CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

2 Corinthians Chapter 5 —
The Ministry of Reconciliation

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

2 Corinthians Chapter 5 is one of the great gospel chapters of the Bible.

It continues the thought of Chapter 4.

Paul had just said that our outer self is wasting away, but our inner self is being renewed day by day.

He said we fix our eyes on what is unseen and eternal.

Now he explains what that eternal hope looks like.

Our bodies are like tents.

They are temporary.

One day they will be taken down.

But God has prepared a permanent home for us.

A building not made with hands.

Eternal in the heavens.

Because of this hope, believers can be confident even when facing death.

To be away from the body is to be at home with the Lord.

But Paul also reminds us that every believer will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

That truth shapes how we live.

Then Paul explains what drives his ministry.

“The love of Christ compels us.”

Christ died for all.

So those who live should live for Him.

And anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.

Finally, Paul gives one of the clearest descriptions of the gospel in all of Scripture.

God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

And He has made believers His ambassadors, carrying the message:

“Be reconciled to God.”

The chapter moves through five movements:

- Our Heavenly Dwelling (verses 1–5).
- Walking by Faith, Not Sight (verses 6–10).
- Compelled by Christ's Love (verses 11–15).
- New Creation in Christ (verses 16–17).
- The Ministry of Reconciliation (verses 18–21).

The central truth of 2 Corinthians 5 is:

Because Christ died and rose for us, believers have an eternal home, live by faith to please Him, become new creations, and carry God's message of reconciliation to the world.

I. OUR EARTHLY TENT

2 Corinthians 5:1 — A Building from God

"For we know that if our earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Paul begins with certainty.

"For we know."

This is not a guess or a wish.

It is a settled confidence.

"If our earthly tent we live in is destroyed."

Paul was a tentmaker.

He knew tents well.

Tents are temporary.

They wear out.

They are taken down and moved.

Our bodies are like tents.

They are not meant to last forever in their present form.

"We have a building from God."

In contrast to a tent, a building is solid and permanent.

“A house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

God Himself has prepared it.

It will last forever.

This points to the glorious resurrection body and our eternal home with God.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 15:53

> For this perishable body must put on what is imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

Philippians 1:23

> I am torn between the two. I long to leave this life and be with Christ, which is far better.

John 14:2

> My Father's house has many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?

Spiritual Principle

Our bodies are temporary tents, but God has prepared an eternal home for His people.

Key Truth

Death for the believer is moving out of a tent and into a permanent home.

II. WE GROAN

2 Corinthians 5:2 — Longing for Our Heavenly Dwelling

“For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling,”

Paul is honest about life in this body.

“For in this tent we groan.”

We feel pain.

We grow tired.

We get sick.

We grow old.

Life in a fallen world brings groaning.

“Longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.”

Paul mixes two pictures.

A house and clothing.

We long to put on our new, glorious bodies like putting on new clothes.

This longing is not wrong.

It is a sign that we were made for something more.

Cross References

Romans 8:23

> And not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the Spirit as the first part of God's harvest, groan inwardly as we eagerly wait for our full adoption as God's children, the redemption of our bodies.

1 Corinthians 15:54

> When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

Philippians 3:21

> By the power that lets Him bring everything under His control, He will change our weak earthly bodies to be like His glorious body.

Spiritual Principle

The groaning of this life points us to the glory of the next.

III. NOT FOUND NAKED

2 Corinthians 5:3 — Clothed

“if indeed, when we are clothed, we will not be found naked.”

Paul continues the picture of clothing.

The Greeks often spoke of death as the soul escaping the body and floating free.

Many saw that as the goal.

But Paul did not long to be a bodiless spirit.

He longed to be **clothed**—with a new, glorious body.

"We will not be found naked."

Bible students understand this phrase in different ways.

Some see it as the time between death and the resurrection, when the believer is with the Lord but not yet raised.

Others see it as a reference to being spiritually unprepared before God.

Either way, Paul's hope is not escape from the body.

It is the resurrection of the body.

Cross References

Revelation 3:18

> I advise you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire so you can be rich, and white clothes to wear so you can cover your shameful nakedness, and ointment to put on your eyes so you can see.

Revelation 16:15

> Look, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes on, so that he will not walk around naked and be ashamed.

Isaiah 61:10

> I will greatly rejoice in the LORD. My soul will be glad in my God, because He has dressed me in clothes of salvation and wrapped me in a robe of righteousness.

Spiritual Principle

The Christian hope is not escape from the body, but a glorious resurrection body.

IV. SWALLOWED UP BY LIFE

2 Corinthians 5:4 — Not Unclothed, but Clothed

“For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened—not that we wish to be unclothed, but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.”

Paul repeats and explains.

“While we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened.”

Life in this body is heavy.

“Not that we wish to be unclothed.”

Paul did not want death for its own sake.

He did not hate his body.

“But to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.”

He wanted something better.

“So that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.”

This echoes 1 Corinthians 15.

Death swallowed up in victory.

Here, mortality swallowed up by life.

Life will win.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 15:54

> When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

Romans 8:23

> And not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the Spirit as the first part of God's harvest, groan inwardly as we eagerly wait for our full adoption as God's children, the redemption of our bodies.

Isaiah 25:8

> He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from every face and remove His people's disgrace from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.

Spiritual Principle

God's plan is for life to swallow up everything mortal.

Key Truth

Believers do not long for death.

They long for life—full, eternal, resurrection life.

V. GOD PREPARED US

2 Corinthians 5:5 — The Spirit as a Guarantee

"Now the One who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee."

How can Paul be so sure?

"The One who has prepared us for this very thing is God."

God made us for this.

Our eternal future is His plan from the beginning.

"Who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee."

The Holy Spirit living in us is God's down payment.

He is the first part of what God has promised.

If God has given us His Spirit now, He will certainly give us the rest.

Cross References

Ephesians 1:14

> The Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance until God redeems those who belong to Him, to the praise of His glory.

2 Corinthians 1:22

He put His seal on us and gave us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee of what is to come.

Romans 8:16

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Spiritual Principle

The Holy Spirit is God's guarantee that our eternal future is secure.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Spirit within us is God's promise that glory is ahead of us.

VI. ALWAYS CONFIDENT

2 Corinthians 5:6 — At Home in the Body, Away from the Lord

"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord."

Because of God's guarantee, Paul has confidence.

"Therefore we are always confident."

Not sometimes.

Always.

"Knowing that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord."

Believers are with the Lord now by His Spirit.

But there is a fuller presence still to come.

In this life, we do not yet see Him face to face.

We are like travelers away from home.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 13:12

For now we see only a dim reflection, as in a mirror, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only part, but then I will know fully, just as I am fully known.

Hebrews 11:13

> All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it from far away and welcomed it. They admitted that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.

Philippians 1:23

> I am torn between the two. I long to leave this life and be with Christ, which is far better.

Spiritual Principle

Believers live with confidence, knowing their true home is with the Lord.

VII. WE WALK BY FAITH

2 Corinthians 5:7 — Not by Sight

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

This is one of the best-known verses in the Bible.

“We walk by faith.”

To **walk** means to live day by day.

Believers live by trusting God.

“Not by sight.”

We cannot yet see Christ.

We cannot yet see heaven.

We cannot always see how God is working.

But we trust what God has said.

Faith is not believing without reason.

It is trusting God's word even when our eyes cannot see.

Cross References

Hebrews 11:1

> Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Romans 8:24

> For we were saved in this hope. But hope that is seen is not hope. Who hopes for what he already sees?

Galatians 2:20

> I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Spiritual Principle

Believers live by trusting God's word, not by what they can see.

Application

Where is God asking you to walk by faith right now, even though you cannot see the way?

VIII. AT HOME WITH THE LORD

2 Corinthians 5:8 — Absent from the Body

"We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be absent from the body and at home with the Lord."

Paul repeats his confidence.

"We are confident, I say."

Then he states his preference.

"And would prefer to be absent from the body and at home with the Lord."

For the believer, death means being with the Lord.

There is no waiting room.

No wandering.

To be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord.

Jesus told the thief on the cross, **"Today you will be with Me in paradise."**

Paul was not eager to die because life was bad.

He was eager to be with Christ because Christ is so good.

Cross References

Philippians 1:23

I am torn between the two. I long to leave this life and be with Christ, which is far better.

Philippians 1:21

For me, living means living for Christ, and dying means gaining even more.

Luke 23:43

Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise.”

Spiritual Principle

For believers, death means being at home with the Lord.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

For the Christian, death is not leaving home—it is going home.

Application

If you have lost a believing loved one, take comfort.

They are at home with the Lord.

IX. OUR AIM IS TO PLEASE HIM

2 Corinthians 5:9 — At Home or Away

“So we make it our aim, whether at home or away, to please Him.”

Paul draws a practical conclusion.

“So we make it our aim.”

The word means to make something your highest ambition.

“Whether at home or away.”

Whether alive in this body or with the Lord in heaven—

“To please Him.”

Paul's greatest goal was to please Christ.

Not to please people.

Not to please himself.

To please the Lord.

Cross References

Romans 14:8

> If we live, we live for the Lord. If we die, we die for the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

Colossians 1:10

> so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God.

1 Thessalonians 4:1

> Finally, brothers and sisters, we taught you how to live in a way that pleases God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.

Spiritual Principle

The highest ambition of a believer is to please the Lord.

Application

What is your greatest ambition?

Is it to please Christ?

X. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 5:10 — Each One Receives What Is Due

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

Paul gives a sobering reason to please Christ.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.”

All.

Including Paul.

Including every believer.

The **judgment seat** was a raised platform where a ruler or judge sat to make decisions.

There was one in the marketplace of Corinth.

Paul himself had stood before it when he was brought before the Roman governor.

“That each one may receive what is due for the things done while in the body.”

Every believer will give an account of how he lived.

“Whether good or bad.”

This judgment is not about whether a believer is saved.

That was settled at the cross.

It is about how believers lived and served, and the reward they will receive.

Paul taught the same truth in 1 Corinthians 3, where each one's work is tested by fire.

Cross References

Romans 14:10

> So why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you look down on them? We will all stand before God's judgment seat.

Romans 2:6

> God will repay each person according to what he has done.

Revelation 22:12

> Look, I am coming soon! I am bringing My reward with Me, and I will repay each person for what they have done.

Spiritual Principle

Every believer will give an account to Christ for how he lived.

Key Truth

Salvation is by grace.

But how we live matters, and Christ will evaluate it.

XI. THE FEAR OF THE LORD

2 Corinthians 5:11 — We Persuade Others

“Knowing, therefore, the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.”

Paul explains how the coming judgment affects his ministry.

“Knowing, therefore, the fear of the Lord.”

The **fear of the Lord** is deep reverence and awe.

Paul knew he would stand before Christ.

That made him serious about his calling.

“We persuade others.”

Paul tried to convince people of the truth of the gospel.

He reasoned with them.

He pleaded with them.

“But what we are is plain to God.”

God knew Paul's heart completely.

“And I hope it is also plain to your conscience.”

Paul hoped the Corinthians could also see that his motives were pure.

Cross References

Proverbs 9:10

> Respect for the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowing the Holy One is understanding.

Acts 17:4

> Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few leading women.

Hebrews 4:13

> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.

Spiritual Principle

Reverence for the Lord makes us serious about reaching others.

XII. BOASTING IN APPEARANCE OR IN HEART

2 Corinthians 5:12 — An Answer for Your Critics

"We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart."

Paul explains why he is sharing all this.

"We are not commending ourselves to you again."

He is not bragging.

"But giving you cause to boast about us."

He wants the Corinthians to be able to defend him.

"So that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart."

The false teachers in Corinth were proud of outward things.

Impressive speaking.

Letters of recommendation.

Spiritual experiences.

But God looks at the heart.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 3:1

> Are we starting to praise ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you?

1 Samuel 16:7

> But the LORD said to Samuel, "Don't look at his appearance or how tall he is, because I have rejected him. The LORD does not see as people see. People look at the outside, but the LORD looks at the heart."

2 Corinthians 10:12

> We do not dare to class ourselves or compare ourselves with some who praise themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they show they have no understanding.

Spiritual Principle

God values what is in the heart more than outward appearances.

XIII. BESIDE OURSELVES

2 Corinthians 5:13 — For God and for You

“For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.”

Some people thought Paul was crazy.

He was so passionate about Christ that it seemed extreme.

Even Jesus' own family once said He was out of His mind.

“If we are beside ourselves, it is for God.”

If Paul seemed overly zealous, it was because of his devotion to God.

“If we are in our right mind, it is for you.”

When he spoke calmly and reasonably, it was to help the Corinthians.

Either way, Paul's life was not about himself.

It was for God and for others.

Cross References

Acts 26:24

> While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus shouted, “Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you insane!”

Acts 26:25

> But Paul replied, “I am not insane, most excellent Festus. What I am saying is true and reasonable.”

Mark 3:21

> When His family heard about this, they went to take charge of Him, because they said, “He is out of His mind.”

Spiritual Principle

A life fully devoted to God may look strange to the world.

XIV. THE LOVE OF CHRIST COMPELS US

2 Corinthians 5:14 — One Died for All

“For the love of Christ compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all, and therefore all died.”

Here is the driving force behind Paul's life.

“For the love of Christ compels us.”

The word **compels** means to press, to hold, to control.

Christ's love for Paul gripped him and drove him forward.

It was not guilt.

It was not fear.

It was love.

“Because we are convinced that One died for all.”

Jesus died in the place of others.

“And therefore all died.”

Those for whom Christ died are counted as having died with Him.

His death was their death.

The penalty for their sin was paid.

And their old life ended.

Cross References

Romans 5:15

> But the gift is not like the sin. Many died because of one man's sin, but God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflowed to many more.

Galatians 2:20

> I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

1 John 3:16

> This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ gave His life for us. And we ought to give our lives for our brothers and sisters.

Spiritual Principle

The love of Christ, shown at the cross, is the strongest motivation for Christian living.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Duty can push us, but only the love of Christ can truly compel us.

XV. NO LONGER FOR THEMSELVES

2 Corinthians 5:15 — But for Him

“And He died for all, so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”

Paul explains the purpose of Christ's death.

“He died for all.”

“So that those who live should no longer live for themselves.”

The old life was centered on self.

Christ died to free us from that.

“But for Him who died for them and rose again.”

Now we live for Jesus.

He died for us.

He rose for us.

So our lives belong to Him.

This is the natural response to such great love.

Cross References

Romans 14:8

> If we live, we live for the Lord. If we die, we die for the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

Galatians 2:20

> I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

1 Peter 4:2

> As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but for the will of God.

Spiritual Principle

Christ died so that we would no longer live for ourselves, but for Him.

Application

Who are you living for?

XVI. NOT ACCORDING TO THE FLESH

2 Corinthians 5:16 — A New Way of Seeing

“So from now on we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we do so no longer.”

Christ's death and resurrection change how we see everyone.

“From now on we regard no one according to the flesh.”

We no longer judge people by worldly standards.

Not by appearance.

Not by wealth.

Not by status.

Not by background.

“Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh.”

Before his conversion, Paul saw Jesus from a worldly point of view.

He thought Jesus was a false messiah who deserved to die.

“We do so no longer.”

Now Paul sees Jesus as the risen Lord and Savior.

And he sees every person as someone for whom Christ died.

Cross References

John 6:63

> The Spirit gives life; the flesh accomplishes nothing. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life.

Colossians 3:2

> Set your minds on the things above, not on earthly things.

Philippians 3:7

> But whatever I once counted as gain, I now count as loss because of Christ.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel changes how we see Christ and how we see every person.

Application

How do you see the people around you?

As the world sees them, or as people for whom Christ died?

XVII. A NEW CREATION

2 Corinthians 5:17 — The Old Has Passed Away

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.”

This is one of the most beloved verses in the Bible.

“If anyone is in Christ.”

Anyone.

No matter their past.

No matter their background.

If they are joined to Christ by faith—

“He is a new creation.”

Not just improved.

Not just reformed.

Made new.

The same God who created the world creates new life in those who trust Christ.

“The old has passed away.”

The old life, the old identity, the old slavery to sin is gone.

“Behold, the new has come.”

Paul says **“behold”**—look!

Something new and wonderful is here.

This is the beginning of God's new creation, which will one day fill the whole world.

Cross References

Isaiah 43:19

> Look, I am doing something new! Now it springs up. Don't you see it? I am making a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

Galatians 6:15

Being circumcised or not circumcised means nothing. What matters is being a new creation.

Revelation 21:5

The One seated on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!”

Spiritual Principle

Everyone who is in Christ is made completely new.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

In Christ, your past does not define you; your new creation does.

Application

Are you living as the new creation God has made you?

XVIII. ALL THIS IS FROM GOD

2 Corinthians 5:18 — Reconciled Through Christ

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:”

Paul explains where this new life comes from.

“All this is from God.”

Salvation is God's work from start to finish.

“Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ.”

Reconcile means to restore a broken relationship.

Because of sin, we were separated from God.

We were His enemies.

But God took the first step.

Through Christ, He brought us back to Himself.

“And gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

Now God has given believers a job.

To tell others how they too can be reconciled to God.

Cross References

Romans 5:10

> For if, while we were God's enemies, we were brought back to God through the death of His Son, how much more, now that we have been brought back, will we be saved through His life!

Colossians 1:20

> and through Him to bring all things back to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood shed on the cross.

Ephesians 2:16

> and in one body to bring both groups back to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility.

Spiritual Principle

God Himself took the first step to restore our broken relationship with Him.

Key Truth

We did not find our way back to God.

God came to bring us back.

XIX. GOD WAS IN CHRIST

2 Corinthians 5:19 — Not Counting Their Sins

“namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their sins against them, and He has entrusted to us the message of reconciliation.”

Paul explains the message.

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.”

God was not standing far off.

He was in Christ, doing the work of reconciliation Himself.

And the scope is great:

The world.

The offer of reconciliation goes to all people.

“Not counting their sins against them.”

This is the heart of the good news.

God does not hold our sins against those who trust Christ.

Their sins have been dealt with on the cross.

“And He has entrusted to us the message of reconciliation.”

God has trusted believers with this precious message.

Cross References

Romans 5:19

> Just as many were made sinners through one man's disobedience, so many will be made righteous through one man's obedience.

Colossians 1:20

> and through Him to bring all things back to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood shed on the cross.

1 John 2:2

> He is the sacrifice that takes away our sins, and not only ours but also the sins of the whole world.

Spiritual Principle

In Christ, God does not count the sins of believers against them.

XX. AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

2 Corinthians 5:20 — Be Reconciled to God

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God.”

Paul describes the role of believers.

“We are ambassadors for Christ.”

An **ambassador** represents a king in a foreign country.

He does not speak his own message.

He speaks the message of the one who sent him.

Believers represent King Jesus in this world.

“As though God were making His appeal through us.”

When believers share the gospel, God Himself is speaking through them.

“We implore you on Christ's behalf.”

Paul does not just state facts.

He pleads.

“Be reconciled to God.”

This is the message.

God has done everything needed.

Now people must respond.

Come back to God.

Cross References

Ephesians 6:20

> for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may speak about it boldly, as I should.

Job 22:21

> Come to know God and be at peace with Him. In this way good things will come to you.

Isaiah 55:6

> Seek the LORD while He may be found. Call on Him while He is near.

Spiritual Principle

Every believer is an ambassador for Christ, carrying God's appeal to the world.

Application

Who in your life needs to hear God's appeal to be reconciled to Him?

XXI. HE WHO KNEW NO SIN

2 Corinthians 5:21 — The Righteousness of God

“For God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

This verse is one of the clearest explanations of the gospel in the Bible.

“For God made Him who knew no sin.”

Jesus was completely sinless.

He never once disobeyed God.

“To be sin for us.”

On the cross, God placed our sin on Jesus.

He took our guilt.

He bore our punishment.

He was treated as if He were the sinner.

“So that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

And those who trust Christ receive His righteousness.

They are treated as if they had lived His perfect life.

This is often called **the great exchange.**

Jesus took our sin.

We receive His righteousness.

He took what we deserved.

We receive what He deserved.

This is why God can reconcile sinners to Himself without ignoring their sin.

Cross References

Isaiah 53:6

> All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way. And the LORD has laid on Him the sin of us all.

Galatians 3:13

> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”

1 Peter 2:24

> He Himself carried our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.

Spiritual Principle

On the cross, Christ took our sin so that we could receive His righteousness.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

He took my place so that I could take His.

XXII. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 2 CORINTHIANS 5

1. Earthly Life Is Temporary, Heavenly Life Eternal

“If our earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God.”

Principle:

Our bodies are fragile tents, but God promises us an eternal dwelling.

2. Faith, Not Sight, Defines the Believer

“We walk by faith, not by sight.”

Principle:

We live with confidence, knowing absence from the body means presence with the Lord.

3. Every Life Will Be Judged

“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.”

Principle:

All will stand before Christ's judgment seat to give account.

4. Christ's Love Compels Us

“The love of Christ compels us.”

Principle:

His death and resurrection call us to live no longer for ourselves but for Him.

5. In Christ, We Are New

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”

Principle:

Salvation transforms us; old things pass away, and new life begins.

6. God Gives Us a Mission

“We are ambassadors for Christ.”

Principle:

As ambassadors of reconciliation, we carry the message that through Christ, sins are forgiven and fellowship with God is restored.

XXIII. THE TENT AND THE BUILDING

Verses 1–5 contrast our present bodies with our future ones.

Our Earthly Tent

- Temporary.
- Wears out.
- Brings groaning.
- Mortal.
- Made for life in this world.

Our Building from God

- Permanent.
- Eternal in the heavens.
- Brings full life.
- Swallowed up by life.
- Made by God, not human hands.

Key Truth

The tent will come down, but the building God has prepared will stand forever.

XXIV. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Verse 10 teaches an important truth about the future.

Who Will Appear?

"We must all appear." Every believer.

Who Is the Judge?

Christ Himself.

What Will Be Evaluated?

"The things done while in the body, whether good or bad."

What Is Not in Question?

The believer's salvation, which rests on Christ's finished work.

What Is the Result?

Each one receives what is due—reward for faithful service, or loss of reward.

How Should This Affect Us?

- It should make us aim to please Christ.

- It should give us reverence for the Lord.
- It should make us eager to reach others.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

We are saved by grace, but we will give an account for how we lived in that grace.

XXV. THE GREAT EXCHANGE

Verse 21 describes what happened on the cross.

What Christ Took

- Our sin.
- Our guilt.
- Our punishment.
- Our curse.

What We Receive

- His righteousness.
- His standing with God.
- His acceptance.
- His blessing.

Key Truth

Christ was treated as we deserved so that we could be treated as He deserved.

XXVI. THE MESSAGE OF RECONCILIATION

Verses 18–21 explain the heart of the gospel.

The Problem

Sin separated us from God.

God's Initiative

“All this is from God.”

God's Method

“Through Christ.”

God's Mercy

“Not counting their sins against them.”

God's Means

“God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us.”

God's Gift

“That in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

God's Messengers

“We are ambassadors for Christ.”

God's Appeal

“Be reconciled to God.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God has done everything needed to bring us back; now He calls everyone to come home.

XXVII. WHAT 2 CORINTHIANS 5 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

He Is the Judge

“The judgment seat of Christ.”

His Love Compels Us

“The love of Christ compels us.”

He Died for All and Rose Again

“He died for all... and rose again.”

In Him We Are New

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”

God Was in Him Reconciling the World

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.”

He Knew No Sin, Yet Was Made Sin for Us

“God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Jesus is the sinless Savior who took our sin, the living Lord we serve, and the coming Judge we will face.

XXVIII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why does Paul call our bodies “tents”?

Tents are temporary and wear out.

Our present bodies are not meant to last forever in their current form.

Question 2

What is the “building from God”?

It is the eternal, glorious resurrection body and home God has prepared for His people.

Question 3

Why do believers groan?

Life in this body brings pain, weakness, and longing.

We long for the glory God has promised.

Question 4

What is the Spirit's role in our future?

The Spirit is God's guarantee, like a down payment, that He will give us everything He has promised.

Question 5

What does it mean to walk by faith, not by sight?

To live each day trusting God's word, even when we cannot see how things will work out.

Question 6

What happens to believers when they die?

To be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord.

Question 7

What is the judgment seat of Christ?

It is where every believer will give an account for how they lived.

It is not about losing salvation, but about reward for faithful service.

Question 8

What motivated Paul's ministry?

The love of Christ, shown in His death for all.

Question 9

What does it mean to be a “new creation”?

Anyone in Christ is made completely new.

The old life has passed away, and new life has begun.

Question 10

What does it mean to be reconciled to God?

To have our broken relationship with God restored through Christ.

Question 11

What does it mean to be an ambassador for Christ?

To represent Jesus in the world and carry His message: “Be reconciled to God.”

Question 12

What should 2 Corinthians 5 change about the way Christians live today?

2 Corinthians 5 should cause believers to live:

- Confident about their eternal home.
- Walking by faith, not by sight.
- Unafraid of death.
- Aiming to please Christ above all.
- Remembering they will give an account.
- Compelled by Christ's love.
- Living as new creations.
- Sharing the message of reconciliation.

XXIX. PERSONAL APPLICATION

2 Corinthians 5 asks several important questions.

Am I Holding This Life Too Tightly?

Do I remember that my body is only a tent?

Am I Walking by Faith?

Where do I need to trust God even when I cannot see?

Am I Afraid of Death?

Do I believe that to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord?

What Is My Highest Ambition?

Is it to please Christ?

Am I Ready to Give an Account?

How would my life look before the judgment seat of Christ?

Is Christ's Love Compelling Me?

Or am I living for myself?

Am I Living as a New Creation?

Or am I still clinging to the old life?

Am I Acting as an Ambassador?

Who needs to hear me say, “Be reconciled to God”?

XXX. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Ambassadors of Another Kingdom”

An ambassador lives in a foreign country.

He speaks its language.

He lives among its people.

But his true home is somewhere else.

And his loyalty belongs to the king who sent him.

That is the Christian life.

We live in this world, in temporary tents.

But our true home is with the Lord.

We serve a King who is not seen.

And we carry His message to people who need to hear it.

The message is not, **“Try harder.”**

It is not, **“Clean up your life.”**

It is, **“Be reconciled to God.”**

God has already done everything needed.

Christ took our sin.

He offers His righteousness.

This creates a powerful principle.

Every believer is on a mission.

We are not tourists in this world.

We are ambassadors.

Principle:

Live as an ambassador of heaven, carrying the King's message of reconciliation to everyone you meet.

XXXI. FINAL APPLICATION

2 Corinthians Chapter 5 lifts our eyes to eternity and sends us into the world.

It reminds us that our bodies are temporary tents.

It assures us of an eternal home with the Lord.

It calls us to walk by faith and to please Christ.

It reminds us that we will give an account.

It shows us the love that compels us.

It declares that we are new creations.

And it gives us a mission.

2 Corinthians 5 therefore reminds us:

Never forget that this life is temporary.

Never fear death if you belong to Christ.

Never live for yourself.

Never forget that you are a new creation.

Never stop pleading with people to be reconciled to God.

The church does not need people who are comfortable in this world.

It needs:

Believers who walk by faith.

Servants compelled by Christ's love.

New creations who live for Him.

And ambassadors who carry His message.

The same gospel still calls:

Tell people that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

Tell people that He does not count the sins of believers against them.

Tell people that Christ took their sin so they could receive His righteousness.

Tell people that anyone in Christ is a new creation.

And with all your heart:

Walk by faith.

Live for Christ.

Represent your King.

Plead with the world: be reconciled to God.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You that our earthly tents are not all there is.

Thank You for the eternal home You have prepared for us.

Thank You for the Holy Spirit, Your guarantee of all that is to come.

Thank You that to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord.

Thank You for the love of Christ, who died for all and rose again.

Thank You that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

Thank You that You took the first step to reconcile us to Yourself.

Thank You that You do not count the sins of believers against them.

Thank You that You made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become Your righteousness.

Forgive us when we have held this life too tightly.

Forgive us when we have walked by sight instead of by faith.

Forgive us when we have lived for ourselves instead of for Christ.

Forgive us when we have kept the message of reconciliation to ourselves.

Help us make it our aim to please You in everything.

Prepare us to stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Let the love of Christ compel us every day.

Help us live as new creations.

Make us faithful ambassadors.

And give us courage and love to plead with others: be reconciled to God.

“For God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.” — 2 Corinthians 5:17

Central Truth

Because Christ died and rose for us, believers have an eternal home, live by faith to please Him, become new creations, and carry God's message of reconciliation to the world.

2 Corinthians 5 in One Sentence

Paul declares that believers have an eternal home from God, walk by faith as they aim to please the Christ before whom they will stand, are compelled by His love to live for Him as new creations, and serve as His ambassadors announcing that God made the sinless Christ to be sin for us so that we might become His righteousness.