

Title: **“KNOWING THEREFORE THE TERROR
OF THE LORD, WE PERSUADE MEN.”**

Text: 2 Corinthians 5:1 - 6:2

Reading: *Psalm 96:1-13*

Subject: *A Fourfold Appeal to Sinners*

Date: Sunday Morning – November 18, 2001
Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Jacksonville, NC

Tape #

Introduction:

It is my great privilege and awesome responsibility to speak once more to you, eternity bound sinners with immortal souls, in the name of God almighty, as God’s ambassador! I am here today to feed, comfort, reprove, edify, and encourage you who know the Lord. And I am here to persuade you who are yet enemies to God to be reconciled to him, before he crushes your soul down to hell in his fierce anger. My task is too great for me. I pray that God the Holy Spirit will speak by me to your hearts for the glory of Christ and your souls’ everlasting good.

If you care for your souls, give me your attention for a few minutes this morning. I want you to open your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 5. Just hold them open on your laps and follow along as I show you the message contained in this passage of Holy Scripture.

You will find the burden of my message and the burden of my soul for you in verses 11 and 20. -- *“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.”* I know that only God himself can persuade you to be reconciled to him. Only God can give dead sinners life. Only God the Holy Spirit can give you life and faith in Christ. **I am fully aware of your inability and my own. Yet, it is my business to persuade and pressure you, by the preaching of the gospel, to come to Christ; and it is your responsibility to come.**

Now, look at verse 20. *“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”* **I stand before you as God’s ambassador.** I cannot and will not alter the message he has given me to deliver to you. **Yet, I am not just a messenger.** A mere messenger has no regard for the message he carries, the one who sends him, or the one to whom he is sent. God’s

servants are not like that! **I cannot think of anything more important to me than these three things:**

1. The One Who has Sent Me (Jer. 1:4-10).
2. The Message He has Given Me (1 Cor. 1:17).
3. The Immortal Souls to Whom I am Sent (Rom. 10:1-4).

Proposition: I am this day calling for you to cease from your rebellion, to come to God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, surrendering to his rule and dominion as your Lord and your God.

That is the issue. You must be reconciled to God. To believe on Christ is to bow to Christ. To be saved is to surrender to the claims of God upon your life, trusting Christ alone for acceptance with him.

Divisions: The basis of my appeal is fourfold.

1. The Immortality of Your Soul (vv. 1-9)
2. The Certainty and Strictness of Divine Judgment (vv. 10-11)
3. The Love of God in Christ (vv. 11-16)
4. The Grace of God Revealed in the Gospel (vv. 17-21)

I. THE IMMORTALITY OF YOUR SOUL

You and I are not animals. We did not evolve from some a worm, a germ, or an ape. We are creatures made in the image and likeness of God. We live in these bodies; but we are living, immortal, undying souls.

- Genesis 2:7
- Mark 8:36-37

You are going to spend eternity somewhere, either in everlasting life in heaven or in everlasting death in hell. **Everything in this world is temporal**. It is all vanishing. It is all passing away. Try as you may, you cannot hold anything or anyone here for very long. **But we are rapidly moving to a world where all things are eternal**.

- 2 Corinthians 4:18

(2 Corinthians 4:18) "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal."

With those things in mind, I want us to read verses 1-9. **In these 9 verses the apostle Paul, writing by divine inspiration, shows us a believer’s attitude toward life and death. He also issues a warning to all who are yet without Christ.**

2 Corinthians 5:1-9 *"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. 5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. 6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him."*

There are many, many things taught in these verses that need to be understood; but let me simply show you **three things** that are true of all believers.

A. **We live in the expectant hope of immortality** (vv. 1-4; Phil. 1:21-23; 2 Tim. 1:12).

(2 Corinthians 5:1-4) *"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. {2} For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: {3} If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. {4} For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."*

(Philippians 1:21-23) *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. {22} But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. {23} For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:"*

(2 Timothy 1:12) "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

B. **Our faith in Christ gives us confidence and assurance of these things** (vv. 5-8).

(2 Corinthians 5:5-8) "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. {6} Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: {7} (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) {8} We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

C. **Yet, our faith and confidence does not cause presumption** (v.9; Phil. 3:8-14).

(2 Corinthians 5:9) "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him."

(Philippians 3:8-14) "Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, {9} And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: {10} That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; {11} If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. {12} Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. {13} Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, {14} I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

We recognize that there are multitudes who, as soon as they die, must forever perish under the wrath of God; and many of those who do perish in hell vainly presume that they are perfectly accepted with God. Do not be so

foolish. If you die without Christ, you will die forever. That is to say, you will be cast into hell to suffer the second death. The wrath of God shall be your everlasting portion.

I appeal to you, as an eternity bound sinner with an immortal soul, to be reconciled to God. *Second*, I make my appeal to you upon the basis of...

II. THE CERTAINTY AND STRICTNESS OF DIVINE JUDGMENT.

I remind you once more that there is a day of judgment. I know that there is a final, climatic day of judgment appointed by God; but do not imagine that until then your sins will go unpunished. It is not so. Immediately after death, you and I will meet Christ himself in judgment. Read verses 10-11.

2 Corinthians 5:10-11 *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord."*

Nahum 1:2-6 *"God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. 3 The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. 4 He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. 5 The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. 6 Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."*

*"Ye sinners, seek His grace, Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of His cross, An find salvation there.*

*So shall the curse remove, By which the Savior bled;
And the last awful day shall pour His blessings on your head."*

-- Philip Doddridge

As you care for your soul, I urge you to flee from the wrath of God. O my friend, flee away to Christ and be saved!

Illustration: The Cities of Refuge

But I know that the wrath of God will never persuade you to trust his Son. The terror of judgment to come may terrify you; but it will never break your heart and bring you to Christ. It is the goodness of God that leads sinners to repentance. So *third*, I appeal to you upon the basis of...

III. THE LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST.

2 Corinthians 5:11-16 *"But we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. 12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. 13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. 14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. 16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more."*

- A. I claim your attention and hearing, not because of anything in me but by the gospel I preach. My only commendation of myself to you is the message I preach. You know that I tell you the truth (v. 12).
- B. My motive, I believe is obvious. I have no concern in this thing except God's glory and your eternal good (v. 13).
- C. The basis of my appeal to you, the foundation of my message, the strength of the call I now issue to you is the love of God revealed in the crucified Savior (vv. 14-16).

In these verses the apostle is telling us that **the love of God is revealed in...**

1. The Sacrifice of His Son (v. 14).

(2 Corinthians 5:14) "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:"

2. The Substitutionary Nature of His Sacrifice (v. 14).

3. The Sanctifying Efficacy of His Sacrifice (v. 15).

(2 Corinthians 5:15) "And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

4. The Saving Revelation of His Grace (v. 16).

(2 Corinthians 5:16) "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more."

Do you see how the Holy Spirit reasons with and persuades us by Paul's words to be reconciled to our God? He appeals to us upon the basis of...

- The Immortality of Our Souls
- The Certainty and Strictness of Divine Judgment.
- The Love of God in Christ.

And, in the last part of this chapter he appeals to us upon...

IV. THE GRACE OF GOD REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL.

There is no passage in the Bible more glorious than this. There are no words to be found in human literature to compare with these. Read these last verses and weep over the sins that demanded such a sacrifice. Read these verses and rejoice and give thanks to God for the grace that provides such a sacrifice!

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us:*

we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Here the Holy Spirit shows us **five things** about the grace of God.

A. **THE FACT OF GRACE** -- *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

- A New Nature
- A New Record
- A New Covenant
- A New Name

B. **THE SOURCE OF GRACE** -- *"And all things are of God."*

Salvation is God's work, from start to finish. A preacher here in town once told my wife, "God is sovereign over everything except salvation." He was dead wrong. God is sovereign over everything, especially salvation!

- He Planned It.
- He Purchased It.
- He Performs It.
- He Preserves It.
- He will have the Praise of It!

That same preacher said to Shelby, "God is in control of everything except man's will." Oh, no. If God leaves you to your imaginary "free will," you will go out of here just like you came in, lost, dead, doomed, without Christ, without God, without hope. But, thank God, salvation does not depend on your will or mine! Salvation is accomplished by God's will!

- Romans 9:16
- Psalm 110:3
- Psalm 65:4

C. **THE MESSAGE OF GRACE** -- *"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."*

- God was in Christ.
- God was reconciling the world of his elect to himself.

NOTE: Do not allow heretics to confuse you by throwing that word “world” in your face. Obviously, God did not reconcile everyone in the world to himself, for all are not reconciled to him. He reconciled his elect, scattered throughout all the world, to himself.

- The work of reconciliation, in so far as the law and justice of God is concerned, was finished at Calvary (Rom. 5:8-11).

(Romans 5:8-11) "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. {9} Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. {10} For 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. {11} And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

- The great reason for this glorious redemption accomplished by Christ is just this: -- **GOD WILL NOT IMPUTE SIN TO HIS CHOSEN!**
- Now, he has committed and trusted to us the word, the ministry, of reconciliation.

Let me tell you what that means. The Lord God has sent us to tell sinners the good news of reconciliation accomplished by Jesus Christ. And he has sent us to call you to be reconciled to him. Will you hear me now? If this day you bow to Christ, if you will right now raise the white flag of surrender in your heart to the Son of God, you have been reconciled to God by the death of his dear Son.

Read on. Verse 20 describes...

D. THE CALL OF GRACE -- *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."*

Perhaps you are more thoughtful than most. Maybe you are thinking, “If God is holy and just, if he must punish sin, how can he be gracious to a sinner like me?” Read verse 21. Here is...

E. THE BASIS OF GRACE -- *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."*

1. Who was made to be sin?
2. Who made the Son of God to be sin?
3. For whom was the Lord of glory made to be sin?
4. How was he made to be sin for us?
5. Why was he made to be sin?
6. What did God do with his dear Son when he was made to be sin for us?
7. What is the result of Christ being made to be sin for us?

Application:

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 *"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. 2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)"*

Amen.

¹ **Misc. Sermon #1227** – Tape # S-37 -- Danville (AM 03/31/96) -- **This Message** – Sovereign Grace Baptist Church – Jacksonville, NC – Sunday Morning (11/18/01)