

## **Why Do You Serve Christ?**

### **2 Corinthians 5:9-21**

**Have you looked at a habit you have and thought, this is stupid?**

**Why do you do what you do?**

**Do you ever stop and ask yourself why?**

**What motivates you to do your job?**

**What Does The Bible Say?**

**The Apostle Paul gave three reasons why WE Should Serve Christ.**

9 So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him. 10 For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body. 10 So why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on

another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For the Scriptures say,“ ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord,‘every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will declare allegiance praise to God.’ ” 12 Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God. (2 Corinthians 5:9–11 NLT)

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11 Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too. (2 Corinthians 5:9–11 NLT)

**We serve Christ because one day, we will stand before Him.**

14 Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. 15 He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. 16 So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! 17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! (2 Corinthians 5:14–17 NLT)

**We serve Christ because of His love for us.**

**How Can You Obey?**

18 And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. 19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18–19 NLT)

**We serve Christ because He gave us a message to share.**

**“Reconcile” means to change thoroughly.**

20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!” 21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:20–21 NLT)

**How would you rate yourself as an ambassador for Christ?**

**We serve Christ because:**

**one day we will stand before Him.**

**of His love for us.**

**He gave us a message to share.**

**Additional Notes:**

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at [www.crosswaveschurch.com/host](http://www.crosswaveschurch.com/host). Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

**Additional Notes:**

This week's Insights to The Biblical World is from Michael S. Heiser, *Brief Insights on Mastering the Bible: 80 Expert Insights on the Bible, Explained in a Single Minute, The 60 Second Scholar* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 64.

**Explore:**

**Believers Look Forward to Being With the Lord and Having a New Glorified Body (2 Corinthians 5:1-8)**

Paul's discussion regarding the hardships relating to the ministry (chapter 4) led him to discuss spiritual truths regarding our bodies and eternity. While some would have been anxious about Paul's physical well-being because of the many dangers and hardships he faced, he assured them that when our physical bodies are destroyed, we will have a new body that is fit for eternity (verse 1). The word for tent or tabernacle referred to the earthly body, which is susceptible to death and decay. The destruction he spoke of was a reference to death, the future experience of every individual.

Although we struggle with the burdens of life here on earth, we have a new body and a new home in Heaven with the Lord to look forward to (verses 2-4). The word groan in verse 2 indicates our struggle with the difficulties of life. The term for naked in verse 3 means to be disembodied or stripped of the present body. For a second time, the apostle used the word groan (verse 4). Paul's desire was not just to put off the frail human body but also a desire to put on the new, glorified body so that the mortal would be replaced with immortality. See also 1 Corinthians 15:42-55).

Paul reminded the readers that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit assures us we will take up new residence in Heaven after we die (verse 5). The word translated guarantee, earnest, or pledge meant a deposit or a down payment and expressed the apostle's confidence in the work God had promised to fulfill.

With this eternal perspective, Paul could remain confident and encouraged despite his mortality and suffering (verses 6-8). Recognizing that being in the physical body meant being

absent from the Lord, he would continue to live this life by faith. Indeed, this is not all there is. In fact, Paul had such an eternal perspective that he would prefer to be at home with the Lord and absent from the earthly body.

## **Explore:**

### **Major Theme**

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in response to strong attacks which some Christians at Corinth had made on his person, motive and character.

### **Background and Purpose**

False apostles had moved in among the Christians at Corinth (11:12–15). These “super-apostles” (11:5), taught a different gospel (11:12–15), and defied Paul’s authority. The Christians at Corinth had, or were on the verge of, changing their minds about Paul. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to tell them just how much this change of mind meant to him.



His letter warns them not to be too harsh with his opponents (2:5–11); not to be closely linked with unbelievers (6:14); to give generously to the collection of money being made for the poor Christians in Jerusalem (8–9); how to deal with false teachers (11:1–6); and concludes with Paul’s happiness that the Corinthians have stopped following false teachers (11:12–15).

### **Author**

The apostle Paul.

### **Date**

We know the precise date that Paul was originally in Corinth. It was when Gallio was proconsul in Achaia: “Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.... While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court” (Acts 18:1, 12). This was in ad 51 or 52. So his first letter to Corinth must have been written in about ad 54–55 and his second letter about one year later in ad 55–56.

Mark Water, *The Books of the Bible Made Easy, The Made Easy Series* (Alresford, Hampshire: John Hunt Publishing, 2001), 47.

### **Explore:**

The judgment seat about which Paul spoke in verse 10 is a very specific term. The concept came from the Isthmian Games (the Corinthian Olympics) where a judge would sit on a Bema seat at the finish line to determine what position the runners came in (first, second, third . . .), and then to give out the appropriate rewards. This same concept is used in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 in which the quality of a man's works were evaluated. It was here that Paul spoke of gold, silver, wood, hay, and stubble. This particular judgment seat is for believers only. It does not determine salvation or eternal destiny, but is the time in which believers give an account of their individual lives to Christ. The

other major judgment in the New Testament is the great white throne judgment. This is found in Revelation 20:11- 15, and is the final judgment of unbelievers. At this judgment, unbelievers from all the ages are judged for their sins and consigned to the lake of fire. While each of these judgments carries an element of fear or trepidation, for the believer it is intended to spur us along to good works. Each of us should be constantly evaluating our lives and asking, “What are we living for?” Is it the things that really matter (precious stones) or temporal, worldly things (wood, hay, stubble)? Wise men and women will prepare for Jesus’ judgment by living in light of eternity.

### **Explore:**

### **Believers Seek to Please Christ Because of All He Has Done for Us (2 Corinthians 5:9-15)**

Paul’s goal was to please the Lord, whether he was on earth or in

Heaven (verse 9). He wanted the Corinthians to make this goal their own. Ultimately, what matters for all believers is our determination to please the Lord no matter what. Paul's motivation for this mindset included the reality that we all will stand before the Lord and give account of all we have done on earth, whether good or bad (verse 10). All individuals, including believers, will answer to God, not only in regard to salvation, but also in respect to the way we live while here on earth. The apostle's greatest desire was to hear the Lord say that he had done well. This, in Paul's mind, should motivate the Corinthian believers (and us) as it motivated him.

Paul stated that knowing we will all stand before Christ caused him to work diligently to reach others with the gospel (verse 11). When Paul spoke of the fear or terror of the Lord here, he could have been referencing the "fear" or awe of believers knowing that one day they will stand before the Lord and give account of their lives. This "fear" motivated him to seek to persuade others

with the gospel. It is also possible, however, that Paul had in mind the fear or terror that unbelievers would one day experience without a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Regardless of which view was in mind, it served as a motivating factor for the apostle. Beyond his words of persuasion, however, Paul also understood that his life and integrity would speak volumes to others as well. The truth is, a person's message is linked to his life and integrity.

Knowing the tactics of the critics and their accusations of Paul boasting about himself, he took verse 12 to inform the readers of these things so they would know the facts if, and when, the accusations about him came. This would merely provide a defense for them to have at their disposal. In fact, scholars believe that even some of the Corinthians were accusing Paul of being "out of his mind." Aware of these accusations, he used verse 13 to assert that if he appeared to be out of his mind, as accused in Acts 26:24, that it was for God's glory. It must have

been an encouraging thing for Paul to know that similar charges were made against Jesus (Mark 3:21). When Paul appeared to be in his right mind, it was for the benefit of the readers. Whatever he did was for Christ and for others, not for himself.

In the final analysis, however, it is Christ's death and sacrifice that provides the motivation and determination to serve. Because Christ gave His life for us and bore our sin, we should give our lives for His service (verses 14-15). Aware of the love that Christ had for mankind, Paul asserted that this is what compelled him to continue to serve, in spite of the obstacles and challenges. The beauty of the gospel message is that the death of Christ was for all people, regardless of ethnicity, social status, gender, or nationality. Christ's death breaks the power of sin even to the extent that believers would no longer live for themselves, but for the one who gave His life for them. This great truth motivated Paul to continue to serve and should motivate us as well.

## **Explore:**

### **Believers Share With Others How They Can Be Reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:16-21)**

Paul concluded this chapter with a stark reminder of who we are in Christ, and of the importance of the task we have been given.

While reminding us that Christ has completed the act of reconciling us to God, making us new in Christ, he also stated that God has now extended that ministry of reconciliation to us.

Since we have seen firsthand the difference God can make in our lives, we are to be the messengers for that change to the entire world (verses 17-19). Paul shared that we are now to be ambassadors for Christ, representing Him to the lost world (verses 20-21).

As a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus, Paul's entire

outlook had changed (verse 16). The worldly attributes and achievements he once regarded as valuable were not so important anymore. Interestingly, these were the same attributes he once looked for in Christ. In fact, from Paul's vantage point, he previously evaluated Christ according to his own worldly standard.

Therefore in verse 17 is connected to the concept of knowing or regarding Christ in verse 16. The idea of being in Christ speaks of being united with Him and was an expression Paul used often referring to a believer's relationship to Christ. As a result of this new relationship, the believer is a new creation and possesses new life in Christ. Now, the old things, namely the selfish, carnal views and actions, have passed away. The new life, a life of devotion to Christ, has now come.

Lest people misperceive Paul's message, he reminded the reader in verse 18 that all of this came from God. It was God who took the initiative to reconcile mankind to Himself,



something that only Christ could do. Having reconciled us, the Lord then committed to believers the ministry of telling others how we can be reconciled to God. Verse 19 served as a repetition and further clarification of the work God did through Christ. God did not use people's sins and shortcomings as a reason to withhold salvation, but instead sent Christ to reconcile the world, those estranged from God, to Himself. This wonderful message has now been entrusted to His followers as they seek to declare this good news to all people.

The ambassador in verse 20 alluded to an individual that served in a foreign country as a representative of his home country. In this case, those reconciled to God implore others, namely the enemies of God, to be reconciled to Him. Through His people, God works to call the lost to reconciliation. The reason they should be reconciled to God is given in verse 21. Although He had never sinned, Christ took on our sins, becoming sin for us. John the Baptist first expressed the beauty of this truth when he

spoke of Jesus being the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Because He had borne the sins of the world, the righteousness of Christ could then be placed on those who trust in Him. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God could demonstrate both judgment and mercy through Christ.

### **Explore:**

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not

mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6).

Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ- followers. When they do, Heaven will rejoice!

### **Question 1 of 5**

Why did most Jews around the time of Christ not know Hebrew?

### **Question 2 of 5**

What do we mean when we say we want to live for Christ?

### **Question 3 of 5**

Which do you think is a better motivator: obligation or appreciation? Explain your answer.

### **Question 4 of 5**

In what ways are believers' new creations in Christ?

### **Question 5 of 5**

In what ways can we act as representatives of Christ to those around us?

