

## 2 Corinthians 5:9-16 – “Motivators for Mission”

Last week we talked about the glories of heaven and the fact that these earthly bodies are going to be changed and we’re going to inherit a new heavenly habitation. Because these are the coming realities for us, it could be tempting to throw in the towel and not put too much stock in this life.

But as we continue on in this chapter, we begin to see quite clearly that what we do in this life (and in this body) does matter. In fact, God has a whole program and mission for us to be active in as believers that should cause us to be occupying and active until He comes.

Paul points out a few things in this passage that should be motivating us on mission and using these lives for the purposes of God.

1. The Judgment of God – 5:9-10
2. The Fear of God – 5:11-12
3. The Love of God – 5:13-16

### 1. The Judgment of God – 5:9-10

**5:9 - *Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.***

Paul’s desire, along with the true apostles of Jesus, was to be well pleasing to God. This was their aim. Everything they did was aiming towards that goal. That was the target for them. Everything they did went through that filter of: *‘Would this be pleasing to the Lord?’* This was the original ‘What Would Jesus Do’ motto.

- Wouldn’t we be spared from a lot of problems if we lived with this kind of goal for all that we did? If our aim is to be ***well pleasing to Him***, there’s a lot of things I’m sure we’d have to stop doing.
- Interestingly, the word *sin* is defined as missing the mark. We know what the target is – it’s to be pleasing to God. How do we please God? We follow His commands, walk in obedience, we love Him above all. When we’re not doing that, we’re missing the mark.
- So, Paul says this is what we’re aiming for.

And he says this is done ***whether present or absent***. Present or absent from what? From this world (5:8). This is what Paul has been talking about in this chapter. Being here on this earth and absent from the Lord didn’t alter how Paul lived. He wasn’t waiting to get to heaven to begin being pleasing to the Lord.

In fact, we read next that how we live our lives now has eternal ramifications.

**5:10 - *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.***

There is coming a day when we're all going to stand before God and give an account of our lives. Now, how many people are looking forward to this?

This can be a scary thing for many people. But let me put you at peace right now, this is not regarding our salvation. This is not a judgment seat to determine if you've qualified for heaven. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ and have put your trust in His finished work at Calvary, then you're in! You don't get into heaven because of your good works, you get in because of Christ's good work completed for you and your acknowledgment and acceptance of that.

So what's this judgment seat all about? We'll get to that in a moment.

There are three end time judgments talked about in the Bible:

- Matthew 25 talks about the Judgment of the Sheep and Goats. This is when the nations are judged after the tribulation. The righteous enter into eternal life, but the unrighteous into everlasting punishment.
- There's the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20. This will come after the Millennium and will be a final sentencing for all those that have rebelled against God and did not receive His free gift of salvation in Jesus. Only unbelievers are at this one.
- Then there's the Judgment Seat of Christ, which Paul talks about here. The Greek word used for ***judgment seat*** is *bema*. This is where we get the term Bema seat (who remembers Petra singing about that in the 80's?).

This judgment seat of Christ is for believers only. This is not to judge sin or salvation. This is already a done deal for believers. Our sin was already judged on the cross when Jesus bore the wrath of God for you and me so that we could be forgiven of our sin and spared from judgment. So, this judgment is not about salvation, rather this is for rewards.

This is what Paul is speaking of when he said ***that each one may receive the things done in the body...*** The things done in the body is referring to our time here on earth. How we live now counts for eternity.

- “In Roman cities the governor sat on the judgment seat to hear court cases. Indeed, Paul had earlier stood before the judgment seat of Gallio in Corinth<sup>18</sup> just as the Lord stood before the judgment seat of Pilate.<sup>19</sup> <sup>1</sup>
- This judgment (bema) seat was also the place where officials at the Olympic or Isthmus games sat to issue prizes for the athletes.

That’s the imagery Paul is drawing on as Corinth was a destination city for the Isthmus games.

One day we’re going to stand before the Judge of all, and we’re going to be rewarded for how we’ve used these lives for Him. Everything that was done for Jesus will be rewarded. This is what was spoken of in **1 Corinthians 3:11–15**, *"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. <sup>14</sup> If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."*

- All of our works are one day going to be tested. They’re going to go through the fire. All the dross and wasted work will be burned away, and what remains will be that which had an eternal value to it, and it will be rewarded!

So, this should be a great motivation to make it our aim to be well pleasing to the Lord. Sure, we can coast along in the assurance of our salvation, but God didn’t save us to have us sitting back sipping margaritas until He comes. The real joy is in living these lives for Him. It’s not just a joy now, but it will be rewarded eternally.

This is certainly how Paul lived his life wasn’t it?

- **Philippians 3:13–14**, *"Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*
- **1 Corinthians 9:24**, *"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it."*

<sup>18</sup> Acts 18:12.

<sup>19</sup> Mt. 27:19.

<sup>1</sup> Barnett, P. (1988). *The message of 2 Corinthians: power in weakness* (p. 103). InterVarsity Press.

I love that about Paul. If anyone could have sat back and thought I've earned my margarita time it was Paul. But he wanted to keep moving forward so that he could win that prize.

Are you living your life in a way where you're looking forward to how God is going to reward you? Are you living so you can hear those words: *'Well done good and faithful servant.'*

It's not just about **how much** you do, it's about how **faithful** you are with what God has given you.

... **whether good or bad**. The good things are the things that have been done unto the Lord and on the Lord's behalf. The bad things are the things we did for self, or out of a selfish motive. Those works will just be burned up and have no value to them.

Now Paul brings up another motivating factor - the terror of the Lord, or the fear of God.

## 2. The Fear of God – 5:11-12

**5:11 - *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.***

Now this sounds pretty harsh and negative, but for the believer this is not a fear or worry of an angry God. We know that one day we're going to see Him and experience His love in a greater way. For Paul there was still a sense of awe in that.

Now this passage has a couple ways you can look at it. The primary way, with the context we've been seeing in 2 Corinthians, is that Paul is speaking of a reverential awe of God and in serving Him.

But we also see the obvious implication in this for those that don't know God. Paul knows the tragedy awaiting those who don't know God and his desire is to persuade them into the truth. To do whatever is needed for them to have an opportunity to repent and find life in the Lord.

We talked a lot last week at heaven and the joys of eternity for the believer, but there's an opposite reality for those who have not repented and given their lives to Jesus.

The Bible makes it very clear that there is an eternal hell. In Revelation it's called the Lake of Fire and it's the final place of eternal torment for Satan, the Antichrist, and all that have rejected the good news of Jesus.

- Some would like to say that there's no eternal torment. That it's just annihilation and then nothingness. Or some like to think it's a big party with all their friends where anything goes. But it's going to be an eternal place of suffering and we should be doing everything we can to see people be spared of such a place.

Look at what we see in God's Word:

- **Hebrews 10:31**, *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*
- **1 Peter 4:17**, *"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"*
- **Jude 21–23**, *"keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. <sup>22</sup> And on some have compassion, making a distinction; <sup>23</sup> but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh."*

Do we see lost people around us with the same urgency as Paul had? Do we worry about what it's going to be like for those that don't know God when they eventually have to stand before Him and face their sentence? I know that doesn't always rattle me as it should.

May our hearts be filled with a prayerful agony for the unsaved.

Notice Paul says ***we are well known to God***. And here's the issue, it's not whether you know God (that's important), but are you known ***by*** God?

- **Matthew 7:21–23**, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"*
- The ones that are known by God are the ones who follow and obey His Word.

**5:12 - *For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart.***

Paul had to continuously combat the false accusations being lobbied against him. He's trusting his life and actions speak clearly to the consciences of those he ministered to in Corinth (5:11b).

He knows he doesn't need to commend himself or bring a letter of endorsement to them. In fact, the believers at Corinth should be boasting in him. And it's not so much boasting in Paul's greatness, but boasting in his weakness and in the Lord's greatness through it.

This is in great contrast to the false apostles who were all about outward image but of little substance inwardly. They were ones who said they knew God but weren't truly known by God.

The third motivating factor for Paul to be living this life for God's purposes:

### 3. The Love of Christ – 5:13-16

**5:13 - *For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you.***

It would seem that some of Paul's critics tried to label him as insane. But Paul says, *'I'm crazy for God!'* His zeal and love for God which caused him to keep persevering in the face of threats and near death experiences certainly seemed like a person a little insane. But it was all because of what Paul had in Christ. And when he's in a sound mind and speaking intelligibly, it was for their benefit.

**5:14 - *For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;***

The thing driving Paul was not trying to please people or go for the popular vote. The thing driving Paul was the love of Christ! This is what moved him.

- This word compel is the Greek word *synechō* which means to hold together, or seize. It's like the love of Christ has seized Paul and has kept him together and faithful in the ministry.

What are you being moved by or held together by today? Are you feeling forgotten, forsaken, or are you fearful and fretting? May you be reminded of His

love for you and may that love not only keep you, but move you in faithfulness to the Lord.

Paul goes on to show the greatness of His love by speaking of Christ's death. **Romans 5:8**, *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

And He died for all. Because of sin we were separated from God. Death was the only provision and substitution that could atone for that. As a perfect sacrifice, Jesus took God's wrath in our place, and He satisfied God's justice for sin.

Christ did this for all, because all were dead (**then all died**). We were all in this boat because of Adam's fall. **Christ died for all**, not only for the *benefit* of all, but *instead* of all.

**5:15 - and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.**

If Jesus died for us, then should we not also die to self and live for Him? He died and rose again so that we may have the gift of eternal life. But it's not something to just wait for, it's something to start living in now and using these lives for His glory!

- **Romans 12:1**, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."*
- **Galatians 2:20**, *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."*

**5:16 - Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.**

Because of what we've experienced in Christ, and the fact that He has made all things new, we no longer need to evaluate things just on an outward basis.

Paul had done that with Christ; saw Him as just a person. But now Paul knows who Christ really is. And so his outlook is not just one of sight, but of faith (5:7).

- This fleshly body is passing on. That person you now see messing up will be changed, just as you'll be. We need to look at people through God's eyes and the lens of eternity, seeing them for who they will be and who they are now in Christ.