

LESSON 9: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-21

Living by Faith

1. What “building” is contrasted with “the earthly tent” in which we now live (vv. 1-2)? (See also 1 Cor. 15:42-57; 1 Pet. 2:4-9; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; John 2:19-21; and 1 Cor. 12:12-14,17, and consider the implications of these passages taken altogether.)
2. What images does Paul use to compare the shabbiness, or the deficiency, of your life now with that which is to come (vv. 2-4)? What’s wrong, in Paul’s understanding, with the “nakedness” to which he refers in these verses.
3. In verse 4, Paul writes the stunning phrase, “so that what is mortal may be swallowed up in life.” What does this mean. Read the following passages and consider the rich implications of this phrase: Genesis 41:4-7,25-27; Exodus 7:8-12; Psalm 49:10-15; Isaiah 25:7-8; and 1 Cor. 15:54.
4. How is the Holy Spirit a “deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (v. 5; see also 2 Cor. 1:22 and Eph. 1:13-14.)
5. How does Paul’s destiny in Christ affect his view of life and death, 5:6-10? (See also Philippians 1:21-24.) How does it affect yours? What does Paul mean when he writes that as long as we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord” (v. 6)?
6. What does it mean to you that “we live by faith, not by sight” (v. 7)?
7. How is Paul motivated by the future judgement (vv. 9-10)? What do you understand Paul to be saying in verse 10? (Compare 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.)

Our Ministry of Reconciliation

1. Why does Paul write that “we know what it is to fear the Lord,” and how is that thought then connected to the consequence of this knowing, i.e., that therefore “we try to persuade men” (v. 11)? How does this impact your understanding of our commission to share the good news of Christ with any and all?

2. What accusations had possibly been made about Paul (vv. 11-13). How does he answer these? (See also 3:1; 4:1-2; 16-18.)

3. From these same verses, and through (especially) verse 15, what is it that motivates, that constrains, that convinces Paul to serve God? What are his goals? What are your goals?

4. What is the “worldly point of view” of which Paul speaks in verse 16? How is this contrasted with our being “a new creation” in Christ? In what way are you a “new creation”? What is the “old” that has gone, and what is the “new” that has come (v. 17)?

5. What is an ambassador? (See also Eph. 6:20, Luke 14:32, 19:14.) How does it help your understanding of your commission to think of yourself as an “ambassador of Christ”?

6. What do you think is the key word in verses 18-21? What does it mean? Why is it so foundationally important? What is the “ministry of reconciliation,” and what is its message? Who is reconciled to whom, what is restored, are you Christ's ambassador?

7. 2 Corinthians 5:21 is a powerful microcosm of the entire gospel. How so? What is Paul saying here and why is it so important?