

2 Corinthians Class 6 Transcript

Greetings and welcome back to FI Online. This is class number 6 in our series on **2 Corinthians: The Ministry of Reconciliation**.

We had no questions turned in for class number 5, so there's nothing to answer in that way this evening. But we will remind you that you have one hour after the end of the class if you'd like to turn in questions for next time.

Now as we begin this class. We certainly want God's blessing upon it. So, if you will please join me and will ask a prayer asking God to bless our class today.

[Prayer]

[1:23]

Welcome back to FI Online. This is class number 6 in our series on **2 Corinthians: The Ministry of Reconciliation**.

In the class this evening, we're going to be specifically looking at that phrase to understand a little more about what it means and how it applies to this whole book that we're covering.

Now, we need to kind of back up just a second here to look at what we were talking about at the end of **chapter 4**. (We'll be picking up in **chapter 5**.) So, if you go back to **chapter 4**, you find that Paul has been talking about difficulties that we go through, the perspective that we need to have on those difficulties.

And then in the very last verse, **verse 18 of chapter 4**, he says: *while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

That's an important verse for us to understand all by itself. But, it sets the tone for what we're going to read next.

Now, of course, we all remember that the divisions that we find between chapters, divisions between verses, they can be very handy as far as being able to find something. But they're artificial. They were inserted much later by human beings trying to make it a little bit more accessible. And that's fine. But keep in mind that **verse 18** is a thought which continues into the first verse of **chapter 5**. So that is the perspective.

We don't just look at the outward things that may be seen with physical eyes. But we look at—and because of God's Spirit, as he told us in **1 Corinthians 2**—because of God's Spirit, we're able to perceive and understand what is not physically perceivable—what is seen through the help of the Spirit of God. That's the important perspective that we should have. It would be almost like—I suppose in a sense we could say, it would be like an individual who has the ability to see with both eyes, but then covering up one of those eyes and not really being able to see properly because of it, if we don't use the Spirit of God. To have that ability, that unique perspective that the Spirit of God gives, and then fail to use it would be a terrible shame. So, we need to use that—and that's what Paul is talking about here—as we look at what we're going through.

The Church in Corinth was going through a certain amount of persecution. Although primarily it seems the problems in Corinth were more internal, as people struggled with attitudes and approaches. And as we said, it appears that there may have even been some people there who were denigrating Paul, trying to undermine him as the leader.

[4:03]

So let's pick it up in **chapter 5** and **verse 1**. Paul says: *For we know that [if] our earthly house, this tent, is— (Excuse me) —that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

Now, what is he telling us here? Is he talking about houses and tents and structures that we're supposed to look at and see with our physical eyes? Obviously not. That's not the point. Why does he use the metaphor of a *tent*?

Well, if you remember the story of the apostle Paul, one of the things that he learned as a trade was tentmaking. Now, some of the commentaries will tell us that perhaps it had more to do with leatherwork and things like that; the term could be used in that way. But this was a part of Paul's normal upbringing. And just as many of us draw analogies or metaphors from the things we're most familiar with, Paul did the same thing.

I heard a man recently who works in orchards in the Northwest. And he drew a number of analogies from his experience working with the trees and the fruit being produced, and so on. Another gentleman I knew many years ago worked in the woods as a timber cutter. And, very often when he spoke—he was an elder—when he spoke, he would give metaphors that related to working in the woods with the timber. That's a perfectly logical thing to consider.

So for Paul to use the metaphor of a tent makes perfect sense. What's he talking about? What we live in now, our earthly house, that which is the physical existence that we have. Or, we could probably say, our bodies. Okay. And he describes our body as a tent. Okay, a tent can be a beautiful thing. It can be very elaborate. It can be very comfortable. But it—by its nature, everyone knows it's temporary. You don't really pass along your tent to your heirs later on. It's something that we recognize is a temporary structure, though it can be nice, or it can be rather spartan, depending on what the situation may be. But, it is temporary. And that's a part of what Paul is saying.

We know that if we have this temporary dwelling—our body, our physical life that we live today—that if it's destroyed—now really, the Greek here, the idea is not so much “destroyed,” as some of the commentaries bring out. It's the idea of taking down a tent. Now a tent can be taken down for a number of reasons. You're moving to a different location. It's begun to wear out. Or you have a different habitation. There are a lot of different reasons. So not necessarily are we talking about “destroyed.” So we don't want to see that when we look at his statement here about our lives, our body being **destroyed**. It's not that. It's kind of used up. It's finished its usefulness, and we're done with it.

[7:03]

So, one of the commentaries also brings out that, you know, this may be one of the earliest times where Paul really begins to seriously consider that he may well not be alive when Jesus Christ returns. Remember, earlier on he talked about those of us *who are alive and remain*. And he talked about that kind of thing because, again, that was his hope, just as it has been for many of us—that we would still be alive when Christ returns.

But, Paul's been through some difficult things. He has faced almost certain death, but delivered from that. He's told us that in the first chapter. So, it may be that he's looking at himself and very seriously saying: “You know, there's a good possibility I won't be alive when Jesus Christ returns.” And of course, I think there are several reasons why he may come to that conclusion. Part of it seems to be that Jesus Christ told him that he was going to suffer a martyr's death. That appears to be a part of it too.

So, Paul is looking at this situation and saying: “Okay. This temporary dwelling that we have, we all have to recognize it **is** temporary; it’s not meant to last forever. But, what then? Are we then left homeless, so to speak?” And he says: “No. If this—or **when** this takes place, *we have a building...*” A building is different than a tent. A building has permanence. A building has stability. It lasts over a period of time.

—we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Now what is he telling us here? Well, if you were a good Protestant, you would immediately say: “Well, see it tells us right here that when we die, we go to heaven.” No. It doesn’t say anything about us going to heaven at all. What it says is that God, who is the One in charge, who is Himself eternal, has prepared for us a dwelling place, not a tent, but a building that is eternal. And the fact that it’s in the heavens doesn’t mean we have to go there to get it. What it means is that it’s outside the realm of anything physical. A tent, even a building on this earth can suffer great damage or even be destroyed over a period of time. But the building which God has for us—this home that He has, this new body, so to speak, that’s not temporary like the tent—is preserved in heaven where nothing on this earth can affect it. Nothing here is going to take away from, or destroy, or just simply cause decay in what God has prepared. Now put that in context of what we’ve just said.

[9:53]

People sometimes will speculate. I remember when my family first came into the Church, one of the things that we often talked about—not just in our family, but in the Spokesman Club, and so on—is, what will we be like in the resurrection? What will we look like? Will we have a new [body]? Can we choose what age we look? You know, can I look like I’m 30 instead of 70 plus, as we do today? We had all of those questions. And, in a sense they’re kind of humorous questions to look back on now. But, in the context of what Paul is writing here, he’s saying: “Okay. We look at our tent right now, and we have certain ideas about it, and so on. What are we going to look like in the future? Well, God has prepared, not a tent; He’s prepared something very different. And we can trust Him in that. Don’t look at what you see. Look beyond that. Use the Spirit of God to get the perspective that this life, and everything about it, is temporary.”

So, he says this building is something we have. Now notice that. It is not something we **hope** to have. It’s not something we **might** have. It’s not something God’s in the process of kind of trying to lay out the blueprints and get it built before we need it. It’s already in existence, and we already are owners. We simply have not taken possession yet. We’re kind of like an heir to a great family property. The family’s still there. We haven’t received it yet. But we’re the heirs, and we’re going to receive it. So, he’s telling us that.

He tells us it’s eternal. In contrast to this earthly body, which is like a tent and temporary, this one is something that God has established and is therefore never going to decay. The fact that, again, we say it’s in the heavens doesn’t mean that we go there to get it. There’s nothing here about going there to get it. Jesus Christ comes back and brings things with Him. We remember that.

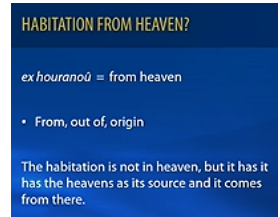
*For (he says, **verse 2**) in this we groan, —*

Or in this tent that we live in now, we groan. That doesn’t necessarily mean we groan in pain or there’s something terrible about it. But it’s the recognition of the limitations that we have. All of us have those limitations, and sometimes it’s so frustrating to be limited in this way. Now again, I know—if I could use a simple example—most of us, sometimes we get really tired. Being able to go to bed and get a good night’s rest is really a blessing. But probably all of us have also had that experience where: “I have so much to do, so many things I want to do, but my body is insisting that I can’t keep going. I’ve got to stop

and sleep for a period of time, but I have so many things I want to do.” So, we kind of groan at the limitations that we have. We have physical limitations. We’re not able to do some of the things we would like to do. So we kind of groan in this tent. And Paul is saying that.

2 —(We earnestly desire) *to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,*

I want to note that—there’s an interesting word there—because I think it’s important. The phrase “*from heaven*” is *ex houranoū*, and it literally means “from.” The word *ex* means “from,” or “out of,” or “this is the origin of it.” The habitation itself is not to remain in heaven, but it has— (Oh, I put that in wrong; I’m sorry.) But it has the heavens as its source, and it comes from there. That’s the source of it. So that’s what it’s saying in this phrase: It comes from the heavens. It doesn’t come from here. So, we can put in all this effort with our physical bodies and try to maintain our health, which we should do, that’s fine. That’s a blessing God gives us. But, we also should note that what we have here is temporary, and our eyes should be focused on something more. And he talks about that in the sense of being *clothed*.



[13:58]

Now I want to note something there. There’s—sometimes we talk about as human beings: what do we need as the bare minimum? So we talk about food and **shelter**. But when we read through the Scriptures, it’s very often talking about food and **clothing**. In the sense of this was—used commonly in the Greek world—the idea of clothing or shelter; they kind of merged. So it’s very similar to what we say when we talk about food and shelter. And I think that’s the sense here when he talked about being *clothed*. It’s not so much putting on clothing as it is having a place to live, having a dwelling place. We earnestly desire to be able to dwell in our *habitation which is from heaven*.

Verse 3 *if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.*

So again, here’s the contrast. Now again, yes, you can use *clothed* and *naked*, and that’s literally what the Greek says. But, the sense of it seems to be that once we have been able to live in this new habitation, we’re never going to be without habitation again. That’s the sense. It is kind of an awkward phrase. Perhaps one way we could put it is: When our tent, our temporary dwelling, is removed, we won’t be found to have no dwelling at all. We will in fact have the dwelling that God has prepared.

Verse 4 *For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed (not because we don’t want to have a dwelling place), but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.*

So again, keep the perspective in mind. And we can —This is an important section to look at, and you can pull it out of context and learn very important lessons from it; that’s perfectly all right. **But**, the context that Paul is talking about is our perspective on life, that we don’t get bogged down in what is in fact temporary. Whether it’s a trial or a blessing, whatever it may be, it is temporary. And we need to have that perspective. Temporary doesn’t mean it has no value or importance. That’s fine. But don’t place **too** much value on the temporary when what’s **eternal**, what is **not** temporary, is what really matters.

[16:20]

So he says: We’re in this life. Yes, we’re kind of *burdened* at times. Being physical can really be a challenge. And of course, we often talk about how we are an aging Church. And we, as we get older, we certainly understand that, yes, this physical body has its limitations. If you have an injury when you’re older, you find it takes a lot longer to recover from that injury—if you can at all! The body doesn’t

regenerate itself in the same way. You don't have the same sense of energy. You don't have the ability to do things in the same way, and you have to learn. You have to learn how to function a little bit differently as you age.

Now some people age wonderfully, and they're still very, very active in their older years. We have an elder in the Dallas area who is 93 years old, I believe it is—92 or 93—and still jogs about four miles every day. We all admire him very much. He's a wonderful example. There are some who are able to do things that way. But we also know many people who are much younger than that who really have physical problems, difficulties, infirmities, and are really not able to.

So, he's saying: *In this physical life—yes, we do—we groan because we're burdened*, because there are limitations on what we have. But our groaning, our concern, is not because we just simply want to be rid of the physical body—"I just don't want to be anywhere." No, we have something that is more important to us.

But notice how Paul puts this, because it's very important to understand. It says here:

4 ... *that mortality may be swallowed up by life.*

Scripture consistently teaches that man is mortal, and something has to change in order for him to receive immortality. We are not immortal on our own.

Now, whenever we talk about that, you and I immediately think of what is common in this world today, the idea of an immortal soul. Now again, that's very common in what is called the "Christian world." But understand that throughout much of the Eastern religions and so on, there is still this concept of, not necessarily an immortal soul, but some way in which the human survives. You know, for example, in one particular religion, Buddhism, where the person is reincarnated over and over again until they, I guess you would say, get it right. And then they don't have to be reincarnated anymore. They can join in the great Buddha in wherever the Buddha is.

But the concept of life after death is virtually **universal** in whatever religion, even tribal religions and so on. There are some who choose to set it aside. If you were to talk to, let's say, Jewish people, for example, and you ask: "What is your thought about life after death?" The general answer you usually get is something like: "Well, we don't really think much about that. We focus on where we are today." Okay. That's a wonderful example of looking at what may be seen instead of what is eternal. But that's the approach that some people take.

[19:41]

Now, why am I going through all that? Understand that in the first-century world where Paul is preaching, in the Gentile world where he is—and he's writing here of course, as we know, to Corinth, a very Gentile area—the idea of the immortal soul was the common, accepted belief. **Everyone** believed in an immortal soul. They believe that when you died, there were basically three different possibilities for you. If you were a hero, you could go to the Elysium fields, where everything is wonderful forever and kind of just exist there in happiness and peace and beauty. If you were really bad, you ended up in the bad area of Hades where suffering takes place. And if you weren't either one of those, then you were kind of in this dark existence that goes on and on forever, not especially suffering, but certainly not enjoying anything. It was a common belief among the Greek world.

Now, they believed there was a soul that you have inside of you that's going to survive this human life. If Paul believed that, if that was something that Paul believed, then this statement makes no sense. Why would *mortality* have to be *swallowed up by life* if we already have an immortal soul or spirit dwelling

within us? That makes no sense. So for Paul to make this statement that, as we look at what really matters, as we have the perspective, then we recognize—we keep before our eyes the idea that this mortality, which I now have, has to be swallowed up with life. It has to be taken over by life.

So he goes on. He says: **verse 5** *Now He who has prepared us for this very thing (for mortality to be swallowed up by life) is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.*

Now, literally the Greek here is what we would call “present progressive”: the One *who is preparing us for this*. We’re in the process of that as time goes forward. He is preparing us. But God is the One who is doing it. Okay. So there’s my perspective again. Keep this in mind: I’m looking forward to this eternal dwelling that God has prepared for me. You’re looking forward to the dwelling God has prepared for you for all eternity. We look forward to that. But we never lose sight of the fact that: I’m not the one who’s going to give it to me. I’m not the one who’s going to be able to give myself this incredible gift. Only God can give us life, eternal life, life that goes on.

But he says that in order for us to have the assurance that this is exactly what He’s doing, He has given us the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God as, he says here, a guarantee. You and I receive that gift of the Holy Spirit when hands are laid upon us after baptism. This is the way God chose to make it available to us. That Spirit comes and begins to dwell within us.

[23:13]

We all know that when hands were laid upon us and the minister who was conducting this part of the ceremony asked God to give His Spirit to us, that we didn’t have some sudden, you know, speaking in tongues or flames of fire or rushing, mighty winds or anything like that. We really didn’t feel any different at all. But over a period of time, we begin to see the influence of the Spirit of God. Probably we see it in ourselves in some ways before anybody else does. We begin to recognize that we see things differently. We begin to think differently. That, when we’re faced with a challenge, instead of just looking at it with the carnal eyes, we instead recognize: Wait a minute—what does God say about this? And we want to go back and find out: What does God expect of me? That’s all a part of receiving this gift of the Spirit.

Now again, as we said—I think Mr. Franks is the one who came up with the phrase—but, I really like the concept that the Spirit of God is the way a spiritual God, a God who is Spirit, inserts Himself and influences those who dwell in a physical world. It’s the medium that God uses to communicate with us what He is and what He expects of us. So He has given us this Spirit.

And it says here, it’s as a *guarantee*. Now I don’t want to get too bogged down here, but I think it’s really interesting. The word that’s used here for *guarantee* is *arrabōna*, and it means “the first or initial payment of money or assets as a guarantee for the completion of a transaction or pledge.” It’s kind of the down payment that we would have.

THE SPIRIT GUARANTEES

guarantee = *arrabōna*

- The first or initial payment of money or assets as a guarantee for the completion of the pledge; down payment
- A deposit guaranteeing what is to come

If you’ve ever purchased a home, you know what we call “earnest money.” You put forward a small portion of the down payment, which is not refundable if you change your mind. It belongs to the others. But it’s your guarantee, your personal guarantee that: “I will carry through on this purchase.”

Going on, a second aspect of it: a deposit guaranteeing what is to come. So, it has that sense of being that earnest money or the deposit. God’s Spirit is a deposit to guarantee what’s going to come. When you begin to see the influence of the Spirit of God in your life, and how it changes you, and you realize this is only a tiny, tiny part of how the Spirit of God is ultimately going to change me into being a son or daughter of God, living forever in His family, it’s an exciting and humbling thing to realize: What an amazing thing this is! But by giving us that—God doesn’t give that carelessly, any more than one of us

would very carelessly give a down payment on something that we don't intend to carry through on—God is **guaranteeing** He will carry through.

[26:19]

Now, we always have the option of bailing out. And of course, if so, you lose everything. We don't ever want to do that; none of us are wanting to do that. But understand that God is guaranteeing from His side: "I'm committed to taking you from where you are into my family forever. That's my commitment."

Now, here's what *Expositor's* says about this word. It says:

The crucial word in this verse is *arrabōna*, which had two basic meanings in commercial usage.

First of all, it was a pledge or guarantee, differing in kind from the final payment but rendering the final payment obligatory.

Or, number two. A partial payment, the first installment, the down payment, the deposit that required further payments but gave the payee a legal claim to the goods in question.

Interesting phrase.

In other words, by God giving us that guarantee of His Spirit, that small deposit of His Spirit to dwell within us and to begin to grow and change us, it also gives God title to us. By receiving that Spirit we acknowledge that we belong to Him, that He is the Owner of whoever we are. We belong to Him. We're His servants. He can do with us what He chooses. By giving that down payment and the guarantee that He will carry it through, He becomes the Owner. We belong to Him, and that's not a bad thing. It's a very comforting thing.

Interestingly—I really thought this was an interesting aspect of it. *Expositor's* goes on to say:

In modern Greek, *arrabōna* means an "engagement ring." His present work prefigures and guarantees His future completion of that work.

So I thought that was interesting that *arrabōna* means an "engagement ring." It's that kind of commitment. It's like God gives us that.

[28:33]

Notice as well, this isn't the first time Paul has talked about this concept. We talked about it when we looked at the book of **Ephesians [1] verses 13 and 14**: *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel (the good news) of your salvation; in whom also, (after) having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who (or which) is the guarantee (the arrabōna) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of (God).*

So Paul uses that concept.

You may remember as well, in **Romans 8 verse 11**, Paul says: *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit (dwelling) in you.*

Now that again is totally in line with what Paul has just said.

One more passage which is always very encouraging—**Philippians 1 verse 6**, Paul says: *being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;*

So there is that guarantee from God. It's a very encouraging one—the reception of God's Spirit, a tremendous gift. And it is God signing His name on the contract that says we belong to Him and He will make us a part of His family forever. Again, we can break the contract, but He won't. He's made His commitment.

Moving on to [2 Corinthians 5] verse 6, Paul says: *So (as a result of this,) we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in (this) body we are absent from the Lord.*

Now we'll look at that in a second because, again, this is one of those sections that people love to kind of pull out of context and get something out of it that Paul never intended at all.

Our confidence, though—notice here: Why are we *always confident*? It is, our confidence never changes because it's based on the promises of God. And God doesn't change the terms. God doesn't change the promises. So we have an absolute confidence in Him. We are aware of what has **eternal** reality and the temporary things that only have the illusion of reality. Sometimes we've kind of kidded about that at the Feast where someone may say: "Well, it's time to leave the Feast and return to reality." And we've often said: "No, that's exactly the opposite. What we're celebrating at the Feast, **that's** reality. But we're going back to the temporary illusion set up by Satan in his world to distract us. But the reality is what we've been talking about."

[31:33]

The phrase here—about being *at home in the body*, that we are therefore *absent from the Lord*—the phrase here, that doesn't mean that, you know, we don't have contact with God while we're *in the body*. The phrase is one that was used to mean "while we are living abroad." That's the sense of it. If a person travels to another land, like an ambassador (which we'll see later in this chapter) or businessman or a student, they probably have some kind of a temporary place that they live while they're there, even if they live there for **years**. They still know it's a temporary place: "I'm here. I may enjoy being here. I enjoy being with the people who are here, but, my **home** is in another place." And that's the sense of what's here. We're living abroad. We're not living at home. That's still a place that we're going to. That's still a place that God has prepared for us.

And he again goes on to draw a conclusion from this: **verse 7** *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

Now that verse all by itself—and it is a reference to the Old Testament as well—but to *walk by faith, not by sight*, there's sermon upon sermon built upon that phrase. But again, put it in here—and it's fine to give sermons about it—but put it in here in the context of what Paul is saying. What's the context that started in **verse 18** of **chapter 4**? We look at the things that are eternal, not the things which are seen.

So Paul says now, *we walk*—that's how we move through life—*by faith*, not something that you can see physically, but *by faith, not by sight*, or not by what we can see. Our decisions in life are not based upon what we can see physically. For most of the people, they have nothing else to base their decisions on. They have no other way to know that they should make a different decision. If you leave God out of the picture, then the only thing you have available to you is the physical. So they make their decisions there. But we don't live that way.

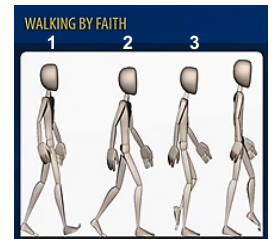
Now, as usual when we come across this phrase *to walk*, the reference really is to the way we move through life. And, for a person who moves through life *by faith*, they're going to live a different way. They're going to make different decisions. Sometimes, you know, when you think about when Christ was here and the Pharisees were coming to Him and said: "Give us a sign. Give us a sign." That's not walking *by faith*, that's walking *by sight*. Looking for a sign is not walking *by faith*.

I know, I remember a situation where an individual talked about a decision that they had to make and that they had asked God for a sign in making that decision. The phrase they used was: “I laid out the fleece.” They were thinking about Gideon with putting out the fleece and asking God for a sign. Remember, Gideon didn’t have the Spirit of God dwelling in him. God was using Gideon. He was trying to do the right thing, and God accomplished a great thing. But Gideon did not have the Spirit of God dwelling within him. So he sought a sign, a physical thing to show him.

This individual, who was supposed to have the Spirit of God dwelling in him, said that he went and asked God for a sign. And somehow, in his mind, this was a very righteous thing to do. No, that’s a sign of lack of faith. When you have to get a sign before you step out and do what God tells you to do, that’s not walking *by faith*. That’s walking *by sight*. That’s not the way we’re supposed to be.

[35:16]

Now I want to note a couple of things here, and I’ve got a, probably a kind of an unusual graphic to show here that shows four different positions as a person walks. What I’d like you to notice here is especially the last one. If this were an individual walking down wherever, you will note that in position 1, position 2, position 3—all of those places—that individual could stop. But when you get to that fourth position and your weight is shifting forward, no matter what you do, you really can’t stop moving and put that foot down. Once that weight has shifted—we talk about, in a sense, critical mass, or that tipping point where you reach that place where you cannot hold that step back.



Now why have I used this illustration? Because to *walk by faith* is step number 4. In other words, you step out in faith, and you’re in a situation where: Okay, I may not know what that next step is going to lead to, but I know that I need to take the step. So, I’m committed. I go forward so far that there is no turning back. That’s walking *by faith*.

But I also want to note something else, and that is that it doesn’t say: “Take **one** step by faith.” It’s, take one step, and the next, and the next, and the next. Walking isn’t one step. Walking is a series of steps, and many times every step requires faith. So when he says *walk by faith*, it’s more than just taking a step. It’s taking step, after step, after step, by faith. It would be wonderful to think that: “Well, God requires me to step out in faith and I take one step, but from there on everything’s going to be clear.” No, it doesn’t work that way. God requires us to walk, to move through life based upon confidence in Him and the promises that He makes.

[37:35]

So, Paul says, [**2 Corinthians 5**] **verse 8**, (And) *We are confident*, —

Paul isn’t shaky because of this. Being able to step out in faith means: “I’m relying on God instead of what I can see.” [Did] you ever step on something that looks solid and find out it’s not? Well, that’s never going to happen when you’re stepping out in faith in God. God will be there. God gets us through.

So Paul says: **8** *We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

Now, the commentaries looking at this say: “Well, there are really only two possibilities for us. When you’re in the body, you’re absent from the Lord. And when you are no longer in the body—in other words, you’ve died—you’re present with the Lord.” Well, that’s not what Scripture says. Scripture doesn’t say that the instant you die, you are from there on with the Lord. No, that’s not what we’re promised. Scripture tells us, and we’ll see in a moment, we’re with the Lord when Jesus Christ returns, not when we die.

So Paul is not saying: “Oh, well, I don’t mind. I’m looking forward—I’m eager to be absent from the body, to leave this physical body behind so that I can be with the Lord.” Okay, what is he saying? Is he saying he’s going to heaven when he dies? No, he **is** saying exactly what Scripture confirms, that when an individual dies, thought ceases. For that individual, they are in a sense of being asleep, of being unconscious, and their next conscious thought is going to be the resurrection. And of course, we’ll see in a moment what the resurrection promises.

Remember what we see in **Ecclesiastes**. **Ecclesiastes 9 verse 5**:

*For the living know that they will die;
But the dead know nothing,
And they have no more reward,
For the memory of them is forgotten.* (Or it can be translated: *their memory ceases too.*)

[Ecclesiastes 9] verse 10 *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.*

Now, whenever I read these verses—which are really quite clear—we understand that’s what it’s saying: There is *no ... knowledge or wisdom in the grave*. There’s no **doing** anything. That’s the sense of *device* here. There’s no doing, devising, doing something, in the grave. And that’s where we’re all going.

[40:07]

Now, years ago there was a Bible paraphrase that began to come out, section by section, that eventually became known as the *Living Bible*. Probably many of you remember that from years ago. We don’t use it because it isn’t really a translation at all. It’s one individual’s paraphrase of the *Revised Standard Version*. And they did their best, and in some cases, they captured the sense pretty well. But when you’re trying to understand exactly what God’s words are, no, you don’t go there.

When the section came out that included the book of **Ecclesiastes**, the author had a fascinating note at the bottom of these two verses. Instead of accepting them as being the truth of God, the author said: “Well, we have to keep in mind that when Solomon wrote this, he was really depressed. But we know that actually, yes, there is consciousness after you die.” No, there isn’t. The author was so steeped in the belief in the immortal soul that he could not accept the plain statement of Scripture.

Of course this isn’t the only place. Notice in **Psalms 146** and **verse 4**. In the *King James Version*, it says:

4 *His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts (or his plans) perish.*

Notice the *New American Standard Version*, which is the version that I have up here [on the screen].

4 *His spirit departs, he returns to the earth;
In that very day his thoughts perish.*

Scripture is clear, consistently, that when an individual dies, they no longer continue to think, to reason, to be conscious, to have relationships. The individual is simply unconscious. And that spirit in man returns to God, who preserves it until the day of the resurrection for that person.

Now, Paul here says—remember, we looked at that: (I am) *well pleased ... to be absent from the body ... to be present with the Lord*. When are we present with the Lord? Paul again, makes that clear.

1 Thessalonians 4 verse 17 Describing the resurrection after the seventh trumpet: *Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.* (And notice this:) *And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

When are we going to be with the Lord? At the resurrection. Not until. Again, Scripture is abundantly clear.

Now again, we can pull this verse, this section, out. We can look at these verses and make this point very powerfully, and we are correct. But let's, again, not lose the context that Paul is giving us. Look at the things that are eternal, which you can see with the help of the gift of God's Spirit. Don't let yourself become distracted by all the physical things. Alright, so we're going to go forward with that concept.

[43:13]

Therefore (he says in [2 Corinthians 5] verse 9) we make it our aim, whether present or absent, —

Now again, we're putting that in the context, *present with the Lord* or *absent* from the Lord. In other words, in the future, in the resurrection, or today, as we live our lives today:

... we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

This is our goal. This is what we aspire to. We're looking forward to pleasing God in this life and in the future.

Now, that tells us something else. I don't know how many of you have ever struggled, as I have for many years, with a weight problem. But if you struggle with that kind of an issue and you try a diet—okay, now I'm not down on diets. Diets are very helpful if you get the right one. But many times what people look for is that diet that's going to really take the weight off of you. There's one very popular now. I'm not going to go into it as I don't really want to go that route. This isn't about health. This is about the Bible. But, there's one that's very popular today where people really do lose weight. The problem is, it deprives the body of some very important nutrients. So, in the long run, the longer you stick with the diet, the more deprived your body is going to be of what it actually needs, and you may be, in the long run, harming your health. So, we have to be careful what diets we have. But if you're like me, many times I look at this, and: "Oh, I've got to go on a diet." And we start this with the idea that once I get this weight off, I can go back to living the way I was before. And of course, any good nutritionist will tell you: "No, that's not what you need to do. You need to change the way you do things."

I think the same principle applies here: that our desire to be approved by God, to do those things which are pleasing to God, it's not a temporary change. This is the way we're going to live for eternity.

Remember what Paul also wrote to the Church in **Philippians 2 verse 12**: *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;*

Paul says: "You can't just do it part-time. This has to be all the time, not just when somebody sees. Not just when we come to Church. Not just when others are around who might know that we profess to be Christians. This is what we do when nobody's there, when no one sees." There's an interesting book written a number of years ago by a man named Os Guinness, and that was the title he chose: *When No One Sees*. He talked about what kind of character we need to have.

[46:06]

Okay, let's move along. We're about to use up our time here.

[2 Corinthians 5] verse 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.*

So, we want to be pleasing at all times, and, what we do right now has an impact on the future.

He says, *we must all appear*. Now, the phrase there—again, it's easy to kind of overlook this—it means “to become visible; to be seen; to be fully known by revealing clearly.” One of the commentaries says:

Appear is not a strong enough word since it implies only **presence** at the judgment seat. The important fact is our being **revealed** as we are there.

Now, we don't have time right now to go through the details of this, but, there are many people who—especially with coming from maybe a Protestant or even a Roman Catholic background—have the idea that ultimately, somewhere out in the future there is this judgment day when we all are going to stand before this massive judgment bench with Jesus Christ on the bench and determining what is going to happen.

Well, now, stop and think about that for a moment. Does that make any sense to you? If you are going to be **changed** at the resurrection, when Jesus Christ returns, why would there be a judgment after that? Why would you then need to be—are you going to, as a spirit being, stand before that judgment seat and then God's going to say: “Oh, I made a mistake. You really shouldn't have been resurrected in spirit.” Of course not! That's ridiculous! God doesn't make mistakes like that—God doesn't make mistakes of any kind. But, that's not what Scripture describes. When do you and I stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ?

Peter tells us in **1 Peter 4 verse 17**. He makes it clear: *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?*

Peter makes it clear: Our day of judgment, our day of standing before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ is right now.

[48:27]

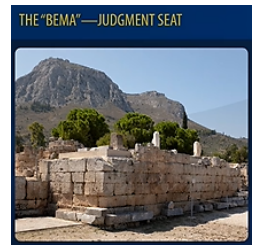
Now, remember back when Jesus Christ was talking about speaking idle words. He says, “Anyone who speaks idle words *will give account thereof in the day of judgment*.” Okay, does that mean that somewhere off in the future, Jesus Christ is going to say: “Okay, on October 15, 2004, you spoke some idle words. What were you talking about? Why did you do that? Give me an account.” That would make no sense.

We give account to God **today**. When I sin, I don't give account a thousand years from now; I give account today. I ask for forgiveness today. You and I are being judged today. Now, the rest of mankind is not. And again, isn't that strange how the false concepts of Christianity get it exactly backward? They have the idea that **everyone** is judged in the future and yet the judgment is on everybody today—that the future is kind of a sentencing, but everybody's being judged right now. You and I understand: No, God isn't judging those people. Who is He judging? The house of God. **We** are being judged. We are the ones who are under judgment today.

If you wonder more or would like to know more about it, I would really refer you to the article on the *Life, Hope & Truth* website, “Judgment of God: The Real Story.” And, I think you will find—David Treybig wrote this article—I think you'll find it very, very helpful, and it shows us what God is doing.

Then he goes on and talks about *appearing before the judgment seat*. That term that's used there is the *bema*, *b-e-m-a*. And, that's a term that the brethren in Corinth would've certainly recognized in connection with Paul. Because when you read through the account in **Acts chapter 18**, the apostle Paul was brought before the *bema*. The *bema* in Corinth looks something like this—well, that's labeled as the *bema* in Corinth.

In the background you see the Acrocorinthus, the high place where the temple was and the temple prostitutes and all of that. But this was the judgment seat anciently, during the first century. And this is where the magistrates who were in charge would sit on top of this, cases were brought to them, and they would make judgments there. So the idea of *the judgment seat* was one that really lived in Corinth, and they would certainly relate that to Paul.



Note, though, what it tells us here: **verse 10** ... *each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

Note that the things that are the basis for the judgment as you and I stand before that judgment seat are the things we do. Not the things we meant to do. Not the things we thought about doing. Not the things we really intended to do, but just never got around to doing. Not the things we planned to do. But what you do. All the other things, pretty much irrelevant. All the good intentions, pretty much irrelevant. We're judged on what we do.

[51:47]

So, [2 Corinthians 5] **verse 11** *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord,* —

Again, the sense there is knowing, and standing in awe of God about the responsibility that we have.

—*we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.*

So Paul comes back to a concept here. He said: "We take this message to men."

The phrase *persuade* there, it's interesting. One of the commentaries says it's what's called "conative." Again, a phrase that I've never used before. But basically, what it means is, it expresses effort, not necessarily success. We **try** to persuade men. We give the message in a way that we hope is persuasive, but only God can make it successful. He's the One who has to open minds.

So, Paul talks about: "This is what we do, but, we don't really have to come to you, brethren, to persuade you, to, in some way, convince you that we really are the servants of Jesus Christ. You should be able to see that in our lives."

Verse 12 He says: *For we do not commend ourselves again to you,* —

We're not coming to you and saying: "Well, look at our letters of commendation. Look at our degrees. Look at this and that. No, you know us. We've been there with you. You know what kind of people we **are**. Just as we said: 'Everybody's judged by what you do.' You know what we **did**. You saw us. You were aware of it. And so, whatever you think of us should be based upon what you know, not what somebody else accuses, not what someone says behind the scenes. You **know** this person. So you should be able to know what kind of people we are."

12 ... *we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast—*

Or again, kind of a launching pad for being very positive and almost—I don't want to use the word "proud," kind of the wrong sense to it—but, **confident** about the way of life that you believe in living. And when people ask you about it, you don't have to be apologetic and say: "Well, you know, we had this really convincing Jewish rabbi, and I kind of went along with it." You don't have to do that. You're confident in what you believe. And, I think the way we might use that today is when somebody asks you why you believe a certain thing, we don't have to say: "Well, that's what my Church teaches," or, "Well, I read it in some Church literature." No, we know the **truth**, and we're able to support it, to back it up in our lives and from Scripture.

So, he says: “I want you to have this *opportunity* to stand on that basis.” But notice the last part of this. He says:

12 ... *that you* (might be able to give) *an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart.*

Oh, what’s our context? What you need to be focused on that’s eternal—it may not be visible physically, as opposed to what **is** visible physically, [the] appearance—[rather, it is] the heart. You can’t see the heart, but you can know what the heart is.

[54:55]

Verse 13 *For if we are beside ourselves, —*

You know, there are people evidently who said: “You know Paul; he’s just completely irrational. You don’t know what he’s saying next. You just can’t go along with what Paul said.” You know, one of the things that people often— well, finish the verse:

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

Again, we’ll look at what that means.

But, one of the common tactics that people use when they can’t really disprove someone else is to accuse that person in some way and accuse them of being irrational. It reminds me of a cartoon I saw a number of years ago that was emphasizing the difference between the way men and women think, and our brains are wired differently. God created us that way. It’s sad, but our young people, especially, are being deluged with the idea that men and women are exactly alike. And that’s wrong. If you accept that concept, then the idea of homosexuality, of homosexual marriage, and so on, seems to be perfectly acceptable. But when you recognize that, no, we are not exactly alike. God did not create one superior and the other inferior, but we do think differently. We approach things differently. Each one has a certain strength and ability that the other may not have. The brains of women—the two hemispheres—are much more completely connected than they are for men. So women are able to tap into both sides of the brain and the functions that are there, where men tend to be better at being focused on certain things.

But it reminded me of a cartoon I saw years ago, and I got one of our graphics people to duplicate it for me. “You think funny!” We look at the other person, and one of the things that this diagram illustrates is that it’s kind of—the information comes in through the eyes, but it’s processed differently. But notice, they both end up at the same spot. It may be a different process that we used to get there, but we both come to an understanding. We both see things in the right way. But it’s very easy for us to begin to accuse others of not thinking rationally when: “You don’t think exactly like we do.”



Paul says that: “If, in fact, we were *beside ourselves*, it’s in God’s service. It’s to accomplish God’s purpose.” Now, he’s not saying: “We are irrational.” But he’s saying: “Somebody wants to say that? Okay, what are we accomplishing? Were we doing something to praise ourselves, to make ourselves look good? No, we were serving God in this process.”

If we are of sound mind, —which means to really have an understanding of practical matters, to be able to act sensibly and wisely in different situations. He says: “if we did that, *it is for you.*”

So basically, Paul realizes he’s going to be judged no matter what he does. Some people are going to judge him favorably. Some are going to judge him critically. But regardless of their judgment about him, they have to recognize that what he does, he does, not to serve himself, but to serve God and God’s

people. And, he says: “Basically, if you’re going to judge me, okay, this is the conclusion you ought to see: what I’m doing, what I’m saying, what I’m teaching is all to serve God and to serve the people of God.”

Well, I see we’ve used up our time for this particular class. So, in class number 7, we will pick up in **verse 14 of chapter 5** and hopefully make up a little bit of time. I’m hoping to basically be able to cover one chapter each class, so we’ll see how we do. Some of these chapters will be pretty challenging to cover in one class.

So, thank you for joining us for this class. We look forward to seeing you next week in FI Online.

[58:52]