

## 2nd Corinthians Chapters 4 and 5 – John Karmelich

1. This lesson deals with our "mission" as Christians. When we get to heaven and God judges us as believers, I like to summarize God's judgment in two questions: 1) Do you believe My Son Jesus died for your sins? 2) What have you done with your life since you accepted that fact?
  - a) I cannot say for certain that is how God is going to judge us. What I do know for sure is we are going to be judged and that judgment is based on how we have lived our lives for God once we have given our lives to Him. OK any questions so far? ☺
2. With that scary introduction out of my system, let me give you the title of this lesson. It is called, "Understanding our focus and mission as Christian believers".
  - a) When I say "focus", I am taking in terms of understanding the eternal perspective of life.
  - b) In these two chapters, Paul is going to teach how to see our life in earth in comparison to, and in preparation for our eternal life in heaven.
  - c) To appreciate this question, it helps to think about Paul's life as a believer. He endured suffering and rejecting far more than most of us can even imagine. The way Paul dealt with that pain is he focused on the "eternal" as opposed to his life on earth.
  - d) Does this mean Paul expects us to go through what he went through? No. It does mean Paul wants us to have the proper "eternal" perspective to deal with life's troubles.
  - e) Part of this lesson discusses the issue of evangelism, which is simply sharing the gospel message with nonbelievers. It is not necessarily about memorizing a specific set of words to share, although that method is one way of sharing the gospel message with others.
    - i) The real point of evangelism is to share our love of God with nonbelievers so that they too can come to the realization that Jesus is God and died for our sins.
    - ii) The issue of evangelism gets to something Jesus commands us to do. This is called "The Great Commission" and is based on Matthew 28:19. This is Jesus' command for us to go out into the world and make disciples of all nations.
  - f) This gets me back to how does God judge our lives: The question comes down to how are we living to make a difference for God? Evangelism is just one of those issues. Helping other Christians grow in their faith is another way we should be making a difference.
3. My goal in this lesson is not to scare you into doing more for God. My job is to make us realize that our lives as Christians will be judged on how we have made a difference for God.
  - a) It is important to state we don't get rewarded based on "numbers". We don't get a point in heaven for every person we save a person or help someone grow in their faith.
  - b) What we do get is rewarded for being loyal to whatever God has called us to do. God may call us to be a witness to one person or to millions.
  - c) The great "quest of life" is to find out what is our mission(s) in life for God and how does God expect us to go about fulfilling those missions?
4. Now that I've gotten everyone scared and worried about our future destiny, ☺ it's a good time to start going verse by verse through these two chapters.
  - a) A final point to remember is that if we have a sense of peace about our life right now and we are regularly seeking God through prayer and His word, I would have confidence that we are right where God wants us. If we feel God is calling us to do something else, it is best to follow that "urge" and see where God leads us. I am assuming that urge does not include doing something that violates any sort of biblical principal. I also assume that urge is something possible to do and that one can get the resources to fulfill that mission.
  - b) As a warning, that urge probably will lead us down a path in life we do not expect. One has to remember that God is always guiding us, even when we don't know what is going to happen next. So with that stated, let's get going.

5. Verse 1: Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.
- a) In order to understand this, we should remember what was happening near the end of the previous chapter. Paul was busy defending the fact he truly was an apostle.
    - i) There were Christians in Corinth who were having doubts about Paul's authority. This was due to false teachers that proclaimed in effect that one must keep the laws of the Old Testament in order to be saved.
    - ii) Paul correctly argues that salvation comes solely by one's trust in Jesus as both Lord (i.e., God) and Savior (i.e., He paid for our sins). Trying to keep the law may lead to a better life for many, but it has nothing to do with our salvation.
  - b) Paul is arguing he can only spend his life in the ministry is "due to the Grace of God".
    - i) I believe this refers to the fact that God changed Paul from his former conduct of persecuting Christians. For those who don't know the book of Acts very well, before Paul was saved, he spent time persecuting Christians as they were teaching contrary to the Law of Moses. It is only due to the mercy of God that Paul not only lives, but also from that time onward, he lived to make a difference for Jesus.
    - ii) One can also argue that this "mercy" refers to Paul's life since becoming a Christian. Paul faced death lots of times as a witness for Jesus. The fact that Paul is still alive at this point in time has nothing to do with Paul being able to outwit his opponents, but has to do with the mercy of God keeping him alive.
  - c) OK, why does Paul say he lives due to God's mercy as opposed to God's grace? Paul teaches elsewhere we are saved by grace alone. (See Ephesians 2:5,8). So how is it here that Paul says his ministry is due to God's mercy as opposed to God's grace?
    - i) Let's define the terms: To receive mercy is a form of forgiveness. The idea is we don't get the punishment we deserve. To receive grace is unmerited favor. Grace is to receive something that we don't deserve in the first place.
    - ii) Paul, like all believers received both. So why is the focus here is on mercy?
      - a) I suspect it was due to the fact Paul accepted the fact God forgave Him for the period of time Paul persecuted Christians prior to his conversion.
      - b) The related idea is that not only was Paul saved but also his life was constantly in danger as he went from place to place for Jesus. It was only by God's mercy AND God's grace that Paul is still alive to that point.
  - d) Meanwhile, there is more to the verse. It says, "We don't lose heart".
    - i) Tying it all together, Paul is saying because of God's mercy, "we don't lose heart".
    - ii) Paul believed he was saved so that he could now spend the rest of his life being a missionary for Jesus. If God has called Paul, or us into a particular ministry, then we have to trust that God provides us with all we need to succeed in that ministry.
    - iii) Let me put it another way: Let's suppose you or I have a particular talent or gift. We decide to use that gift to make a difference for God. Since God is the one who gave us that gift in the first place, don't you also think that God will make it possible for us to be successful at using that gift for Him?
    - iv) I should define "success" for a Christian. It is not measured in numbers. It is all about making a difference for God. We don't get more rewards in heaven if we helped millions or just one. The key is were we loyal to what God called us to do and used what talents God has given us to make a difference for Him.
    - v) Learning what is one's gift is a journey within itself. If one does not know, start by asking yourself what you are good at or simply what one enjoys doing? Then ask how can I use that gift for God. Sometimes it involves trying different things or getting involved in different ministries and seeing where it goes from there.
  - e) Meanwhile, Paul's point is that God gave him the mercy to keep on living for Him and keep on making a difference for Him. That's the point here.

6. Verse 2: Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.
- a) The first sentence starts with Paul saying he has "renounced secret and shameful ways". What Paul is saying is that he is not trying to trick anyone into accepting the Gospel message. What Paul does is he lays out the Gospel message and watches the results.
  - b) One of the mistakes we make as Christians is we think that if people aren't accepting the Gospel message, it is due to our bad presentation. We tend to think, "If I only could have said the right words, people will accept the Gospel".
    - i) It doesn't work that way. Our job is to present the Gospel "honestly and simply". One can study how to present the message, but that doesn't guarantee success.
  - c) This actually leads us back to Verse 2. Paul's point is he didn't try to trick anyone. He simply laid out the truth of the Gospel message simply and plainly.
    - i) Remember why Paul is preaching all of this. It is due to the fact that some people in Corinth were against Paul and his teaching of salvation on faith alone.
  - d) If you read through the Book of Acts and Paul's letters, there are many places that give part or all of Paul's presentation of the Gospel message. Paul didn't memorize a speech. Paul would simply explain his conversion experience and then explain that salvation is about accepting the Gospel message that Paul would lay out.
    - i) Paul never "pushed anyone" to accept the message. Paul's would just preach the message. Sometimes people would accept it and sometimes they would not. Paul would then work with the one's who did accept it (assuming he didn't have to run for his life at that moment) to help them grow in their faith.
7. Verse 3: And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.
- a) The main point of Verse 3 is that the "Gospel Message is veiled to those who are going to hell". Does that mean if we fail to convert someone, it is now, too late for them? Hardly.
  - b) As I've stated in the past, only God Himself knows who is saved and who is not saved. I know that I've rejected the Gospel message for a long time before I changed.
  - c) A key point here is if a person continually rejects the Gospel message, yes, they are going to hell. Hell is a place for those who don't want to live with God forever.
8. Verse 4: The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
- a) The first phrase says, "The god of this age". OK who is that? That is Satan. Paul only uses that phrase here. Jesus said something similar when He referred to Satan as "The prince of this world" in John 14:10. The idea is that this world ("i.e., nonbelievers) belongs to Satan. When we are saved, we are no longer part of Satan's dominion.
    - i) Think of it this way: When Jesus was tempted by Satan, one of the temptations was that Satan said in effect "All of this world I will give to you if you worship me". (See Matthew 4:9 and Luke 4:7). My point is Jesus never denied that it is Satan's world and that he had the power to offer it to Jesus.
  - b) This leads us back to the verse. It says that the "god of this age" (Satan) has blinded the mind of unbelievers so that they cannot see the gospel. What does that mean?
    - i) What it does mean is that when people reject the Gospel message, Satan can "amplify" that lack of belief.
    - ii) Statistically speaking, most people get saved as teenagers. The older one gets in life, the less likely it is to get saved. For those like me who were saved latter in life, consider yourself a statistical anomaly and we can get saved at any given age!
    - iii) People who reject the Gospel message never just worship nothing. God creates us with a need to worship Him. When people don't turn to God, they find someone else to fill that void. Find out how someone spends their spare time and money, and you will find their "god".

- iv) This leads us back to Satan. What He does do (through his legion of angelic followers) is help people "turn from God" to whatever they are into at that moment in time. This is why witnessing for people always requires praying for them that their heart may be open to the truth.
9. Verse 5: For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.
- a) Paul's point in Verse 5 is that when we are witnesses for God, we should not focus on ourselves. We should preach Jesus as our Lord (That is, the "ruler" of our life.)
    - i) Does that mean we cannot share with people how Jesus has changed our lives? No, that may be part of our witness for Him. The point is being a witness for God means our focus is on Him and not ourselves.
  - b) Suppose we are in a situation where we feel lead to witness to someone. How do we start? My usual answer is start with a quick prayer. Sometimes Christians are trained with a specific speech on how to open conversations or leading people to Christ. Those speeches have been "tried and tested", but one should be open to what God has to say, as it is different in every case. Sometimes, it is just a matter of asking questions and seeing if that person is open to discussing "things of God" and going from there.
    - i) If you recall from the book of Acts, whenever Paul entered a new town, the first thing he did was look for the local synagogue. In such towns after the normal synagogue service, guests are often invited to share whatever is on their minds. That gave a chance for the locals to hear what guests had to say. It also gave Paul an open opportunity to preach the Gospel to people attending a religious service.
    - ii) My point is not that we should go attend synagogue services. ☺ My point is to watch for opportunities to share Jesus with people who are honestly interested. For example, I'm the kind of person who reads my bible in public. It has lead to all sorts of discussions with strangers. Some people are interested and some are not. Other people witness by getting involved in outreach groups from local churches. What such groups do is present themselves with opportunities to share.
  - c) Going back to something Paul said earlier, we should not take it personal when people reject the Gospel message. Just because a person does not respond positively does not mean they will not be saved. It just means they reject the gospel message at that moment in time. For many people including myself, I remember being witnessed to on a number of occasions where I quite literally ran away from hearing that Gospel message.
  - d) In Verse 6, the first phrase says, "Let light shine out of darkness". That is a reference to Genesis 1:3. It is the first reference to light in the bible. If one studies that verse in Genesis, it is unusual in that the sun is not mentioned until later in the creation story.
    - i) The "light shining in the darkness" refers to the idea of God giving opportunities for mankind to turn to Him. The existence and evidence of God in the world was there essentially from the beginning.
    - ii) It also ties to something Paul taught in Romans Chapter 1. The idea is that people have no excuse as to ignore the existence of a god. For example, the earth is very delicately balanced. If the earth were just a little closer to the sun or a little further away, we would not survive. Without an ozone layer surrounding the world, we would not survive. What that implies is the world was carefully designed. If that were true, there must be a "designer". My point is the more one studies science, the more evidence one sees for God's existence.
    - iii) A related example is people have a natural instinct to know that murder is wrong and stealing is wrong. The question is, "Who put that instinct in us?" The point is even if one knew nothing of God the "natural evidence" for the existence of God is instinctive in all people if we just think about it.

- e) Now we can get back to Verse 6. Paul's point is just as God said "Let light shine out of darkness" in Verse 1, so God also put "His light" in the hearts of all believers so that we have a "natural ability" to share Christ with others.
- i) This ties to Jesus' teaching that "We (Christians) are the light of the world". (See Matthew 5:14). What Jesus meant by that is we as believers reflect God's light within us and we are able to share the light of God with others.
  - ii) In other words, God equips us with the ability to be a witness for Him. My point here is that God never gives us a command in which He does not also give us the ability to carry out that command. If God wants us to witness to others about Him, He also gives us the power to do so. That is also what Paul is getting at when He says in effect in Verse 6 that the "light of Christ" shines through us so that we can be witnesses to others.
- f) Let me deal with "Christian doubts": Suppose you say, "It is not my calling to go out and be a witness. I'm really good at helping around the church or really good at teaching studies, but when it comes to actually witnessing for Christ, that is not my spiritual gift".
- i) First of all, some Christians do have a better gift for evangelism than others. Where I live in Southern California is a well-known evangelist named Greg Laurie. I could give the exact same speech as Greg, and even give it in the exact same tone. Still more people would respond to Greg than to me because God gave Him a special gift of evangelism.
  - ii) This gets back to something I said earlier about numbers. God is not impressed with numbers. God is impressed with people making a difference for Him and just going out and doing something for Him.
  - iii) Paul is calling all of us to be a witness for God and to make a difference for Him. With that said, we should always watch for opportunities.
  - iv) Sometimes you will know a good opportunity as of a sudden "God puts it on our heart to share the Gospel message" with whoever we are with.
    - a) Sometimes God just wants us to "try to hit a single" as opposed to a "home run" by just giving somebody something to think about.
    - b) One should also pray about what is our specific role in fulfilling Jesus command to preach the Gospel to the whole world.
  - v) On a related issue, there are unsaved people I pray for regularly. I pray for their hearts to be open to the truth and others to be witnesses to them. One's role in spreading the gospel also includes the role of prayer that people's hearts are open.
10. Verse 7: But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.
- a) The term "jars of clay" refer to our physical bodies. Clay jars in Paul's day were fairly cheap things used for trash collection (waste baskets) and even "bathroom collection" material (yes, that ☺) that was then taken outside and dumped. The point is "clay jars" is not a pretty picture of something special. The idea is that "God is special inside of us", but the human bodies that contain the "real us" is much less valuable.
    - i) Let me explain this principal another way: When we get resurrected, we get moved from our physical bodies to a new body that lasts for eternity. I'm not positive what that new body is like, but I know it is not the same as the one I have now, as the one I'm currently in is slowly wearing out.
    - ii) Further, when we accept Jesus in our hearts, our bodies get a little more crowded as God literally becomes part of our physical body. God has no weight so we can't blame God for putting on weight. ☺ Along the same line of thinking, the "real us" has no weight. To explain this, I like to use the image of a computer CD or DVD. The software on that disk has no weight. The software is like the real us but the disk itself wears out over time, just like our physical bodies.

- iii) So if God is with us, why don't we act perfectly all the time? The answer is God still gives us free will, even when He is "part of us". At any moment in time, we can choose to do God's will or ignore God's will. The point is God is always there. It ties to what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit is our "deposit" of what is to come in heaven. (See Luke 11:13 as an example on this.)
  - iv) How does that physically work anyway? How does God manifest Himself in believers and not unbelievers? I'm not sure, but I know it works. If I believe in a God powerful enough to create the world, I can accept the idea that God can manifest Himself inside believers as well.
11. Verse 8: We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;<sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.<sup>10</sup> We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.<sup>11</sup> For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.<sup>12</sup> So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.
- a) Let me summarize these five verses in a few sentences: Our physical bodies wear out (become less efficient) over time. Despite this decline, Christians can have a positive attitude knowing that we will live forever. In our bodies we carry the "death of Jesus" in that our physical bodies are decaying. At the same time, we carry "new life" in us as we will live forever. The new life can be revealed in our bodies in the same sense that our "light shines" as living witnesses for God.
  - b) Now look at Verse 12. It says that "(Even though) death is at work in us (by the physical decline of our bodies), so new life is at work in us" as God is changing us to be more like the kind of person God wants us to be.
  - c) Now let's go back to the adjectives used in Verse 8. It says we are "pressed" but not "crushed". We are "perplexed", but "not in despair". We are "persecuted, but we are not "abandoned". We are "struck down", but not "destroyed". Notice that in each of these categories, we do suffer, but not until a point of death.
    - i) The essential idea is that we suffer in this lifetime, but we will never experience eternal death. We will never be separated from God because we will be with God forever, (in our part) due to the fact we want to be with Him forever.
    - ii) Does this mean that if I am not suffering right now, I am not doing God's will? No, it does not mean every moment of our life will have "troubles". It does mean that life has its troubles to begin with. Further, if we are being a witness for God, we can expect opposition. (As I've stated, if you don't believe Satan is real, try opposing Him for a while!) That opposition will cause all sorts of things to happen to us. The ultimate point is no matter how bad the pain of the moment is, we should not lose hope because we will live forever. That is when one has to remember that "forever" is a whole lot longer than this life.
    - iii) Let me give an "extreme" example: Suppose one is born with a physical ailment so bad that one is in pain all of one's life. If one has accepted the Gospel message, then one can comprehend that the worse that can happen is only in this lifetime.
  - d) Some people argue we carry our "pains" into the next life with us. Jesus still had the scars of his nail prints when he was resurrected and some think we carry our "scars" into the next world. I've always disagreed with that view. In heaven, we are given a new body that lasts for eternity. I don't believe there is any more suffering in heaven. I especially say this for those who have lived a life with a lot of physical suffering in this time.
    - i) Yes it is true Jesus wipes away our tears when we see Him in heaven. (Source: Revelation 21:4.) If there is no suffering, what are the tears for? I suggest two possibilities: One is "tears of joy" that are suffering is over. The other suggestion I've heard is the realization of lost opportunities thinking back over our old life.

- e) The main idea of these verses is that even though we are physically decaying over time, that decay applies to our physical bodies and not our "spiritual selves" that dwell inside our bodies. We are living witnesses for Jesus at any and all ages of our lives. The "light of Jesus" can shine within us at any and all times.
12. Verse 13: It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak,<sup>14</sup> because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.<sup>15</sup> All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.
- a) Verse 13 is Paul quoting Psalm 116:10. The idea is the Psalmist believed God and therefore the writer of that Psalm "spoke (wrote) what was in his heart".
- b) Paul is comparing the faith of that Psalmist to us as Christians. We are able to speak the Gospel truth to people because such information is already in our hearts.
- i) Going back to Greg Laurie, I heard him tell the story of the first time he ever witnessed to somebody. He was only a Christian a matter of days. He met a stranger at the beach and had an urge to share the Gospel. All he knew how to do at that time (he was just saved a few days earlier) was to read from a tract he had in his pocket. The amazing thing is that person then accepted Jesus.
- ii) My point is not that we should grab a bible tract and read it to the first person we see. ☺ The point is God works on us on our level, which is wherever we are at spiritually. Whether one has been a Christian one day or 100 years, God has the ability to work on us and share our spiritual faith with others
- c) OK, time to stand back and ask, "Why is Paul preaching all of this?"
- i) Part of the answer is to explain to the Corinthians: "The good news of Jesus" in that one is saved by accepting that message and not by keeping "The Law".
- ii) Part of the answer is so that the Christians in Corinth understand that Paul's only intent is to preach the Gospel message and that he was not at it for any sort of personal financial gain.
- iii) Finally, it is so that we understand that God puts the power in us to be witnesses to others. In other words, God does not command us to do anything that He has already put the power "in us", so that we can obey His commands.
- iv) Believe it or not, that ties well to Verse 15, which says, "All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people. Paul's point here is he shared God's grace with Christians so that they can pass on God's grace to others. In other words, those Christians don't need Paul in order for the church to grow.
13. Verse 16: Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.<sup>17</sup> For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.<sup>18</sup> So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
- a) Paul finishes his point (remember there were no chapter breaks in the original text) by coming back to the idea that while our bodies on earth are wearing out over time, our true internal self, the part that lives forever, is being "renewed" every day.
- b) Paul's point is the way we deal with the suffering of this lifetime, is to get our focus on the eternal and to remember that eternity is a lot longer than our life on this earth.
- c) Let me put "life" in a different light: Why didn't God design us now with bodies that last forever? Why have this life long "test" before we can live forever? The answer is God desires a two-way love relationship with us. The purpose of this life is to see if we do choose to love God. In order to make that choice, there has to be other choices available to see if we do or do not choose God at any one moment.

- d) I do believe that before Adam and Eve sinned, their bodies were designed to last forever. God allowed physical decay to come in this world as a "mercy killing". The same way it is more merciful to kill an injured horse than to let it live, so it is more merciful to let our bodies "wear out" due to the damage caused by sin than to let us live forever in this physical state.
    - i) That leads me back to the issue of those that suffer a lot in this lifetime. Suffering in this lifetime is due to the consequence of allowing sin and free will to exist in this world. I find that suffering is easy to explain "logically" but still very tough to deal with on an emotional level.
  - e) In theory its easy to say let us fix our eyes on heaven as opposed to whatever we are dealing with in the here and now. Reality is different. Sometimes there are tough decisions that have to be made and it is hard to not focus on the present situation.
    - i) Paul is saying the way to handle the "pain of the moment" is to consider the "length of the moment" in comparison to eternity. While that is all fine and good, the problem is the "pain of the moment" is real and tangible and it's hard to focus on things we cannot see or touch.
    - ii) How do we make the "tough decisions" of life? Let's already assume one is regularly praying and seeking God through His word. The "practical" may be a manner of listening to the doctor's advice and making the best decision possible. Often it means consulting with other family members who may or may not be saved. The point is we never know how God is going to work in any situation. All we do is make the best decision possible based on information at hand.
    - iii) The older I get, the more I realize the hardest part of difficult situations is not so much the physical pain, but getting mentally past it. This is where Paul is right on the money. This life is "nothing" in comparison to the length of eternity. Thinking about eternity does help to deal with whatever one is going through for that moment of time. The related idea is that it is best never to handle it alone. Seek out people one loves at such times. It is also good to find those who can relate to what one is going through at that time.
14. Chapter 5, Verse 1: Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.
- a) Paul keeps our focus on the "forever". He is still comparing this life and our physical bodies to a tent and comparing our eternal life to a house. The idea is that a tent is a temporary place of dwelling. It maybe fun to camp in a tent for awhile, but sooner or later, one misses the comforts of living in a more permanent type of dwelling.
  - b) However we exist in heaven, our new bodies are made by God and will last forever. The point of this verse is to know that and not just think it.
  - c) Notice the word "know" in Verse 1. Paul is saying we can know that we have an eternal home in heaven. How can Paul be that confident? Well, first remember that God blinded Paul for three days when he first got saved. (See Acts Chapter 9, Verse 9).
    - i) Personally, I believe Paul's point here has nothing to do with his initial conversion experience. I believe Paul is telling us by having the Holy Spirit living in us, we can have assurance all of "this" is true.
15. Verse 2: Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, <sup>3</sup> because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. <sup>4</sup> For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup> Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.
- a) Let me summarize this: This present life has its moments of pleasure, but it also has a lot of pain. It is not always fair. We don't know how long we will live in this life. If this life on earth was "all that there was", it would be very unfair.



- b) The other key point is that "God made us for a purpose". That purpose is to live with Him for eternity. God designed this life to see "how we do" as far as constantly trusting Him through whatever happens with our lives. God is building our trust so that we can have a love-relationship with Him for eternity.
  - c) In order to prove God wants to be with us forever, He put the Holy Spirit in us. This leads to the question of how does one know if the Holy Spirit is dwelling in us? The first answer is, "Have you accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior?" If that is the case, one can count on it. The second answer is, "Do you have a desire to seek God"? If that is the case, that is the Holy Spirit working in our lives. I also have a third answer: If we are reading bible studies in order to learn more about what God wants for our life, one can be assured the Holy Spirit is dwelling in us.
    - i) Think of it another way: How much did you care about God prior to be saved in comparison to now? That is another sign one has the Holy Spirit in one's life.
    - ii) This leads to another point: If we have assurance the Holy Spirit is dwelling in us, then we can also have assurance the bible is right when it comes to eternal life.
  - d) Do we have doubts at times? Of course, we all do. It's hard not to have doubts about things we cannot see or touch. Let me end this with some positive thoughts:
    - i) If we are 80% sure the bible is true and 20% of "us" have doubts about Christianity, then we need to focus on the fact that the majority of the time we do believe the truth. Another consideration is that if you look at the other major religions of the world, they would all consider a devout Christian "saved". Those other religions may argue we are saved at a "lower level", but we are still saved.
16. Verse 6: Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.
- a) Let us remember what Paul is trying to teach us here. Whatever we are going through at the present time, we can have confidence that if we are saved, God is watching over us, he has wonderful plans for our eternity.
  - b) Let's suppose life is "ok" for the moment and there are no significant problems at this time. You know that things don't stay that way. Sections of the bible like this give us reminders of where to put our focus in both good and bad times.
    - i) Even if we have access to lots of money, that money can't buy our way out of painful situations when they occur. Even if we have access to the best medical care in the world, that won't help with the stress of going through situations.
    - ii) I'm not condemning using whatever resources we have to help us through a situation. I'm, like Paul am reminding us that the "eternal" lasts a lot longer than this life and one has to keep that in mind when making decisions in life.
  - c) Let's get back to Paul's purpose for all of this: Some Christians in Corinth had their doubts about Paul and his message. Paul is laying out why having "faith in God the Father through Jesus" is worth the time and trouble and that trying to "keep the law" is trying to add to what Jesus has already done for us. By laying out an argument of the benefits of eternal salvation, it helps us to keep our focus on Him, and not ourselves.
  - d) One more point about this verse. There is a view in Christianity called "soul sleep". This view is after we die, our soul sleeps until the moment Jesus comes back. I don't believe in this theory. Paul is saying in this verse in effect that we will always live in one of two places: In this body, or after we die, in our heavenly body. It argues against "soul sleep". In other words, if we are not in our "decaying" body, we Christians must be in heaven.
17. Verse 7: We live by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup> We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.
- a) Let me talk about Verse 7 in practical terms: It says that we as Christians are to "live by faith and not by sight". Does that mean we can literally walk around all day with our eyes closed as we "live by faith"? Not exactly. ☺

- i) It means that our hope for the "best of all things" does not come in this lifetime. Yes we can have times of pleasure in this lifetime, but we know that a world of eternal happiness only comes in the next life, not in this one. In this lifetime, there will be a lot of pain and injustice that happens.
      - ii) One has to understand the difference between "moments of pleasure" as compared to happiness. We can have moments of pleasure based on our circumstances. The concept of happiness is about a trust that God has wonderful eternal plan for our lives. He will take care of all the "hurts" and "injustices" of things that happen to us and those we care about.
    - b) This leads to the second sentence. Paul is saying he and all Christians for that matter would prefer to be at home in heaven than here on earth. Does that mean Paul is encouraging Christians to kill themselves and speed up the process? No, not at all. Our time on earth is strictly in God's hands, not ours.
      - i) What Paul is getting at is life in heaven is going to be far greater and far more glorious than everything we experience in this lifetime. In that way, we prefer to be in heaven than to be here.
      - ii) So if all of this is true, why stay here? The answer is God wants us to be witnesses to nonbelievers as well as help encourage other people. Remember that God works through people to lead others to Him and to help other Christians draw closer to Him. The reason God gives us spiritual gifts is so that we can work together to make a difference for Him.
18. Verse 9: So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. <sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.
- a) Paul is saying in Verse 9 that our goal in life is to please God. If you ask me what is my motivation for living, it is first of all, to please God in all that I do. That includes caring for my wife and children. That includes working to provide for my family. That even includes using whatever skills and gifts God has given me to make a difference for Him.
    - i) Let me "sneak in here" my marital prayer for my daughters. I want them to marry men who love God more than they love my daughters. That is because it is through God's grace, God's love and God's strength that they will treat my daughters well and put my daughter's well being before their own.
  - b) To be "pleasing to God" does not mean we spend every waking moment thinking of how to pleasing God. It means we are conscious of the fact that we will be judged by Him.
  - c) So what does that mean practically? Does that mean I can't have social times with my friends? Does that mean I can't be with nonbelievers unless I am sharing the gospel with them? The answer to these questions is a strong "no". It means that I know that God will judge me based on how I live my life, and therefore I want my life to be pleasing to Him.
    - i) God Himself knows we need times of relaxation. God knows that if we work all the time we would burn out quickly. The idea is not so much what we are doing at any particular moment as much as we want our lives to be pleasing to Him.
    - ii) OK, how do we please Him? My "pat" answer of prayer and bible study is only the beginning. Those types of things simply get our focus on Him. The big question is what we do with the rest of our time? Are we living to please Him in all that we do? Are we involving in helping to make a difference for Him? I'll leave it up to you to fill in what one is doing with their time over and above that.
  - d) This leads me back to Verse 10. It says that all Christians must appear before Jesus' judgment seat. In Revelation Chapter 20, there are two separate judgments. One is for believers and one is for unbelievers. Paul is focusing here on the judgment of believers. (Source Revelation 20:4-6 and 20:11-15.)

- e) The "good news" of the judgment of believers is no one gets sent to hell. At this judgment, Jesus goes over our lives and He judges how we have lived as believers. Getting back to my point of prayer and bible study, I don't believe that is the focus of our judgment. God may commend us for the amount of time we spent doing that, but what is far more important is how we "live" for Him through our lives.
  - f) If believers can't be "eternally condemned" in this judgment, what is the purpose? I believe our eternal rewards or lack thereof is determined at this point. In other words, how the actual judgment works is unknown. Do we watch a video of our lives and it keys on specific moments? ☺ The bible doesn't explain the "how" of that issue.
    - i) My answer to this issue goes back to my understanding of God. If I believe in a single God that is capable of making the world and all that is in it, then I also believe in a God that is capable of fairly judging all individuals.
19. Verse 11: Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.
- a) Paul says, "We know what it is to fear the Lord". What that means is Paul understood that God will come down hard on unbelievers. It is also an understanding that saved people are judged, but that is a different type of judgment. If we accept that fact as true, then we too, should try to persuade men (and women). The point is if we are aware that each individual will face a judgment one day, we should not keep that knowledge to ourselves but go out and make a difference for God.
    - i) Does this mean that every Christian has to be in "professional ministry"? It does not. Nor does it mean every Christian has to focus their efforts solely on bringing new people into the kingdom of God. Helping others to grow in their faith is just as (no more, no less) important than bringing in new members.
  - b) The second sentence is Paul giving a bit of a personal testimony. Paul's point is that he is not trying to trick Christians into doing anything other than what he says and writes. All of this "Christian stuff" is not a trick to get you to say, donate to some specific cause. Paul is not preaching the Gospel for any financial benefit, but because Paul simply wants to see as many people as possible "get it" and not be sent to hell.
    - i) To put it another way, Christianity is not designed to be kept a secret. If we truly believe the only way to be saved is through Jesus, then why keep that information to ourselves? It would be as if everyone is dying of poison, and we have the antidote and there is plenty of antidote for everyone. Why keep it to ourselves?
20. Verse 12: We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart.
- a) Christians generally regard pride as a bad thing. Technically, that is wrong. To have "self-pride" is a bad thing in that it inflates our own ego and gives our self the credit that should go to God. At the same time, having pride in someone else is not a bad thing. If someone else is doing a good thing for God, it is ok to take pride in that, as we are getting our focus off of ourselves.
  - b) I state all of that, as that is the point here in Verse 12. Paul is saying in effect that he wants the Christians in Corinth to have an opportunity to take pride in Paul's work. Not so they could carry around signs saying "Hooray for Paul" ☺ but so they could live a life pleasing for God in the same way Paul lived a life pleasing to God.
21. Verse 13: If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

- a) Suppose someone says, "Paul is out of his mind, why follow him?" Along the same line of thinking, one could say of our Christian witness, "He or she is nuts, why listen to them?" Paul's first response is in effect, "Well, even if I am nuts, I am doing it for your sake!"
    - i) The point is Paul isn't spending his life seeing others come to Christ and grow in Christ for "his sake" but for the sake of those believers. Paul doesn't get "more saved" or get more rewards in heaven if others join him. They (those Christians Paul is ministering to) are the ones that benefit from Paul's work, not Paul himself.
  - b) The rest of the verses fall along the same line of thinking. If we believe Jesus died for our sins, then we were "dead" and are now alive. Out of gratitude for that new life, we should now live for God and not for ourselves. In other words, if we are grateful for Jesus dying for our sins, the big question of life is "What are we doing about it"?
    - i) Paul is saying the purpose of life is to "live for Him". This gets back to what I said that we don't spend every moment in prayer and study. Those things guide us and remind us of what we are to do. It is the "rest of the time" that I believe God will mainly judge us on. What about sins we still make? Confess them, and then have confidence God has forgiven that.
22. Verse 16: So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.
- a) Paul said we no longer regard from a "worldly point of view". What does that mean? The general answer is to see people as the "world" (non-believers) sees them. In other words, the "world" view is to judge people based on how successful they are or based on what they have done with their lives apart from God.
  - b) The second issue is how do people judge Christ in that way? You will find most non-Christians respect Jesus as a person. They will say he was a great teacher or "something like that", but they just won't acknowledge Him as God. In effect, that was what Paul thought of Jesus prior to being saved. The reason Paul used to persecute Christians (prior to Paul being saved) had nothing to do with "Jesus the good teacher", but because people acknowledged Jesus as God.
23. Verse 17: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
- a) When we are "born again", we literally become a new being. We probably look the same on the outside, but on the inside, we are now this "entity" that includes the spirit of God living inside of us. We are changed into a person that will live forever in heaven. How we live from that moment on affects our "status" in heaven, but not our salvation.
24. Verse 18: All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.
- a) Part of the idea of being "born again" is that we are "reconciled" to God. The idea is that God has permanently forgiven all of our sins, past, present AND future. If we truly believe Jesus is God and died for our sins, we are considered sinless before Him.
  - b) The real issue, and the main point of this lesson is, "If we accept that fact, what are we doing about it?" If we believe Jesus died for our sins, what are we doing with that information? That is how God will judge believers. That is, what did we do with the knowledge that Jesus died for our sins?
  - c) Verse 20 then calls us "Christ's ambassadors". One has to remember that God made the decision to work through people to lead others to Him. Let's face it, if "God is God" then He could just shine a big light on those He wants to save and then call people to salvation all by Himself. Instead, God wants us to use people to be part of His "game plan".
    - i) In other words, the purpose of being saved is to then work for God to make a difference for Him with our lives.

25. Verse 20 (cont.): We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.
- a) Paul concludes this whole argument by saying in effect that if you believe this gospel message to be true, don't just stand there, "Do something about it". The idea of being reconciled to God starts with believing the Gospel message. The whole idea of being reconciled is all about living a life pleasing to God in all that we do.
26. Verse 21: God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- a) I would put this verse on one's memorization list. That is because it teaches an important principal about Jesus. It is that He literally "became" sin for us, so that we could have an eternal relationship with God.
  - b) One of the hardest things for Christians to "grasp" is the idea that Jesus not only bared the price for our sins, but quite literally "became sin" for us. I don't think any of us can fully comprehend what that means, but just be grateful that it is true.
    - i) It doesn't mean that Jesus can now sin. It means that the concept of sin (as if it was a disease that is past on from one person to another) is fully "bared" by Jesus Himself so that the concept of sin will no longer exist for us in heaven.
    - ii) So if that is true, why do we still sin now? The answer is God still gives us free will, even after we are saved to see if we do live a life pleasing to Him. So why do we not sin in the next life? The answer is the desire to sin is taken away in heaven. I'm not sure how that connects to Jesus "being" sin for us, but somehow, I'm sure it is connected.
  - c) I could go on from here, but I'm running long, so I'll wrap it up.
27. Let's pray: Father, first of all, help us to never forget that we are saved. Help us not to take that fact for grant it and help us in our moments of doubt about that issue. With that knowledge in hand, help us to use that knowledge to make a difference for You in every aspect of our lives. Help us to be a good witness for You. Guide us in whatever ministry aspect You have called us to do to make a difference for You. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.