

9. Learning to Look Forward to the Judgment Seat of Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to deal with suffering as they serve the Lord. We saw that even when we experience suffering in our physical body, the Lord is renewing our inner man day by day. This inward renewal helps us to look at things from an eternal viewpoint instead of a physical viewpoint. As we show our children how to look at the eternal viewpoint while they live their lives on this earth, we are also preparing them for the time when they will stand before the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ. In our topic today, we will see how to help our children understand that they can look forward to the time when they stand at the judgment seat of Christ.

We begin 2 Corinthians 5 by seeing that our physical body is compared to a tent. 2 Corinthians 5:1 says, “For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Our physical body will die one day if the Lord does not come first. If the Lord comes before we die, we see that our physical body will be changed at that moment. 1 Corinthians 15:52 says, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Either way, our physical body is like a tent that will not last.

That is why we read that when our tent is destroyed, “...we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Here, we see that our new body will not be like the temporary tent that is used to describe our physical body. Instead, our new body will be permanent. It will be a body that is created by God. It is a body that is not made with hands. Finally, it is a body that will be eternal in the heavens. Here, we see that God makes it very clear that the physical body we presently have and the eternal body that we will have in the future are very different.

2 Corinthians 5:2-4 says, “For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in *this* tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.” Paul and Timothy said that they groaned in their physical bodies. They both looked forward eagerly to the time when they would have their eternal bodies that the Lord has prepared for them and for each one of us who have placed our faith in Christ.

Paul had earlier described to the Corinthians the changes that will be made in our new bodies. 1 Corinthians 15:54 says, “So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’” Paul wanted to make it clear to the Corinthians that God will give us a new eternal body. This physical body that we now have causes us to groan because it is controlled by the effects of sin. We experience various kinds of sickness; as we grow older, our physical body does not improve with age. As a result, we have no desire to live in our present physical body with all of its problems for eternity. We looked forward to the fact that we will be clothed with a new body that will not die. Instead, our physical mortality (the fact that we die) will be swallowed up by life. Our eternal body will never die or experience the physical problems that we face today.

We are also told why we can know that we will have this new body that will be eternal. In 2 Corinthians 5:5-8, we read, “Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” Here, we see that the One who has prepared us for this purpose is God. God plans for us to experience our eternal life in a new body.

We also see that God has given us the Holy Spirit as our down payment and guarantee of the eternal life that we have been promised. 2 Corinthians 1:22 says, “Who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” The Holy Spirit is the down payment on the fact that we have been given eternal life. Since God has already given us the down payment, we know that He will complete what He has begun and will give us eternal life along with the new body that He has promised to us.

As a result of the fact that we have already received the down payment, we see that we can always be confident about the future. The word that is translated “confident” is a word that means *to be bold or to be of good courage*. Hebrews 13:5-6 says, “*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: ‘The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’*” Here, we see why we can have such great confidence and boldness. The Lord has promised that He will never leave us or forsake us. This is a promise that is good for all eternity.

We are reminded that as long as we are living in this human body with all of its limitations that are the result of sin, we are absent from the Lord. However, that will change very suddenly. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 says, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” Once the Lord takes us home, we will be with the Lord for all eternity. The earth is the temporary place that we live in a temporary body. Heaven is our eternal home where we will have a new body that is an eternal body.

As a result, that is why while we are here on this earth, we walk by faith and not by sight. Romans 8:23-25 says, “Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.” Since we have already received the firstfruits, the Holy Spirit in our life, we eagerly wait for the day when we will be given our new body.

We are confident about the future. In fact, we are looking forward to the day when we will leave this present human body and go to be present with the Lord. That is why Paul said in Philippians

1:21-24, “For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. But if *I* live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you.” Here, Paul said that the reason why the Lord even leaves us here on this earth is due to the fact that He still has more work for us to do here. We want to help our children understand that the reason why Christ leaves them on this earth is to help others and that when their work is complete the Lord will take them to heaven.

This means that we want to please the Lord by whatever we do. 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 says, “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” Here, we see why we want to do whatever we do to please the Lord. We know that the day will come when we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

The word that is translated “judgment seat” was the raised platform where the athletes that had been victorious in the Isthmian Games or the Olympic Games went to receive their crowns for their victories in those games. As a result, the judgment seat of Christ is the place where we will receive our eternal rewards for the things that we have done on earth as Christians. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 says, “Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” Here, we see that our works will be tested by fire before we stand at the judgment seat of Christ.

As Christians, some of our works are works that have eternal value. Other works are of no eternal value. Those works that are of eternal value are like gold, silver and precious stones. The fire that tests our works will burn out any impurities and the result will be like pure gold, silver and precious stones. Those are the things for which we will receive our rewards as we stand at the judgment seat of Christ. Those works which we have done that have no eternal value are like wood, hay and stubble. When those works are tested by fire, they will be removed and there will be no reward for those works. The Christian that does few or no works of eternal value will receive eternal life. However, there will be little or no reward since most or all of the works of that person will be burned. We want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example that our desire is to do works of eternal value that are purified when they are tested by fire. We also want to help them understand what works do have eternal value and equip them to do those works so that they can also enjoy eternal rewards. May the Lord richly bless you as you prepare your children to look forward with joy to the judgment seat of Christ.