

2 Corinthians 5

Gospel Addresses No. 1 -- 2 Cor. 5

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GOSPEL ADDRESSES The attention of our readers is earnestly invited to the various papers appearing under this title, adapted as they are to meet, in a simple but thorough and precious way, the first needs of the soul. They consist, in many cases, of notes taken at the time of the utterances of honored and devoted servants of the Lord.

No. 1. 2 COR. 5 There are two words of immense comfort here, when once we have

believed in the Lord Jesus and His work, and yet often they are a trial to people who cannot say them with simplicity. They are "we know" and "we have" (v. 1). There is no question as to whether we can be received or not, for we are reconciled. The consequence of having eternal life is that we "live to Him." We know this, and it gives us a consciousness of the place we are in. It was not merely the apostle that had it, it was common Christian knowledge. The apostle considers here what its bearings are as to the Christian, and then to the world. The latter are death and judgment. First I get the fulness of my place, that all this glory is mine; then he contemplates judgment. He says, "I don't want to be unclothed [to die]; I am looking for mortality to be 'swallowed up of life?'" Such a power has come in in the Son of God, that if the moment for this were come I should not die at all; it is divine power. "Enoch was not, for God took him." Such a power neutralizes death, and if you are "naked" -- that is, you haven't got Christ -- you will be raised for judgment. Do you believe that God has given you glory? (v. 2). You may groan now because you have not got it yet. It is not a question of what we deserve; He has wrought us for it (v. 5), and He knows what He has wrought. He is glorifying Himself by us according to the riches of His grace, and He does what will glorify Himself. If we believe that He gave His Son for us, all the rest is easy; and that the blessed Lord gave Himself for us, then nothing is too great to expect. Do you say, I fail here, and come short there: what will God do? The Holy Ghost never reasons like this, that is my responsibility, and drawing from it as a consequence what God will do. The Holy Ghost draws the consequence from what God has done for us: "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by His life." He draws His conclusions from what God has done, and not from what we have done. The consequences of what we have done are judgment, and all would be over with me. God never gives me up. It is His joy to get sinners to depend on what He has done for them, His joy to find the lost piece of silver, to get the lost sheep back. He does not ask us what He shall give us, He brings forth the best robe. He has wrought us for the glory. How can it be? Nothing less than by the gift of the Son of God on the cross. And He gives us the earnest of His Spirit that we may know it now. Then the apostle looks the natural portion of man in the face. There is death and judgment, but he begins by saying, "We are always confident." I am looking for glory, but still I look death in the face. What is death for the

believer? "Absent from the body, and present with the Lord." We were under death, and subject to it, and the judgment afterwards; now, instead of my belonging to it, death belongs to me. "All things are yours; life, death, things present, things to come, ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." When I die, I have done with

mortality; my body goes to corruption; no matter, it will be raised again. I have done with this burden, the spirit is with Christ; and I have done with pain, sorrow, temptation, with having to resist evil, and bear with it. I am with Christ, in perfect happiness with Him, though not yet in glory. I am looking for glory, but if I do die I go and enjoy Christ, I depart "to be with Christ," "absent from the body." In this "vain show" in which we walk, "disquieting ourselves in vain," it is what faith gets at that is true. How little those men, when they broke the legs of the thief, thought that they were sending him off to paradise! "To die is gain," and all I am anxious about, the apostle says, is that when He comes He should find me what He likes, that all I do may be acceptable unto Christ. That was the sanctifying effect on Paul. "We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ," and it is useful to think of it. The apostle does not hide what a solemn thing it is, but the effect is that he persuades men -- it does not alarm him. He has not such a thought. God had wrought him for the glory. It is a blessed thing to see all the wondrous ways and dealings of God in grace with us. There are poor things, not ready, still in their sins; Paul feels what a solemn thing judgment is, and the love of Christ constrains him when he thinks of their meeting the judgment of God. But we are made manifest to God, that is the sanctifying power, as a present thing: he looks at everything as it would appear at the day of judgment -- of the believer I mean. By realizing this he is able to look at things and judge them as they would be there. "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." I must take Christ as my pattern and measure. I am manifested now, everything I do and think is clear out before God now. Then I shall find a Person judging who has put away all my sins, and there can be no question of imputing them to me. There are three things. First, the bright and glorious hope for which He has wrought us. Then, secondly, he takes up death, and says, "We are always confident." We have a life that death does not touch at all. Thirdly, if he looks at judgment, it only urges him to go and preach to other people. You will find many a thing that is not made manifest as in the day, if you are going on with your own will, and your own thoughts, and not according to God. It will not be manifest even if you do love Him, but that won't do. Verse 14 shows that all were dead, not merely guilty. What man left for five hours would think of the things of God and of Christ unless God had awakened him? That is more than being guilty. Then he says: if we are beside ourselves it is to God; for then his mind was wrapt in ecstasy; if he began to reflect, it was thinking of other people. He just adds it is all new, the whole thing. If the greatest sinner in London were here, God is beseeching him to be reconciled; and how terrible if he should have to say in that day: Thou wast beseeching me, and I didn't care about it. If I cling to selfishness, I can't be right. If I am grieving the Spirit, I am uncomfortable, not because I have not got eternal life, but because I have got it and am not living up to it.

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