

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

2 CORINTHIANS LESSON 2 (Chapters 5-7)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). Welcome to our study of the Book of Second Corinthians. In this book Paul is dealing with his right to be an apostle, and is offering encouragement to the church in Corinth. In chapters 1-4 we learn that we walk by faith in the promises of God. We also learn Who God is, and what He has promised us in His Word. Now, in chapters 5-7 we learn that we walk by faith in the plan of God—a plan that takes us back to the very beginning of time. God, before time began, had planned a way to save man (Tit. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). Second Corinthians 5 especially shows us how God’s plan uniquely ties together in motivating, encouraging, and offering salvation to the child of God.

Paul begins 2 Corinthians 5 by making the point that we must stay focused on Heaven if we are going to realize God’s ultimate plan. Part of that plan of salvation is for us to have a home in the place we call Heaven. But to do that, we must distinguish between this earthly house and our heavenly home. We must realize the difference between the temporary and the eternal, and between what is important and what is not. Notice 2 Corinthians 5:1 where Paul says, “We know 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.” In chapter 4 Paul had said that our light affliction is but for a moment because it is temporary. We must not look at what is temporary, but instead at what is eternal. Then he says, “If our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” If we are going to have faith in, and be true to, the plan of God, we must realize that this earthly life (our body) is not what life is all about. It is true that we walk in the flesh and live in the flesh. But the battle we fight is not fleshly. We learn from 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 that ours is a spiritual battle. While we do have to live in a physical, temporary shell, it is not what is important. It is not what masters us; rather, we are to master it. We must realize that our heavenly home is the most important of all things. In Hebrews 11 we learn that the saints of old looked for the city “whose builder and maker is God”—Heaven itself. In Revelation 21, encouragement is offered to Christians not to focus on the Earth, but instead to focus on Heaven. Revelation 21:1-4 says that we are looking for “a new heaven and a new earth” where there will be no more sorrow, death, crying, or tears because “all the former things have passed away.” In view of that, we must put worldliness and materialism aside in order to focus on godliness. James 4:4 teaches us the danger of worldliness when it says, “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” We cannot have “the best of both worlds.” We cannot “live it up” in our earthly bodies by having every pleasure we want, yet somehow think that we still will go to Heaven. We must focus on the eternal—Heaven itself. Paul gives us the correct mindset when he says in Philippians 1:21, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Living for Jesus is what this life is all about, and death is only a benefit. But to make that true, we must follow the words of Jesus, Who said in Matthew 6:33, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

If we really want to possess the correct desire to go home, we must desire to have the proper clothing in this life. In 2 Corinthians 5:2 Paul says, "In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven." We must desire to be clothed with eternal promises and the eternal plan of God. Our clothing initially begins when we obey the Gospel. Galatians 3:27 says, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." The clothing we wear in this life must be pure and holy—washed in the blood of the Lamb. Ultimately, in the twinkling of an eye, we will be changed—from mortal to immortal, from corruptible to incorruptible. We will be made like Jesus (Phil. 3:20-21). While we may not understand all we would like to know about that, we must desire to be clothed with that type of body. We must want to be clothed with Heaven itself. Don't you get tired of the aches, pains, and all the other things that go along with this temporary shell? Don't you want to one day put that off so you can have a home and a body that will never fade away? That is what God has promised us. We do not claim to know all the details about this, but we do know that God has given us that promise, and it is something that we ought to earnestly desire to have. We must groan for our heavenly home. More than anything, we must want to go there. Paul said in Philippians 1:22 that he would like to have been able to stay and help various Christians, but the truth was that he actually wanted to go home to be with the Lord, which would have been far better. Did Paul want to stay and help Christians go to Heaven? Absolutely! But he also said that he had a stronger desire—which was to go be with the Lord. Our desire must be to go home to Heaven. In Revelation 14:13 we are told, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.'"

Think seriously with me for a moment about God's plan for us to go home to Heaven to be with Him one day. Ask yourself: Do I desire to stay here on this Earth more than I desire to go to Heaven? If right now you had the choice of either staying here or going to Heaven, what would your choice be? For some that might be a difficult choice. They might say, "Well, I would like to go to Heaven...in a few years. I'd like to go to Heaven...after I've lived a full life. I'd like to go to Heaven...after I've accomplished certain things." Our mindset cannot be like that. If we are going to partake of the plan with which God has so richly blessed us, then we must yearn to go to home to be with God at any moment. We must have the mindset of being homesick for Heaven. In 2 Corinthians 5:6 we read, "We are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord." We must have the feeling of being homesick. Have you ever gone on a long trip? Or, perhaps you had a son or daughter who had gone across the ocean to participate in a war, and who was gone for a long time as a result. Do you remember the homesick feeling? You've been gone too long, and you desire to sleep in your bed, sit at your table, and be a part of that residence. The feeling of being homesick is how we ought to be regarding Heaven. We ought to be homesick for Heaven, and more than anything else desire to go there to be with God.

But to do that, we must "walk by faith, not by sight." I have never seen Heaven. I have never seen Jesus. I have never seen God. But my faith is the way by which I know that Heaven exists and that God and Jesus exist. Look at 2 Corinthians 5:7 once more: "We walk by faith, not by sight." We have faith that our bodies will be changed. We have faith in a heavenly home. We have faith in the Savior, God, and the Bible. But what does it mean to "walk by faith"? Does it mean that we "just take a leap in the dark," and even though there is no evidence, we have a warm, fuzzy feeling deep within us that says that there is a God? No, that is not what it means to walk by faith. How does a person, according to Scripture, walk by faith? What is faith? Is faith a warm, fuzzy feeling? Is it a "leap into the dark"? Is it something we feel in spite of the fact that we have no evidence? No. Faith is always based on evidence. It is something that is sustainable. It is something of which we

can be sure. But how is it that we can be sure of God, Christ, and Heaven when we have never seen any of those things? It is because God has given us ample evidence to know that they exist and to put our trust in them because of His Word. How do we “get faith”? Romans 10:17 says, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. It is impossible to please God without faith (Heb. 11:6). When we talk about “walking by faith,” we are talking about walking via the teachings found within the Bible. We obtain faith as we read and understand God’s Word, as we study about the nature and character of God, and as we look at His promises and dealings with humankind throughout the centuries. We can know that God has not lied (Heb. 6:18). We can know that He does not change because He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). Thus, when we talk about “walking by faith,” we are not talking about taking some kind of “leap into the dark.” Rather, we are talking about something that has a solid foundation, and that is based upon the evidence that God has given us. Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is substance and evidence. How do we have such substance and evidence? We have evidence of God based on His Word and on the things He has left so that we can know Him. Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” Can we look up at the heavens at night and say, “Wow! What a great marvel of evolution!” Hardly. When we look up at the twinkling stars in the heavens, and when we see all the marvelous things that God has created, we are not going to say, “That was a great accident!” Instead, we will say, “There is a great God behind these things.” Acts 14:11-17 tells us that God has not left Himself without witness. He has done good. He has given us rain from Heaven and fruitful seasons. Look at the changing of the seasons, and how they always stay constant. That is because of God. We can know that God exists. And we can know that Jesus came because of historical evidence. We can trust in the inspiration of God’s Word because all Scripture is inspired by God. When God says it, and we then do what God says, we are walking by faith based on evidence. God’s plan is substantial. It is something that we can know. It is sustainable. And we can be sure about it.

But we also can be sure that we must live a proper life here and now if we expect to go home to be with God. From 2 Corinthians 5:10-11 we learn that God’s plan requires that we live our lives in harmony with God’s will.

“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. 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.”

What encourages us to live a good, holy life? First, we know that one day we will stand before God to give an account of everything we have done in this life. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. We know from 2 Corinthians 5:10-11 that every act we have taken will be judged. The way we live our lives will determine where we go for eternity. God is going to judge us according to the words of Jesus (Jn. 12:48). Second, we must “know the terror of the Lord.” While it is important to emphasize the love, mercy, and comfort that God makes available, we also need to be fair and emphasize how horrible it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Hebrews 10:31 says, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:31). We must realize that God is a God Who can get angry, and Who, at times, deals with sin according to His anger. In Genesis 6 we can see the terror of the Lord. The world had become very wicked—everyone except Noah and his family. God was fed up with the sin, and said, “I am going to destroy the world.” He sent a flood, but prepared a way for Noah and his family to be saved. Everyone on Earth except Noah and his family drowned because of the anger of God. Think about the rebellion of Korah. Korah and his family de-

cided that Moses and Aaron had taken upon themselves too much authority. So, Korah and his followers wanted to take some of that authority in order to be important in Israel, too. What happened during that rebellion? The ground split open and thousands of the Israelites fell into it. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Based on the Day of Judgment when all things will be made open, and when the small and great will stand before God (Rev. 20:12), we know that we will be judged according to the way we have lived our lives. We therefore need to realize that is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God. God **will** punish people if they do not live correctly.

Central to God's plan is the great love that He has for humankind. Yes, it is a fearful thing to fall into God's hands. And we need to understand the terror of the Lord. But we also need to understand the depth of God's love for mankind. In 2 Corinthians 5 we see the balance of God. Immediately after talking about how fearful it is to fall into the hands of the living God and how we need to be afraid of God at times. But the Bible also talks about how we need to respect God's love. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 Paul said,

"The love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 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."

The idea is that the love of God motivates us, compels us, and pushes us on. Think about God's great love as demonstrated in His plan to save mankind. Paul said in 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." What was it that motivated Paul? It was the love of God. Think about what Christ did for you and for me. He came to Earth and lived a perfect life. He did not own any possessions—and, in fact, did not even have a place to lay His head. People mocked Him, spat upon Him, and eventually crucified Him. What is it that Jesus asks of us? He said, "If anyone desire to come after Me, let Him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me." Paul said, "I beseech you by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice." It is only right that we live as a sacrifice for Jesus—in view of all that He did for us. Stop and think about the love that God has for each individual. In John 3:16 the Bible tells us, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." God loves us so much that He sent His Son from Heaven to Earth to die a horrible death for us. If that does not motivate us to live for Christ, what will? The love of God is central to His plan for saving humankind.

In fact, God's love is what makes the plan possible. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 we see what the plan is all about, and how we get a second chance "in Christ." Aren't you thankful for second chances? Look at this one: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Sometimes we make mistakes. Sometimes we do things wrong. But sometimes we get a chance to make things right. In God's plan, every person gets a chance to make things right after having sinned. All of us have sinned, as Romans 3:23 points out when it says that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10 tells us that "there is none righteous, no, not one." We have all sinned, and we are all headed down the road to destruction. But 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." In God's plan, if we are "in Christ," then we get a second chance. How wonderful that is, and how it ought to fill us with great joy. Paul said in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" Why could Paul say that? Paul used to be Saul. And Saul held the coats of those who killed Stephen. Saul was wreaking havoc on the church. Saul was dragging men and women to

prison, and some of those people were being put to death. Saul was an enemy of Christ, but he was given a second chance. And how joyful he was for that! If we really want to take part in God's plan, we must realize that by being in Christ we get a second chance. How thankful we ought to be for that. We must realize that Jesus is the only reason we have a second chance. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we are told, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Chapter 6 also relates to God's plan. Walking by faith in God's plan is not something that we can take flippantly, and it is not something that we need to "do tomorrow." This is a "now" matter. In 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 we are told,

"We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says, 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Did you see the word "now" in that passage that is so important? Salvation is not a "tomorrow project." It is not something that we do after we have done everything else in life. It is a matter of doing it **now**. Why is it so important to do it now? James 4:14 says, "What is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." Salvation is a "now matter" because we do not know how long we are going to live. At the best we might have 70 or 80 years (Ps. 90:10-12). We know that "it is appointed to man once to die, and then the judgment." We have no clue when that will be. We therefore need to take advantage of "now." We need to do exactly what they did in the first century. We need to obey now what we know now. In Acts 2:37 the Jews who had crucified Christ cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The answer was clear. They had to realize that Jesus was the Son of God, and then believe in Him just as Saul did in Acts 9:6. They had to make the good confession (Acts 8:36-38), just as the Ethiopian eunuch did. They also had to repent. Peter said in Acts 2:38, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." A person also must be baptized to be saved. Jesus said in Mark 16:16, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." Salvation is not a matter for tomorrow. It is a very important, timely matter with which each person must deal **now** since no one has a promise of tomorrow.

In 2 Corinthians 6 we find that one of the things that restricts us from doing the Lord's will is our own desire. How true that is for each of us. If we were to ask, "What is it that keeps me from obeying the Gospel?" or "What is it that has kept me from living the Christian life?" perhaps the top answer would be, "It's because I want to do this," or "I've got desires that I'm not ready to give up." In 2 Corinthians 6:12 Paul said, "You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections." What is it that really keeps us from serving God? Sometimes it is our love of this world. We cannot fully let go of the world in order to love God. Sometimes it is our greed—like Ananias and Sapphira, who felt like they had to keep back some of the money from a piece of land they had sold. This kept them from serving God properly. Sometimes it is our fears that keep us from doing right—our fear of the unknown or our fear of letting go and trusting God. Sometimes it is our anger, which will not allow us to forgive. Sometimes our anger will not allow us to serve God like we ought to. Sometimes it is our pride, which will not allow us to fully submit to the will of God. But be sure you understand that it is not God Who is keeping us from obeying the Gospel. If anyone has not obeyed the Gospel, it is not God's fault. Rather, it is our own affections and desires that sometimes get in the way of our doing the will of God.

Sometimes, however, we also get unequally yoked with unbelievers. Sometimes we get so closely tied to the world that we cannot “let go and let God.” Look at 2 Corinthians 6: 14-17.

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,’ says the Lord Almighty.”

Part of God’s plan for us to walk by faith means that we must be separated from the world. God says, “Come out from among them and be separate!” Christians are to be unique. We are to be unique in our righteousness, unique in our speech, unique in our modest dress. In every way we are to be unique as God’s people. We cannot be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

Another important principle concerning God’s plan is that we must understand how important repentance is, and what true repentance is all about. In 2 Corinthians 7 Paul deals with repentance. He shows how God comforts the downcast (vs. 6). Then, in verses 9 and 10 Paul says,

“Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

In God’s plan, we must be willing to have true repentance. Repentance is not merely tears alone. In 2 Corinthians 7:10 we are told that “godly sorrow produces repentance.” It is right to be sorrowful, but godly sorrow alone is not true repentance. John the Baptist said in Luke 3:8 to certain people who had come out to be baptized by him, “Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.” Did they want to obey God? Had they repented? No. They had not brought forth fruits of repentance. True repentance is a changed will that leads to a changed way of life. So, I ask you today: Have you changed your life in such a way that you are ready to put into action God’s plan? God wants all people to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth. He wants everyone to go to Heaven (2 Pet. 3:9). But God will not force anyone. He has set forth the plan. Will you walk by faith in that plan? Have you heard the Word of God? Do you believe in Jesus? Are you willing to repent of your sins? Will you confess Christ before men? And will you be baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38)? We are hoping and praying that you will obey the Gospel, that you will be saved, and that you will walk by faith in view of the heavenly home that you have been promised.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 2 CORINTHIANS LESSON 2 (CHAPTERS 5-7)

1. According to 2 Corinthians 5:7, how do Christians walk?
2. What does 2 Corinthians 5:1 promise faithful Christians?
3. According to 2 Corinthians 10:3, in what type of war are Christians **not** involved?
4. What does James 4:4 have to say about friendship with the world?
5. What was Paul's point when he said in Philippians 1:21, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"?
6. What does Matthew 6:33 urge every Christian to do?
7. What promise is made to faithful Christians in Matthew 6:33?
8. What point was Paul making in 2 Corinthians 5:2?
9. According to Galatians 3:27, how do we "put on Christ"?
10. What, according to Romans 10:17, is the origin of faith?
11. What important point concerning faith is found in Hebrews 11:6?
12. What important point is found in 2 Corinthians 5:10?
13. According to John 12:48, by what will all people one day be judged?
14. What important point is found in Hebrews 10:31?
15. How does Hebrews 12:31 describe God?
16. How does John 3:16 describe God?
17. What future event is depicted in Revelation 20:12?
18. According to 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, what should faithful Christians no longer be doing?
19. What important point is made in 2 Corinthians 5:17?
20. What motivation is found in Galatians 2:20 regarding why Christians should live a faithful life before God?
21. What did Paul mean when he wrote in 2 Corinthians 6:12, "You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections"?
22. What did Paul mean in 2 Corinthians 6:14 when he said that Christians should not be "unequally yoked with unbelievers"?