

A Gospel Address

2 Corinthians 5: 9-21.

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Part Fourth. LATER MINISTRY.

There are two things very manifest. The first of them is, the world as such does not know the true God, nor Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. (John 17: 3.) The second is, the result that the believer that does know Him gets eternal life, and this eternal life is not merely the communication of blessing; it has got a whole history connected with it, as to how it was brought out, and as to the way it works when it is possessed. We find in this Scripture three things remarkably brought before us. (2 Cor. 5: 9.) What the apostle Paul was, his occupation as a believer. (2 Cor. 5: 11) Then an appeal made to the world as to not knowing God; and thirdly, he comes down (2 Cor. 5: 14) to that which is the turning-point to sinners, and to the saints too, what is not known to the sinner, and what the believer has got built upon the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I should like, just in a simple way, to look at this 21st verse. If I take man as set by God in the garden of Eden — God had displayed His eternal power and Godhead in creation, and He had separated a certain part of the earth where man could have perfect delight. Now a soul like that could not take in what He here says. (2 Cor. 5: 21.) Have I met His mind? Then a blessing will be mine. Have I not met His mind? Then I have no claim upon Him; that is only righteousness. But here it is, "They shall see the measure of my delight in Him brought into heaven, a people that will be the specimen of what His right is to be there." Put it home to the conscience of any person that is not saved. Has God a pair of scales? Come then in the name of the Lord Jesus, and you are perfectly welcome to all that Christ has been given. Christ took my place in judgment, and I am to take His place in glory. "We become the righteousness of God in Him" — that lasts for ever. Men suppose their minds are capable of forming a just estimate of God. Now God says, "My ways are unsearchable." Christ is earth-rejected, but heaven-owned. But there is another thing connected with this. I find that God has been before man, and that if you come before God, you must come in His way. People generally begin with "I," and talk about religion, "I desired to be instructed;" but God says, "I have done the work. I sent my Son; gave Him a cup of wrath to drink, and raised Him again." If so, let me be the first poor sinner. God ought to be the very first Person to be trusted! Has God taken the whole thing into His hand, and left me nothing to do? *Nothing*. What can you do, when Christ has done it all? What could you do, if Christ had not done it all? How could you meet His mind about God? about yourself as a sinner? The conscience gets scared if you get one thought about God. "What I have presented before you," God says, enables you to be as perfectly satisfied in my presence as am."

2 Cor. 5: 20. Here is the message he had got, that God did not need reconciling, but that man needed to be reconciled. Now it is a very humbling thing for a poor sinner to have to go to God and say, Really there was such suspicion of Thee in my heart;" but most easy, if I go on the ground that, "He hath made Him sin for us," etc.; that God hath shown Himself out in this way. If my soul can take that, and say it is true, I have got two most astonishing things brought before me. I can say to God, "I can trust Thee to take away all that lurking suspicion that is constantly stealing up in my heart, because Thou didst make Him sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in

Him."

Well, now, beloved friends, I will turn back to the early part of the chapter, where it is not a question of sinners reconciled by blood. No one has any part in working out redemption but the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. No man can boast of having had anything to do with creation excepting to spoil it; and what have we to do with the providence of God? Nothing; we do not make the sun to rise on the just and on the unjust: God does it. You cannot take the soul that sinned, and make the clean out of the unclean. The work of the Son of God in creation is nothing to the work of the Lord Jesus in redemption. God took care that man might not be brought near in the favour due to man had he been righteous, but in the full favour due to Christ.

2 Cor. 5: 10. Now the heart of many a Christian trembles at this word, and trembles because the soul has not true rest in the last verse — "made Him sin for us," etc. Paul knew his judgment was passed already. What is the Christian as to his sins? He is one whose sins Christ has borne. What have I got of my own in that? Nothing. Christ for Judge, and Christ for acceptance. When Christ reveals Himself to the soul, we become part of a new creation, and the claims on it are not the claims on the old. It turns to God, but it has got to watch, and I have got to watch having it, that the flesh does not hinder it. The Holy Ghost watches over us, and Christ in heaven watches; but the new nature is brought in over the old by all that process.

2 Cor. 5: 9. It should be "*acceptable*," not "accepted." Paul found that by the power of that quickened understanding given to him, he could look back to the Lord Jesus in the perfect consciousness, that he and Christ were one, that Christ was his life, and he wanted everything in his life to be according to Him. Can you and I escape being made manifest at the judgment-seat of Christ? No; little and great — all will appear. Paul faithful in service will appear there, and all that forsook Paul will appear there.

If He has brought me into fellowship with Himself, the life that is in Him has flowed in me, and given me a new nature. If He has given me a new nature, which am I to walk after? If God's Son thought it worth while to come down to the cross for me, and is gone up, and watches me now, I think it is worth my while to live to Him; not to do things merely, but to live to Him. And when I begin to live to Him, I find it is not only right and proper, but I find it is joy, handing up things to Him, no matter how little.

2 Cor. 5: 11. Is there anything, beloved brethren, children of God, do you feel there is any more unveiling of your sins or of what you are in God's presence? You are the counter-part of that death of Christ. What are you? What are God's thoughts about you? What is the ground of His dealing with you? Is it your faithfulness? No; it is all Christ from first to last. He thinks it worthy, meet for Him to receive all that come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ

2 Cor. 5: 12. "You see I (Paul) am not wanting to praise myself. I have not been seeking to set up myself in any way, but this Lord Jesus, 'who loved me, and *gave Himself* for me' — I thought I could blot this name of Nazarene from the earth, and He said, 'I want you to come and love Me.'" Then, in verse 14, he comes down to the power in his own life. Did Paul mean his love to Christ, or Christ's to him? People are very wary of saying, "Christ's love to me; God's love to me." But the fact is, if you do not, you are qualifying your love to God. If thoughts of God's love are presented to you, you can praise Him.

2 Cor. 5: 15. Now the whole world were dead in trespasses and sins: "He died for all, that they which live," etc. That is the life of the soul that would recognize His love. Do you love great things? Ah! the greatest thing in the world is, that I should *live* to him — by *constraint*, if you please; but it

was, "The love of Christ constraineth me," that the thought of the heart should be, "There is nobody worthy but the Lord Jesus Christ." "He, the Son of God, has looked down from heaven, and told me that He, the Nazarene, that I thought not worth while thinking about, is up there in glory, and He wants me (Paul) to go and serve Him; and *I will go and serve Him.*" The hearts that were full of Christ would go and speak everywhere of Christ. Here Paul, going about from one place to another, is led captive by Christ Paul saw the heart that loved him was the same. We might be placed in His providence to sweep a crossing, or be in a cellar all day long; but all the love of Christ is there in the heart, and the heart in that way made partaker of the life of Christ. It is a lantern, and it shines out, out into all the circumstances you are in; it all shines in the love of Christ. Nothing can extinguish that when the heart is walking in faithfulness to God according, to his position.

2 Cor. 5: 17. It is a real change, not a mere figure. The Christian has got a nature, a new nature, that fits him to receive the things of God; and this nature has got its own characteristics. My nature as man is selfish; "I like, and I do not like." The new nature acts spontaneously; "Abba, Father," rises to the heart of God. All the circumstances through which we saints may have to pass are so connected with God. I am thankful that God is God, and will have His own way.

2 Cor. 5: 19. "Hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." What a beautiful thing it is in speaking to the poor sinner, that one can go and talk to him as one that has tasted what one speaks of; to find to the joy of our souls that God is God, and to bow to Him, that we may walk as under the eye of Him "that loved me, and gave Himself for me." Oh, the thought of Christ's love to us! There is a speciality of feeling towards His saints. He loves them, cannot but love them, is under a constraint to love them "to the end," as those given Him by His Father. God cannot have variableness, or a shadow of turning! It is not merely that it is true of Him, but it is true in our hearts. Do you think of that Christ that was a "Man of sorrows" in patience as now in heaven, and occupied with poor sinners, and has a love in His heart to communicate to you individually? Does Christ do it to you individually? Have you ever thought of that love of Christ? The heart knows itself under the heart that loves us, and the effect must be my love to Him that loved, and gave Himself for me.