

The Book of 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 5:9

Session 47: The Judgment Seat of Christ

We are still in the fifth category of the Sufferings of Christ, but beginning in verse 9 we have a bit of a change. We come to Part B of the doctrine. Let's look at the outline.

Part B: 2 Corinthians 5:9-11

Paul's life, message and ministry are objectionable because they:

1) denounce unrighteous living, 2) stress the issue of living a holy and separated life, and 3) appear self-righteous, prudish, judgmental, intolerant, etc.

- 1) 5:9 This particular offense and the "grace" that answers it and dismisses it
- 2) 5:10 The truth about this grace that needs to be understood, appreciated and more highly esteemed than the criticism's against it
- 3) 5:11 Exhortation to put into effect their "salvation" from being victimized by this particular sufferings of Christ (SoC)

Okay, let's start by looking at the passage.

2 Corinthians 5:9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. ¹¹ Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

Paul is not concerned with pleasing his critics, he is laboring (that is, in his life and ministry) that he might be accepted of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, **we may be accepted of him.**

What does Paul mean by, “accepted of Him?” Paul is not referring to being accepted in the sense of salvation, but he is saying that he wants the things he is doing to be pleasing and acceptable to the Lord. This has nothing to do with Paul himself being accepted in the sense of being saved and secure in Christ. If we were going to talk about it in that sense, then I would point us to Ephesians 1:6.

Ephesians 1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein **he hath made us accepted in the beloved.**

We are already “accepted in the Beloved” or “accepted in Christ” as part of the spiritual blessings which are ours in Christ.

Just go over to Ephesians 1:3-17 and look at all of the things that God has done for us; things which we do not have to “labor” to accomplish, but they are ours automatically because we are in Christ. One of those things is that He “hath made us accepted in the Beloved.”

To be “accepted” means to be satisfactory, acceptable and agreeable to God, because we are in “the Beloved,” which is Christ. Every Believer is “accepted in the beloved” in the sense that we are permanently saved, we are justified unto eternal life (JUEL), we are part of the family of God as adopted sons and daughters, we have the mercies of God, and our standing before God is certain and sure.

We are accepted in the Beloved constantly, and that standing is not dependent upon anything we do. I know it sounds odd, but even when we sin, we are still accepted in the Beloved. When we do righteousness, we are accepted in the Beloved. Our being accepted has nothing to do with what we do or do not do; it has to do with what God has made us to be positionally, in Christ, and that is unchangeable. Thank God for that!

This is another evidence of the wisdom of our heavenly Father. Who would have thought of this? Every other religion in the world makes a person's standing before God hinge on their conduct. But that is not the way God works with us; we are always accepted in the eyes of God.

There are those who oppose this because they feel like this gives people a license to sin, but actually, this is necessary if we are going to have the power to overcome sin by the employment of the first two components of our sanctified standing in Christ.

But this is not the sense that Paul has in mind in 2 Corinthians 5:9. He is not talking about our standing before God. He is talking about our manner of life, the way we serve God, and that is something different. Paul is accepted, but he also wants his labor for God to be accepted, and the first does not guarantee the latter.

In verse 9, Paul is saying that whether he continues to labor in this body (as absent from the Lord) or whether by his labor he dies (as present with the Lord), he wants his labor to be acceptable to God. Paul is not willing to die for any reason: he is not just trying to get to be with the Lord. If Paul is going to die, he wants it to be the byproduct of his godly labor, for only then will it be "acceptable" to God.

Those "things" which are acceptable to God:

- Have others in mind
- Are motivated by godly means (love)
- Are a result of the doctrine working in us
- Are a product of grace
- Tend toward our own edification by the doing of them
- Reveal God's glory (His work in us on display)

Why is Paul so concerned with making sure that everything he does in both his life and ministry are ‘acceptable’ to God? The next verse gives us the answer.

2 Corinthians 5:10 **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;** that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.

Paul cares about his labor being acceptable because he will appear before the judgment seat of Christ (JSoC). Okay, so what is the judgment about? Didn’t we already receive forgiveness of sins? Is the Lord going to go back over our sins? No, not in a way of holding us accountable for things which we have already been forgiven. But I do think that at the JSoC we will get a full understanding of the effects our sins have produced in the world.

As we put together the various scriptures which have to do with the JSoC, there are basically three issues which we will face. The apostle Paul laid out the first one in 1 Corinthians 3. Let’s go back and take a look at the passage and see if we can identify the first issue we will face at the judgment seat of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But **let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.** ¹¹ For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; ¹³ **Every man’s work shall be made manifest:** for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

The “work” that is in view here has to do with our edification. The labor (work) that is being inspected has to do with the building of our inner man. Notice how Paul uses building terminology in verses 10-12.

Even in our own culture, whenever we build a building, it usually requires an inspection, to ensure that it is built correctly, that it will perform the function for which it was designed and built, and that it will continue to stand, and be safe to use under circumstances beyond the ordinary. We know we cannot build a house without taking into consideration all of the outside pressures, which will come upon it: hot sun, strong winds, driving rain, snow, sleet and hail. This is why we build with insulation, with weatherproofed building materials; it is why we caulk windows and doors and prepare our roof to be strong enough to carry a load, and be waterproof. This is all common knowledge in the building trade, but there is a spiritual parallel to every one of these building principles.

Paul, by his Gospel, lays the foundation. What we learned after we first got saved was how we (referred to here as “another”) build on the foundation of Paul’s gospel. Then, Paul says for each of us to “take heed” how [we] build thereupon. What does “take heed” mean? “Take heed” is a warning, a caution to pay careful attention, to be mindful, to be attentive, to notice or observe.

In other words, pay careful attention to the way you are building your inner man, be mindful of your own edification. Pay attention to the sanctification process that is taking place in you.

Let’s start by talking about building our edification properly, and then we will talk about what happens if we do not build properly.

If we are doing edification properly, it is like building a building, but this building activity is at the same time, building us – in that it is shaping us into what we will be – and, it is taking place in us - in our spirit and in our soul.

Paul calls these building materials, gold, silver and precious stones, which are metaphors for the various forms of doctrine which are designed to work in us, to build our inner man (edify us) and conform us to the image of Christ. If we are building properly, our “inner man” will look like Christ!

If we are building your inner man with the forms of doctrine in Paul’s epistles, then we are using the proper materials. At the JSoC, God wants to take what we have done, and further refine those building materials by purifying them and bringing them to their best and most valuable estate. In other words, God wants those doctrines, which are working in us to be brought to their highest, purest and most perfect form. He wants them to accomplish the fulness of what they are designed to accomplish in us. This is the balance of the completing and perfecting work that was begun in us, back when we were living on Earth.

Remember, here on the Earth, we are being changed from glory to glory. But at the JSoC, God will bring us all to the fulness of glory.

Keeping to the metaphor, God will refine our gold, silver and precious stones by using a refiner’s fire, which is the judgment seat of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:13 Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

A refiner’s fire uses intense heat to purify precious metals like gold and silver by melting them, causing impurities (dross) to rise to the surface to be removed. Biblically, it is a metaphor for God’s purifying process, removing sins and flaws from people to make them pure and reflect His image.

The goal of the refiner’s fire has always been purification, not destruction. The goal is to remove dross (impurities), not destroy the metal itself, which is a picture of what is happening to our practical sanctification and spiritual

growth at the JSoC; we (our soul and spirit) are being refined to remove impurities.

Here is something remarkable that I did not know until I did some research. The process of refining is observed to be complete when the refiner sees his own reflection clearly in the molten metal. Wow! The JSoC will not be complete until the Lord Jesus can look at us see His own reflection clearly. Glory!

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

Paul laid the foundation for our edification, and that foundation is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

We are responsible for building a “house” of edification in our inner man, and it must be built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Verse 10 tells us to “take heed” how we build on that foundation of Jesus Christ. Why? Because just any old building will not do. There is a right way and a wrong way to build your inner man.

To end today’s session, let’s do a quick review.

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We are responsible for building a “house” of edification in our inner man, and it must be built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ.

We talked about our use of the proper building materials, represented by gold, silver, and precious stones. Do you recall what those proper building materials are; what do the gold, silver and precious stones stand for? They stand for the various forms of doctrine in Paul’s epistles.

1 Corinthians 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; ¹³ Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.

If you are not doing edification properly, it is like using wood, hay and stubble as materials for the “building” of your inner man. And what is wrong with wood, hay and stubble? God is going to “try” the building you built with fire. The intention is to purify the gold, silver and precious stones. This will be done at the judgment seat of Christ.

That fire will purify the proper building materials. What does that mean? Is our inner man going to be subjected to a literal fire? No. These are metaphors to paint a picture of what will be happening to skim away the “dross” that is in our lives, and to refine and complete the work God wants to do in us.

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