2 Corinthians 5

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“God Was in Christ”

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2 Corinthians 5 There are two great aspects of the gospel in this chapter: first, That to which we are called, and for which we are made fit; second, The testimony God has brought out of sin in us, and Christ’s work meeting it. It is good to apprehend what the calling of God is, in order to know what is needed to be in it. There is no reconciliation of the old thing as such, but complete reconciliation in the new man. The judgment of man is pronounced, “now is the judgment of this world.” God’s dealings with man in the flesh are over, the flesh is set aside for ever. In the new state of things brought in by Christ in resurrection, “all things are of God.” As to the body we are not in it yet, therefore it is good to be “absent from the body and present with the Lord.” The moment we get hold of our calling “to his kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12), we are brought into the presence of God. He is also enabling the soul to apprehend the glory. It sees that a work entirely of God must be done in order that man may enter glory. Could you put yourself into Christ’s glory? “He that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God.” The presence of God revealed to the soul, gives true, thorough conviction of sin. It does not mind what man thinks, because it knows what God thinks. Sin is a shameful thing, but the presence of God produces thoughts that are beyond shame. The moment the soul is before God, it hates, judges sin, cannot think of hiding it, would rather be in truth before God -- “there is truth in the inward parts”; shame before man leads to the concealment of sin. God’s true light manifests everything, but when the heart is set right, it takes God’s side against sin -there is forgiveness; all is right when looking at what we are in the presence of God. We are called to “God’s kingdom and glory” to be conformed to the image of His Son. We have a life -- divine glory belongs to that life. It is God that justifies. He says that is right in My eyes, God Himself pronounces. That is what I want, this full, blessed justification connects itself with glory -“Whom he justified them he also glorified.” “We wait for the hope of righteousness” (Gal. 5:5). This is what God is calling us into in Christ, That which is announced in the gospel is: Christ as man is in divine glory. It is “the gospel of the glory of Christ.” That has been done which has put man into the glory of God. This new thing is man, the center of all the glory of God. It will be accomplished of course in Christ by-and-by, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth {Eph. 1:10} -- or as it is expressed in Revelation,

the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

It is to this glory of Christ we are called. It shines in upon the soul. Are you fit for this glory? If not, what are you fit for? You cannot stay here on earth for ever. Where are you going? If not into the light it must be into the darkness, that is opposite to it. There is no medium. We have this in the parable of the king's son -- Jesus had spoken of seeking fruit before; now He is speaking of grace that seeks nothing, it is a feast prepared. Those bidden are from the highways and hedges, and no matter what they were before, but they must have the wedding garment. The prodigal must have the best robe to enter the house -- he must be suited to the house. Have you, my reader, got that. We see what the calling is, can you say, "I have got what is fit for the glory I am going into?" You may be getting it, the Lord leading you into it, but without it what are you fit for? You and I must either be outside or with the wedding garment inside. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

Did He not suit Himself to all to win their hearts? He came with the invitation to turn back to God: but no -- they would not: for His love He got hatred -terrible witness of man's entire ruin -- he is dead; alive indeed for himself and for his fellow men, but there is no movement of his heart toward God. He came to his own and his own received him not.

Yet in Christ there is perfect love -- no reproach. Paul saw the terribleness of the judgment and set about to persuade men. The love of Christ is still pressing upon men the truth we are dead: the link between man and God is broken and cannot be formed again. Does the cross say, "Christ had set the world right?" "One died for all," unspeakable love, "then were all dead." Has your soul been brought to the conviction "that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing? Could you say you would not have put Christ to death? Could you say, "He would not have died for me, He might have helped me, and purified me"? If not, then you must say, "I am dead, lost, I have no link in heart with God!" The old creation is a judged, condemned thing -- you, as children of Adam, belong to it, the question is, whether you get out of it? Man has emancipated himself from God; what infidelity does, is to justify and proclaim the fact: set up and cultivate man's will. Cain began this world without God. He went and built a city and called it by his son's name. They had instruments of music and artificers there -- all to make the world a pleasant place without God; and that is what man is doing still -- he says it is with the faculties God has given -- true: But what is the moral state of man's heart? is he not away from God? Jesus came "to seek and to save that which was lost." I do not ask whether you recognize yourself as wicked, but

whether you see yourself to be lost -- dead? By nature we reject Christ, all our thoughts cluster round self. We prefer pleasure -- everything in the world, our own will -- to Christ. This is the condition of all naturally, was the condition of every one of us, but the One who was not dead, who was acceptable to God, the only One who could be, who was made sin for us. He stood in our place. He, the Holy Blessed One, was made sin. The quickening power of God shows us sin, but we see the

whole thing closed on the cross. I see what flesh is, it crucified Christ -- but I am not in it any longer, I belong to the new creation; I am in Christ, who is my righteousness, and gives me the title to enter in. We find the calling into God's kingdom and glory. We see the veil rent, and Christ is within as man, and in getting there, He has put away all that we were in the flesh. We have to contend with the flesh daily as an enemy, but as to our standing before God it is ended. In Christ we have entered into the new place -- "you hath he reconciled" (Col. 1:21); there is not a thing left between me and God. We are brought into the glory of God. We wait for it indeed as to our bodies, and He has given us the earnest of the Spirit. We have the reconciliation -- reconciliation to what? to God. He did it according to what God is, and we must judge sin according to what God is. When do we know it? now by faith; but we cannot receive it, till we have judged darkness to be darkness. God says, "Where is my Son?" The world must plead guilty of His death; it saw no beauty in Christ, and now prefers pleasure, dress, money, science, anything to Him. I may have to learn a great deal, to go through much conflict, but if I belong to Christ, I am reconciled to God. "The love of Christ constraineth us" -- is the ground of all our walk. You may have been living to yourself; it may have been very decently, none of what the world calls great sins, but there are plenty of decent enemies of God, and will reputation stand in the judgment? A Christian cannot live to himself in purpose, but are you living to yourself in practice? You may say you are occupied in innocent things, but nothing can be innocent away from God. Have you judged yourself as belonging to a world that has rejected Christ? We have to leave it in detail -- the flesh continually showing itself in unexpected ways. But God has condemned sin in the flesh. He forgives sins, but the state He has condemned, not forgiven. Have you known Him, made sin and yourself the righteousness of God in Him. Can you say, I am reconciled to God, brought back to Him? Can you say, I am glad to know all about my sin, "search me, O Lord, and try my heart?" Helps in Things Concerning Himself, 1892, vol. 2, pp. 197-203.

Forgiveness and Salvation

2 Corinthians 5

People do not really believe that they are lost; they believe that they have sins; but that does not touch the question of being lost. Your sins make you guilty, but your state by nature is, that you are lost. It is quite another thing to, seeing that I have sins, the consciousness that I am lost now. In my natural condition, they go together, but they are distinct; guilt looks forward to judgment; lost is my present state. If I get clear hold of that, then I get C hrist dealing with it, and the consciousness that I am saved now . But people neither know that they are lost, nor that they are saved. But, in the Christian, God has brought in a new thing -- he is a new creation; and thus m y place is either in the first man or in the second. And, to get hold of what this new creation is, is of immen se moment in this day. All the ordinances and religion that are going on in the world are for man in the flesh. Do

you think we shall have such things in heaven ? The first man, though the flesh be in us, is done with for faith; God takes me entirely out of

my condition by nature -- though my poor body is here yet of course -- has separated me en tirely from the world, though still in it. “Now once in the end of the world,” we read, “hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Do you believe that the world has morally come to an end? God’s dealings with the first man were then thoroughly, perfectly closed. Man m ay get up an imitation of the Jewish ritual, but it is all over. The religiousness that is going on around us all hangs upon this question: Am I alive in this world, looked at in my relationship with G od, or not? I am not! -- Where does the believer get his life from? From heaven. Christ could say: “The Son of m an wh ich is in heaven.” We, as united to Him, live of the life which is in Him who is on high. Will you occupy yourself in the improvem ent of the first Adam? Will you get good out of him? You never will. God has tried, but He could get nothing. The flesh that is in me has had Christ presented to it, and has rejected Him. It does so still. It cannot cru cify Him now, but it rejects Him just as much. Lawless, if left to itself, it is not subject to the law of God w hen under it, neither indeed can be {Rom . 8:7}, and, if Christ be presented to it, prefers everything in the world to Him. When ever God set up anything good, the first thing man did w as to spoil it. Take the history in o rder as it comes. W hat is the first thing? Man himself -in the garden . And what did he do? -- Then after the flood; you would say if ever anything could have mended man’s manners, surely that would. But no, it is all ruined; the first thing Noah does is to get drunk. Abram is called out of it by grace. B ut the law is then given. The first thing Israel did was to make the golden calf. The priesthood was set up but Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire on the very first day. The son of David is established; but Solom on loved many strange women, and the kingdom is ruined. Nebuchadnezzar, set up as the head of gold, sets up an idol. And the church is in ruins. “A ll,” we read in the apostle’s time, “seek their own, not the things w hich are Jesu s Christ’s.” Who says that? The apostle; while he was yet alive that was the state of things. “The mind of the flesh is enmity against God.” Have you not got that nature? Speaking of us as men, have we not got that nature, which is -- what? Enm ity against God! And are you going to educate it? to cultivate it? Cultivate enmity against God? This is what I mean when I say that men do not know that they are lost. When Christ cam e into the world and w ent about doing good because God was with Him , men did not like Him. W hy? Because God w as manifested in Him! -- It is natural that infidels should try to get what good they can out of the old tree; but I am speaking of Christians. It is the first question with the soul, and must be, if I want to get glory -- this truth that I am lost already; you will never get hold of what it is to be saved already u ntil you see that. It was just at this point, when Pharisaic flesh made its mo st of religion, that

Christ came into the world. He came in and found a magnificent temple; and that is what people want now. If I go into a church I take my hat off. I do not mean I, of course, when I say this, because

I would not go into one, but that is what people do. And they take it off to what? There was a time when God had such a thing -- a temple -- priests -- everything, to try what man in the flesh could do. And now man will go back to it, and says: Oh, you must have m usic, temple, vestments, to influence people. Influence what? Their flesh! But I am "not in the flesh." "Once in the end of the world." There ended m an's history morally. They said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him"; and there was an end of the world as to the judgment of God, not executed indeed, but pronounced. But then there was the beginning of God, and where was that? In the grave of Christ, as com e in the flesh -- the cro ss, if you please, but it was death -- in the grave. He accomplished the work in perfectness of love to God and perfect obedience in a man -- One who was God, of course, but as man dying on the cross, closing all association with man in the flesh, fully tested by grace as well as law, and God set the Man who had done it at His own right hand. The first man's wickedness was proved in the death of Christ, and the second M an was taken out of the world; it is convicted of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment {John 16:8}. Of sin, in rejecting Him; of righteousness in that He is gone to the Father, and the world sees Him no more as so com e in grace, and the prince of this world proved to be Satan; but there is the Man in hea ven; and Christianity is founded upon that. The end is made of the first man in death, and a totally new place is taken in the second Man, in which m an innocent had no more place than man guilty, and till I know that, I shall not know what salvation is. Forgiveness applies to what I have done as the first man. I may sin now, surely, as a Christian, but, if I do, that is the first m an -- the flesh. Salvation is connected with my condition as a child of Adam. When I speak of sins, I do not say I am saved; I say I am forgiven. People think that their guilt, as children of Adam, is cleared away, and so it is; but that is only forgiveness; it does no t in itself take me out of the position that I am in. But G od has judged man; the prince of this world is cast out; and I am now in Ch rist at the right hand of God. If any man be in Christ it is a new creation. Of course, as to my body, I have not got into the new scen e yet, but am left here to have m y senses exercised to discern good and evil, and to walk by faith and not by sight. He is not talking of the sight of things down here, but he means you have not yet got a sight of heavenly things. Bu t I can go through the things down here, they do not affect m e. I have to live d own here -- perfectly true; but that has nothing to do with the moral question of the object that leads us:

We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

And then what does he say? W hy, I am groaning in this tabernacle meanwh ile, desiring to be clothed upon with my house w hich is from heaven, for He that hath wrought me for the self-sam e thing is G od. God has wrought me. It is not only a prepared place there, but he has w rought me for it -- for that place where is the glory of Christ. The world may come and tempt me, but it is the things that are inside the veil that are mine, and I belong to that scene and that is what is salvation. A man in Rom. 7 is a renewed man, but he has not salvation; he is a renewed man under the law {in h is conscience}. The law was God's rule for a child of Adam. Well, but what are you? -- I am a child

of God. The law deals with a man in the flesh; I am “not in the flesh, but in the S pirit.” I get salvation when I get into a place where I am not in the flesh at all. “I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” The law is a very useful thing to kill me. T he law says: Death and the curse are your portion. I say: Yes; but I died on the cross when the cu rse was borne. If a guilty man fall into the law’s hands and die there, what can it do with him? Give him up to be buried! So a Christian is not in the flesh before G od; m y place -- my standing -- is not there at all. You say: W here is it then? -- Why it is in Christ. I find that when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly; and what w e learn in Ro m. 7 is, not guilt, but that we have no power to get out of the condition in which we are. Christ has come and taken me out of the condition in which I was, and put me into His own; by the power which God wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, He has quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ {Eph. 2:6}. Well, if I am sitting in heavenly places in Christ, am I saved, or am I not? What salvation has done is not the merely forgiving me m y sins; forgiveness, cleansing, justifying, applies to m y respon sible and g uilty condition in the first Adam; but salvation applies to my state in the second Man. It is a new c reation. What would you do if you wanted to make something of a crab tree? Not nurture, and prune, and dig about, and du ng it. That God has do ne with his fig tree. If you know anything about it, you will cut it down and graft it. Until you find out that the old man is utterly bad, and that there is no m ending it, you will not give it up. If you cultivate the old crab tree you will have fair flowers but only bigger crabs.

God has gone through the moral history of man’s probation up to the cross, and a little supplementary trial too, if you like, through Ch rist’s intercession on it for Israel, and He has com e to the end of it. I get the wh ole thing. God’s grace in seeking man in the condition he was in, giving His Son to die for him, and then Christ rising into a totally new place as man, wh at man as Ad am w as not at all, and has brought me there in Him -- of course I am not phy sically there -- and then gives me His Sp irit that I may walk in the place He has set me in. In the death of Christ the whole thing on man’s part has closed, and then God begins with His own work. A M an, the Lord of glory, goes down, takes this dreadful cup, goes on the cross into death for us, into the judgm ent, into the curse alone with God, settles that question with God, and has so settled it for God’s glory that God has set a Man at His ow n right han d in glory. All the thoughts and the counsels of God cam e out consequently on that. One p assage w e may refer to on this is 2 Tim. 1:9. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest. I am not saved according to my responsibility; “our works”; saving and calling does not come to me upon this ground. I am saved by the cross. Well, I say, and what part had you in the cross? If you are saved by the cross the only part you had in it was your sins; your enmity too, if you like, in putting

Him there. But I find in the cross a death which on the one hand clears away my sins, and on the other hand brings me salvation. Th e who le of it is God's work. All alone between Him and God was that work; the darkness was the outward testimony that He was alone with God; His divine power not saving Him from the cup, but enabling Him to drink it. And then He goes to His Father, and the w orld sees Him , in grace, never any m ore, till He com es to it in judg ment. "It is now m ade manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ." And again in the beginn ing of Titus: Eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began, but hath in due times manifested. For this purpose of God, to bring us into the second Man, the ground was not laid until the cross. But when He cam e it was no t only this ; He had also in His person the promises for Israel; recollect this. And it is well we should recollect, that there is no promise to the flesh. It was said, in passing sentence on the serpent, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head ; it was not said to Adam. Was Adam the seed of the wom an? He was the only man who was not. The promise w as to the seed of the wom an -- to Christ. God had had purposes of grace before the world existed, but He began H is dealings with Adam -- the responsible man -- and tried him. And, having proved what he was, then I get God's work; God wrought. If I get what man wrought it was sin and

condemnation. But God has raised His Son from the dead, and m y place w ith God being in Christ after His death -- after the power of Satan being broken -after my sins being put away, judged in Him -- I am a new creation, I am in the second Man, I am not in the flesh. You will never know what salvation is until you know that you are in Christ; then the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh {Rom. 8:2, 3}. Sin in the flesh is condemned, not forgiven, but condemned where C hrist was a sacrifice for sin, and, where the condemnation was, death w as; so that there is no condemnation for me now, but I am dead to sin. I will not say any more, but I am anxious this should dwell upon your minds; it is of great moment now. We have come back to the Father, kissed, robed, the ring on our finger, and the fatted calf killed {Luke 15}. We have come back. But was it the fruit of what the prodigal did? He was perishing; if he stay wh ere he is he will perish. But he sets out on his way to G od. And w hat is the effect of that? The effect that is on the minds of many: it is -- "Make me one of thy hired servants." But his reasoning thus only proved he had not yet met Him . And after all what does his experience bring him to? To the Father in his rags! I may say I am running too slow, perhaps stumble in the way, though seeking to go right; but I am always in my rags till I come to my Father. It is the Father who says, Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. It is He who had the best robe brought forth; till then the prodigal son was not fit to enter into the house, though he had been going right, and his father's love shown to him. Of course then we must bring forth good fruit. If I have got the life of Christ in me, I must

bring it out in everything: Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. I say, Are you doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus? If not, you have in that case given Him up for som e foolish thing or other. If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living (alive) in the world, are ye subject to ordinances? I am dead to flesh -- to sin: The body is dead, because of sin; but the spirit is life, because of righteousness. I am crucified to the world, and dead to the law by the body of Christ. The fact then is this, that I do not belong to the world any m ore than a dead and buried man do es -- of course I m ean in the m oral sense of it. If I take my privileges, I say I am seated in heavenly places. If I take my position in the world, I have

nothing to do but to go through it as He did. The Lord give us clearly to see what salvation is: that it is the taking me out of the first Adam and putting me into the second Man. He hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Food for the Flock, 1875, vol. 2, pp. 273-283.