

Study 6: Chapter 5

Introduction

Paul concludes the discussion on the nature and character of the apostolic ministry, before beginning a logical discussion on how he has discharged his responsibility in that regard.

In his typical style, he builds his argument, draws a conclusion, then presses it further to another conclusion, each argument building on the last.

Body of the Study

Our dwelling place (vs 1-4)

Our reward from the Lord (vs 5-8)

Paul's motivation (vs 9-11)

Paul's commendation (vs 12-21)

Homework and preparation for next week:

- *How does Paul approach what is essentially a leadership challenge in this passage? How does his approach compare to a response of a leadership challenge in a political office (or a workplace)?*
- *How can we apply the principles that Paul presents here, to become more effective ambassadors in our own lives? What are the practical ways that we can put this into action?*
- Read the notes as a review of the study.
- Read chapter 6 in preparation for the next study.

Notes for study 6: Chapter 5

Introduction

Paul concludes the discussion on the nature and character of the apostolic ministry, before beginning a logical discussion on how he has discharged his responsibility in that regard.

In Paul's typical style, he builds his argument, draws a conclusion, then presses it further to another conclusion, each argument building on the last.

This chapter is full of 'famous' or rather, prominent verses of scripture, such as vss 5, 7, 10, 11, 14, 17, 20, 21. It is almost as a crescendo in the letter.

Body of the Study

Our dwelling place (vs 1-4)

In the previous chapter, Paul had contrasted with great irony the situation of the things that he (as an apostle) had endured. He concluded by noting the temporal nature of the body (and hence the suffering that it puts up with) with the permanent nature of our heavenly reward (2:4:18).

This chapter begins with a continuation of that thought (remember that the chapter breaks were not put there by the writer – they were added much later to make it easier for us to find our place in the word). Even “...*if our earthy house, this tent, is destroyed...*” there is something better for us. Paul looked at the body as the *dwelling place* of our spirit – the tent we live in. Rather than a tent – a makeshift and temporary dwelling place, we have a building – something substantial and permanent – one that is “...*a house not made with hands...*” We can be assured of the quality of the provision, since it comes from God, who has “...*gone to prepare a place for us...*” (Jn 14:2) in the heavens.

To the brethren of Jewish origin, the parallels of the transition from the Tabernacle (the temporary dwelling place of God during the wilderness wanderings) to the Temple (the permanent and glorious dwelling place in the promised land) would not be lost. Yet, by comparison, this is nothing compared to the permanent home that God is preparing for us. Paul then makes an extension of the parallelism – from habitation to habit – as he discusses the way we are presented – clothed before God.

Our reward from the Lord (vs 5-8)

Paul was between two homes – at home in the body where he could be of service to the brethren (especially those at Corinth) – and his eternal home with the Lord. If the Lord returned before Paul died, then he longed to be clothed with the spiritual body. Or, if he died before the Lord's return, he did not want to be left naked as an outcast. Paul shows here that his anticipation was that the Lord could return at any time – even in Paul's own lifetime. Paul did not think that it was not a phenomenon that was not going to happen for several thousand years, but rather one that could occur during the lifetime of the brethren in the first century. This is in stark contrast to some today who say that the bible teaches that the Lord's return will be in our lifetime (ie around 2,000 years after His ascension).

In 2:5:5 Paul makes a revealing statement about the Holy Spirit. He says that we have a guarantee of our relationship with God, and the HS is given to us as that guarantee. For a more detailed discussion on the Holy Spirit, see the notes for my studies on 1 Corinthians chapters 12,13,14; and Romans Study 10. For the sake of brevity and completeness here, Paul is discussing the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the christian, not the miraculous measure that was evident in only some of the brethren.

Paul was betwixt and between two desirous things – for him, the greatest desire was to die (probably be killed for the sake of the gospel) so that he could go to be with the Lord. However

that would not be the best thing for the church, as by staying in this life he could strengthen the brethren. We should note, that it was not just the brethren at Corinth who were strengthened by Paul's work, but all those who have read of his work over the centuries! The Lord used Paul in a mighty way to accomplish His work!

Paul's motivation (vs 9-11)

Regardless of the outcome of his sojourn on the earth, Paul had a very clear view of his ministry, and it was totally summed up in Paul "...*being well pleasing to God...*" By implication, it means Paul doing things that would make him so regarded by the Lord – but that is not to say that we are saved by works – for there is nothing that we can do that would make us righteous. Rather he lived his life in such a way that God would be pleased with his actions, and delivering his accountability to Him.

The motivation was not just brought about by wanting to serve, but also recognition of the righteous and just judgement of God "...*for we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ...*" Paul was very well aware that a day of judgement is coming. We will be called into account. We will face a true and righteous judge. We will not be able to fool him by telling lies and hoping he believes us. He will have all of the facts. There will be no escape. We will have to give account of "...*the things done in the body... whether good or bad...*" (2:5:10).

Next, Paul gives a further reason for his motivation "...*knowing ... the {terror / fear / awesome respect} of the Lord, we persuade men...*". The idea here is not that Paul was afraid of God in the sense that we would be afraid of a gang of thugs who had camped outside our front door and were waiting for us to come out so that they could beat us up! Rather, it is the awe, respect and reverence that he has for God – the righteous God – who will deliver to us what we deserve. And none of us deserve anything but death! However we have been made righteous by Jesus, and can stand before the Throne and the Judgement seat having been made right because of our faith in Him, and through God's grace and mercy.

The Corinthians could judge Paul's behaviour. It was "...*well known to God, and I also trust (we) are well known...*" to you.

Remember that Paul is responding to the apparent criticism of the Judaisers who had tried to discredit him. The Corinthians had first hand knowledge of Paul, and ought to have had no doubts about his motivation.

Paul's commendation (vs 12-21)

Unlike the Judaisers who (apparently) had brought letters of commendation in an attempt to establish their credibility, Paul needed no such letters of commendation. The Corinthians had sufficient knowledge of him, of his behaviour, and his situation so as to discredit the Judaisers. "...*For we do not commend ourselves again to you...*" (2:5:12)

In stark contrast to Paul's ministry and manner of life, the Judaisers were "...*glorying in appearance...*" whilst Paul's actions were totally motivated "...*from his heart...*" (2:5:12)

Next, Paul commences a logical argument that concludes in 2:6:1, which could be summarised as follows:

- The love of Christ is what drives and motivates us 2:5:14
- Christ died on behalf of all of us 2:5:14
- This was the rightful death that all of us should have had 2:5:14
- As a consequence of our pardon, we are now made alive 2:5:15
- Therefore we should live for Christ, not for ourselves 2:5:15
- As a result, we take no regard for the physical things of anyone 2:5:16
- We once knew the Lord in the body, but not any longer 2:5:16

[By comparison, we are now in the flesh, and no longer have that face to face contact with the Lord. But, when we pass from this life, we will no longer be in the flesh, but will again have that face to face contact with the Lord].

- If we are in Christ, we have been made new 2:5:17
- The old life of sin that we lived has passed away 2:5:17
- God has reconciled us to Him through Christ 2:5:18
- The ministry of reconciliation was given to the apostles 2:5:18
- As such ministers, the apostles are Christ's ambassadors 2:5:20

[As christians, we also have been charged with teaching the word, and are therefore also Christ's ambassadors, however this is not to the same degree, nor in the same sense of the special role that the apostles had in this regard. Remember, Paul is discussing here how he has discharged his accountabilities in direct comparison to the Judaisers who were accusing him of being a false apostle.]

- As Christ's ambassadors, it is as if God pleads through us 2:5:20
- On Christ's behalf, our plea is for all men to be reconciled to God 2:5:20
- The reason for our plea, is because of what God did 2:5:21
- He took the righteous Christ and made Him wear our sins 2:5:21
- As a result, we who are sinners now wear His righteousness 2:5:21
- As ministers together with Christ, we plead for you 2:6:1
- Our plea is that God's grace is not given to you in vain 2:6:1

The last point really drives home the nail! If the Corinthians rejected Paul, then they were rejecting God's workmen and His messengers. It would be a rejection of God. The work of reconciliation was done by Christ, and the apostles (including Paul) was a minister of that reconciliation. To reject Paul, was to reject Christ. If we reject Christ, then we reject God's grace! The consequence is that everything that we have believed and accepted is vain! Worthless! Of no effect!

How clear a picture Paul reveals. He will take the argument further in the next chapter.