flesh. From now on, Paul said, I'm not concerned in the fleshly man, the exploits, whatever.

I'm not concerned in knowing a man after the flesh, though this is how he said, I once knew Christ. At one time, Jesus Christ was to Paul the Apostle, a heretic, a leader of a new sect that was a threat to Judaism. And he went about to stamp out this new sect.

He once knew Christ after the flesh, but no more, he said. That's not the way I know him now. He now knows him after the spirit, and he has received that life and power from him.

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature or creation, and the old things have passed away. Behold, all things are become new. These are direct positive statements.

Now, John tells us that many times a person can say something, but yet their life isn't in harmony with what they're saying. It is possible for a man to make glorious professions. And as you go through the first epistle of John, you'll find over and over, John says, if a man says, if a man says, if a man says he abides in him, then he ought to also walk even as he walked.

If you're abiding in Christ, you're going to walk like Jesus walked. If you say you're abiding in Christ and you're walking after the flesh, you're a liar. You're deluded.

You're living in deception, self-deception. If a man says, I love God, oh, what a glorious thing to say. But if at the same time you hate your brother, you're a liar.

How can you love God whom you have not seen and yet hate your brother who was made in his image, whom you have seen? If a man says, hey, I have no sin, then you deceive yourself. The truth isn't in you. And so all the way through John's giving us little things that men profess, but he's saying, hey, you're only fooling yourself.

You're deceiving yourself. It isn't what you profess. It's what you are.

And if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature and the old things have passed away. And if the old things have not passed away, then you have no real proof that you're in Christ, no matter what you say. Your professions are empty and false and deceptive.

And the tragedy is you're the one who is deceived the most. So many people in church are deceived in the thinking that their attendance at church is going to buy them a place in the kingdom of God. Their giving to the church is going to secure their place in heaven.

Their faithfulness to the church, church attendance, church membership, church contributions cannot do anything towards your eternal life. And these things can be a deception. Oh, well, I pray.

Well, Isaiah said. The God's hand is not short that he cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that he cannot hear. But your sins have separated you from God.

And if you are regarding iniquity in your heart, the Lord doesn't even hear you. It's like cutting the telephone line that comes to your house and then going in and dialing the number and talking to your sweetheart and telling her how much you love her and all the glorious things you think about her. Well, it's not going anywhere.

You've got a broken connection. It's going into the ground. The wire is grounded outside.

And no matter how beautiful or persuasive you may be expressing yourself, your heart, your love, it's not doing anything, not getting any results. And so prayer. If you're regarding sin in your heart, sin breaks your connection with God.

And prayer is meaningless. Oh, it's worse than that. It's deceptive because you have a tendency to still rest on the fact, well, I pray, you know, I know I'm not doing what I should.

I know I'm not living like that, but I still pray. But prayer becomes in that case, a deceptive thing. It's the changed life.

It's the new life manifested by the fact that the old things are passed away. You cannot continue to live after the flesh and walk after the flesh. The life of the flesh and the life of the spirit are mutually exclusive.

Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.

And if you sow to the flesh of the flesh, you're going to reap. And if you sow to the spirit of the spirit, you will reap. But the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these.

And Paul gives us that horrible list. The works of the flesh of which, unfortunately, we are all too familiar. Strife, envying, deceit, murders, lies, fornication, adultery.

But Paul said, let no man think that if he is doing these things, he is going to inherit the kingdom of heaven. You better read that list over again. Read it prayerfully and read Paul's conclusive remarks.

If you are living after the flesh, don't think you're going to inherit the spiritual kingdom of heaven. If any man's in Christ, he's a new creature. The old things have passed away.

Have they? That's the question. Let a man examine himself because you're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. And if you will judge yourself now, then you will not be judged.

Then how much time do you spend living after the spirit? And how much time do you live, spend living after the flesh? He's a new creature. The old things are passed away and behold, all things are become new. All things are now of God.

Not some of the things of my life. Well, God has his place. I, I believe that God should have his, you know, have the place in every man's life and every man should make a place for God.

No, he wants more than a place in your life. He wants the totality of your life. All things are of God who has reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation to wit that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them and have committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Now, then we are ambassadors of Christ. As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ dead, be ye reconciled to God. Now, some people talk about God being reconciled to us.

Never. God didn't leave us. God didn't turn his back and go away from us.

We are the ones that need to be reconciled to God. We're the ones that turned our back on him and walked away from him. We're the ones that need the reconciliation.

And so Paul's plea and he said, I'm doing it in Jesus's place in his stead. As for God, I'm doing it. I'm an ambassador, a representative of God.

I'm speaking on his behalf in his debt, be reconciled unto God. So this glorious work of reconciliation, God in his love, created man, created man in his image, in his government of light and life, that man might live in fellowship with God and know the glory, the joy, the beauty of living in fellowship with God. But man turned from that, turned his back on God, walked away from God.

And he began to experience the miseries of life without God, the emptiness, the hopelessness, the despair of life without God. God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son to die for man's sins in order that through the death of Christ, man might be brought back to God or reconciled to God. And so Paul said, I'm God's ambassador and I'm here representing Jesus Christ and I'm saying for him, be reconciled to God.

Come back into fellowship with God. Come back into the government of light and life. Know again the joy, the glory, the blessing of walking in the Spirit, the life of the Spirit, the life after the Spirit.

For God has made him, Jesus Christ, to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God through him. Here is one of the most glorious Scriptures in the New Testament. As we see what God has done for us in Christ, in reconciling us to himself, all we like sheep had gone astray.

We turned every one of us to our own ways and God laid on him the iniquities of us all. God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin. I sometimes start to read in the paper some horrible, vicious crime that has been committed and I just can't read it.

My being just revolts against it too strongly. I sometimes have been given reports from the Social Welfare Department of child abuse and some of the things that are done to these little one, two, three-year-old

babies. And when I read of some of the abuses of these little children, I have to quit reading.

I can't stand it. My system just won't take it. I just have to set it aside.

I get sick. I cannot conceive a person doing such horribly, ugly, vile things. And my whole being just is revolted by it.

And I'm not that righteous a person. I have my own flaws. I've done some pretty terrible things myself.

Jesus knew no sin. Absolutely pure. Absolutely holy.

Absolutely righteous. But God laid on him every horrible, vile deed that has ever been done by perverted, fallen man. Now, can you imagine what a shock that must have been? No wonder he cried out, My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me? As he tasted of death for every man, that separation from God, that spiritual death, that cry that came from his lips upon the cross was made in order that you might not have to make it for eternity.

There, as God laid upon him our sins, he was reconciling man to God. And so he became what we were in order that he might make us what he is. Love, divine, all loves excelling.

The love of Jesus Christ, who was willing to take all of my ugliness, all of my sin, and bear in his body there on the cross my sins. The love of God, who was willing to allow his son to become sin for us, he who knew no sin, and die in our place. Now you see why the greatest sin that any man can ever commit is the sin of rejecting this love of God offered to him through Jesus Christ.

You see, that's the only sin for which a man will ever be judged. You won't have to face the great white throne judgment of God because you were a cheat, a thief, a liar, a prostitute, a murderer, an adulterer, fornicator. You'll face the great white throne judgment of God if you have rejected the love of God offered to you through Jesus Christ.

That's the greatest sin. Jesus said, I didn't come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through me might be saved. And he that believeth is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, seeing he has not believed on the only begotten Son of God.

This is the condemnation that light came into the world, but men would not come to the light. That's what it's going to be. God has offered salvation, but you didn't take it.

God has offered love, but you rejected it. No hope, for there remains no further or no other sacrifice. There's nothing else you can do for the atoning of your sins, for being reconciled to God.

No other way you can be reconciled to God. That's why Satan hates the cross. That's why your cults hate the cross.

That's why the liberals hate the cross. The cross declares to mankind there is only one way by which you can be reconciled to God, and that's through the cross and the death of Jesus Christ. And if you reject that, there remains no other sacrifice, only the fearful looking forward to the fire indignation of the wrath of God, which will devour his adversaries.

For if they that despise Moses' law died because of the witness of two or three of how much worse punishment, suppose ye he to be accounted worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath

counted the blood of his covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and has done despite to the Spirit of grace. For we know him who has said, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. And again, it is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of a living God.

I'll tell you what, if I were God and did that much to redeem man, offering my son and giving my son, and man would reject and cast him aside and do despite to that Spirit of grace, I would do as God does, and God will do. I would say you want to live in darkness, that shall be your sentence, and I would cast you into outer darkness throughout eternity, which God is going to do to the fearful and the unbelieving. Those who fail to receive his grace and offers of love through Jesus.

So in Christ's stead, as ambassadors of Christ, we encourage you be reconciled to God.

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