

2 Corinthians Chapter 5 v 9 - Chapter 6 v 2

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[0 : 00] Well, if you have your Bibles with you this evening, please turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and we'll start reading at verse 9, and go through to chapter 6, verse 2.

So 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, starting to read at verse 9. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Since then, we know what it is to fear the Lord. We try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.

We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so you can answer those who take pride in what is seen, rather than what is in the heart.

[1 : 20] If we are out of our mind, as some say, it is for God. If we are in our right mind, it is for you.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 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.

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.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone. The new is here. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.

[2 : 42] And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors. As though God were making his appeal through us, we implore you, on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

God made him, who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Chapter 6 As God's co-workers, we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.

I tell you, now is the time of God's favour. Now is the day of salvation. This is one of the most significant passages of scripture that covers the subject of Christian life and service for him.

In it, Paul reveals what it is that makes him tick, and what made him act the way he did. A number of points are made in this passage that will help us as we go through life.

[4 : 13] I'm sure you all agree that the eye is a remarkable creation. The wonderful details we can see and the colours we can comprehend and take in.

But nobody has perfect vision. 2020 isn't perfect. It's only perfectly normal.

The first number, 20. I don't know if there's any optometrists watching, but the first number is you, and the second is normal or average.

When I was a fireman, many years ago, I had my eyes tested so that I could drive a fire engine. Back then, I had 20-15 vision. That means that I could see at 20 feet what the average person could see at 15 feet.

[5 : 19] 20-10 is the best eyesight humans could possibly have. That means that somebody can see at 20 what it would take the average person to see at 10 feet away.

20-15 feet away. I remember sitting at the eye testing machine and looking through this, like a tunnel with signs at the side of the road.

And you have to say which corner of the little sign there was a little dot. 20-15 feet away. 20-15 feet away. 20-15 feet away. 20-15 feet away. If you have poor eyesight, you look through a machine or some kind of thing, and different corrective lenses are placed in front of your eyes so that your vision can be corrected and so that you can see normally.

20-15 feet away. 20-15 feet away. 20-15 feet away. Now, in the same way that nobody has perfect vision, neither does anybody have perfect spiritual vision.

Paul, in this passage that we've just read, gives us some corrective spiritual lenses that we as believers should wear at all times.

[6 : 53] the first corrective lens is found in verse 11 which says this since then we know what it is to fear the Lord we try to persuade others now the focus here is on the fact of hell that's not a very popular subject but it is worth keeping in mind what our destination used to be before we trusted in Christ's finished work in Luke 13 verse 28 it describes hell as being a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth weeping for the things that they do not have and gnashing of teeth for what they do have let me read the account of the rich man from Luke 16 and verse 19

Jesus said there was a certain rich man who was splendidly clothed in purple and fine linen and who lived each day in luxury at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus who was covered with sores as Lazarus laid there longing for scraps from the rich man's table the dogs would come and lick his open sores finally the poor man died and was carried by the angels to sit beside Abraham at the heavenly banquet the rich man also died and was buried and he went to the place of the dead there in torment he saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side the rich man shouted father Abraham have some pity send Lazarus over here to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue

I am in anguish in these flames but Abraham said to him son remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted and Lazarus had nothing so now he is here being comforted and you are in anguish and besides there is a great chasm separating us no one can cross over to you from here and no one can cross from over us to there then the rich man said please father Abraham at least send him to my father's home for I have five brothers and I want him to warn them so they don't end up in this torment but Abraham said Moses and the prophets have warned them your brothers can read what they wrote the rich man replied no father Abraham but if someone is sent to them from the dead then they will repent of their sins and turn to God but Abraham said if they won't listen to Moses and the prophets they won't be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead the rich man is still there today and even though at least 2,000 years have passed he hasn't got a minute closer to leaving than when he first got there

Paul kept in mind the urgency of telling people that there is a hell to be shunned and a heaven to be gained the second corrective lens is found in verse 14 which says this for Christ's love compels us Paul kept before him a focus on Christ's agonizing death for him on the cross we break bread from time to time in church and so often in my mind the focus is on confession of my own sin and not the cost of my salvation I vividly remember a dream I had shortly after I became a believer at the age of 21 I saw in my dream Jesus suffering there for me on the cross and I woke up and I was sobbing tears running down my face

I don't think that's ever happened since Paul constantly kept the death of the son of God at the forefront of his mind and so did the cricketer and missionary C.T.

[12 : 04] stood one of his famous quotes is if Jesus Christ be God and died for me then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him the word translated compels in this verse here has the meaning of held together or constrained it has the idea of being restricted for Christ's love compels us I remember as a teenager going along to many Leeds United matches and standing in the crowd of thousands and thousands of people and it being so tightly packed that you could pick your feet up and be moved along with the flow of people that is what Christ's love compels us means it moves us along the third corrective lens is found in verse 16 which says this so from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view we should not look at people in the street and think what a ridiculous haircut or

I would never wear that kind of thing we should look at people and think there goes someone for whom Christ died this lens highlights the value and eternity of a soul this reminds me of the words of an old hymn let me look at the crowd as my Saviour did till my eyes with tears grow dim let me look till I pity the wandering sheep and love them for love of him the fourth corrective lens is found in verse 17 if anyone is in Christ the new creation has come the purpose of our creation is that the

invisible God displays himself through us created in his image some people dedicate their lives to the study of all kinds of things things

I heard someone committed their lives to finding out how to stop crisps turning brown when cooked and somebody else spent their life studying butterflies in Burma people never Paul never said that he was called to be a tent maker and none of us have been called to be a plumber or a fireman but we are called to be a witness for our creator everything else is secondary the fifth corrective lens is found in verse 18 which says all this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation the responsibility of us who have the answer in Acts chapter 10 we have a fascinating account of the conversion of a

Roman officer called Cornelius I'd like to read this to you Acts chapter 10 beginning at verse 1 in Caesarea there lived a Roman officer named Cornelius who was a captain of the Italian regiment he was a devout God fearing man as was everyone in his household he gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God one afternoon about three o'clock he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming towards him Cornelius the angel said Cornelius stared at him in terror what is it sir he asked the angel and the angel replied your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering now send some men to

Joppa and summon a man named Simon Peter he is staying with Simon a tanner who lives near the seashore as soon as the angel was gone Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier one of his personal attendants he told them what had happened and sent them off to Joppa the next day as Cornelius his messengers were nearing the town Peter went up onto the flat roof to pray it was about noon and he was hungry but while a meal was being prepared he fell into a trance the next few verses show tell us what that God gave Peter a vision to show Peter that God accepted people who were not Jewish so we continue from verse 19 meanwhile as Peter was puzzling over the vision the Holy

[17 : 43] Spirit said to him three men have come looking for you get up go downstairs and go with them without hesitation do not worry for I have sent them so Peter went down and said I'm the man you were looking for why have you come they said we were sent by Cornelius a Roman officer he is a devout and God fearing man well respected by all the Jews a holy angel instructed him to summon you to his house so that he can hear your message so Peter invited the men to stay for the night the next day he went with them accompanied by some of the brothers from Joppa they arrived in Caesarea the following day Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends as Peter entered the home Cornelius fell at his feet and worshipped him but

Peter pulled him up and said stand up I'm a human being just like you so they talked together and went inside where many others were assembled Peter told them you know it is against the law for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you but God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean so I came without objection as soon as I was sent for now tell me why you sent for me four days ago I was praying in my house about this time three o'clock in the afternoon suddenly a man in dazzling clothes was standing in front of me he told me Cornelius your prayers have been answered and your gifts to the poor have been noticed by God now send messengers to Joppa and summon a man called Simon Peter he's staying in the home of

Simon a tanner who lives near the seashore so I sent for you at once and it was good of you to come now we are all here waiting for God waiting before God to hear the message the Lord has given you so here was an angel sent from heaven that scared the life out of this Roman soldier he didn't need any more convincing that here in front of him was somebody who knew the truth and Cornelius was ready to hear it so why didn't the angel tell Cornelius the message he would have received it and believed it the angel didn't tell him because angels are not blessed with the privilege of telling the gospel because God gave us his church the ministry of telling people the message of salvation it is his church's responsibility and privilege to do so not just the pastor or elders this ministry is for all of his church now the sixth and final corrective lens is found in verse 10 we go back to verse 10 but chronologically this comes afterwards it says this for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ the word translated appear in this verse literally means manifested or to render apparent airport scanners can see a great deal but

God will reveal everything at the judgment seat nothing will be hidden a hundred years from now what will be important at that judgment seat everything I have done in my life even thoughts motives will be brought into view and we all want to hear on that day his well done thou good and faithful

servant enter thou into the joy of thy Lord may God bless the hearing of his word now before we sing our final hymn which will be before the throne let's pray father we come to you and we give you thanks for your word we thank you for the truths that we can glean and apply to our lives Lord we want our lives to glorify you and we trust that you continue to work in our hearts to bring us closer to you to make us more like your son the Lord Jesus so that we can glorify him in all we do in Jesus name Amen