

Controlled By Love

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfreda, Georgia. This is the next message in our series in the book of 2 Corinthians, entitled, We Faint Not.

Well, take your Bibles, if you would, and turn with me back to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. If you had in your mind, if you had in your heart that God is big and God is great and eternity is out there, it would surely change everything and you would be controlled by love.

If you really realized that there was going to be a judgment seat someday and that every Christian would stand before God and give an account for the things done in his body, whether good or bad.

If you really believe that God was big and powerful and out there above everything, it might change everything. And that's exactly what is going on in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 11.

I'll call your attention back to that. The Bible says, Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. But we are made manifest unto God and I trust also are made manifest in your conscience.

[1 : 05] And I would just like to remind you today that there is something far bigger than anything that goes on on this planet. There is an eternity. There is a God. There was a creation.

And no matter how much men would like to change that and try to make you believe that you're the product of evolution and that you're the highest level of evolution that's ever existed and you are the epitome of everything, when you realize there's somebody far bigger than you, it'll change your entire perspective.

The Apostle Paul is going to start off. He's going to tell us, Hey, we're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. When this life is over, it isn't over. We will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

The Apostle Paul is going to remind you that there is an awesome, mighty, powerful, supernatural, super everything God standing above everything. And it is going to lead him to understand that he is controlled by something far greater than that.

He's controlled by the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Look, if you would, at 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 10. 2 Corinthians 5 and 10. Write this somewhere.

[2 : 09] We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 2 Corinthians. And you're going to need your Bible today. You're going to need a sheet of paper. You're going to learn some fantastic things that the Bible teaches about your judgment and about your rewards.

The Bible says we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he had done, whether it be good or bad.

We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Look at that. It's in the Bible. It's clear as day. We will all stand. We must all. There's no choice and no option.

He knows all about us. He knows what we have done. He knows where we've been. Even our motives will no longer be hidden. Nothing has ever been hidden from him.

We will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Every Christian ought to sit here and think, wow. You know, there's nothing like when you're in high school knowing Friday's test day.

[3 : 09] There's nothing like knowing you're going to go take a test. There's nothing like you may even know the material, but you know you're going to be tested. Just remember what the Bible says. We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

It ought to bring a strike all in our hearts and reverence in our hearts and respect. We will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. And he does know. But I want you to know something about the judgment seat of Christ.

The first thing I want you to know is this. We will not be judged for our sins there. And you're going to need your Bible to write down some verses and to write them down so you can look them up later.

But listen to this. The judgment seat of Christ is not a judgment about our sins. Our sins were taken care of on the cross of Calvary. My sins have all been forgiven. If I'm a born again believer, if I truly know Jesus Christ as my Savior, when I stand before the judgment seat of Christ, my sins are all paid for.

My sins are all covered. My sins are all washed away. My sins have been blotted out. My sins have been nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ. My sins were under the it is finished clause.

[4 : 15] God has taken care of them. So let me give you some Bible verses that ought to excite you. Now I'll tell you as a little boy growing up in church and hearing preachers preach all the time, I was often quite afraid of going to heaven.

I thought that when I went to heaven, I was going to get to heaven. And then God was going to read all these things I did wrong. He was going to know every place I'd ever been and every mess up I've ever had, every word I'd ever spoken that I should not have spoken.

And then he was basically going to tell me, pull your britches down. I'm going to whip your barrier in right here in front of everybody. And that was basically my philosophy. And so that was the badness purgatory.

And I was really kind of scared of that. And so what I'm about to share with you for me is like the most exciting news I ever learned about when I get to heaven. I can now go to heaven excited because of what God has for me.

Look in your Bible at 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21. 2 Corinthians 5 verse 21. Right where you are right now. The Bible says that Jesus took our sins and gave us his righteousness.

[5 : 11] Look at 2 Corinthians 5 verse 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. Do you know what God did?

Listen to this. Look just wait just a second. Do you know what God did? Think of all that sin nature you have. Think of all of that self-glorification, self-aggrandizement that you have.

All of that that makes you somebody. All of that that makes you rebellious and want to do your own will. All of the things that you've done that are sin he placed those on Jesus Christ and Jesus became sin for me.

Jesus became sin for you. And not only did he do that. Not only did Jesus become sin for us. He went one step further. That is so fantastic and wonderful. Look what he says. He said that we.

How many of you are a part of the we? Raise your hands if you're part of the we. That we might be made thee. Read it out loud with me. Right behind my head. Read it out loud with me. That we might be made thee what? Righteousness of God in him.

[6 : 11] You know what Jesus did? Not only did he take my sins off of me. Not only did he forgive me of my sin. Not only did he pay my sin debt. But Jesus made me the righteousness of God in Jesus.

He made me the righteousness of God in him. So I stand today a saint of the living God. I stand today born again a new creature. All things are passed away.

Behold all things are made new. Galatians chapter 3 and verse 13. Another thing that goes on about our sins being taken care of on the cross of Calvary. The Bible says in Galatians 3.13.

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law. Being made a curse for us. For it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree. Here's what was going on.

We were standing in line for our chance to pay for our sins. We were on our way to the cross. We had belonged on the cross. We deserved to be on the cross. We deserved to die for that. We deserved the curse of God.

[7 : 06] And Jesus came and said, Step aside. I'll stand on the cross. And I'll redeem you. Buy you back. Take you away from there. I will pay your sin debt. And Jesus became, Jesus became sin for us.

Jesus redeemed us from the curse. Jesus became the curse. So I don't have to be the curse. 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 24. Who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree.

That we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness by whose stripes we are healed. When Jesus died on Calvary's tree, he carried my sin. How many of you got a lot of sins?

You'd be very embarrassed if we were to bring them out. Hold your hand if you got a lot of those sins. Y'all remember when you probably heard this preach sometime when you was a kid. They said that one day God was going to turn on a video projector and show all of your sins.

He was going to show all your bad thoughts. He was going to show all. He's going to show you cheating. And in first grade, you were a cheat in school. He was going to show you stealing and lying and cheating and cussing. He was going to show all those dirty thoughts.

[8 : 08] And honestly, they even made me think, buddy, I was going to try to crawl under the chair and dig a hole through the floor to get out of embarrassment. But here's what happened. He bared my sins in his own body.

Can you say amen right there? He bared our sins in his own body. He paid our sin debt. Look at Romans chapter 8 and verse 1. We will not be judged for sin if we're born again.

By the way, if you're not born again, every bit of this is completely the opposite for you. If you're not born again, you will be judged for sin. And I'll get to that in just a second. But in Romans chapter 8 and verse 1, the Bible said, There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

How many of you are in Christ Jesus? Say amen. Now you know that. You've been born again. You've trusted Jesus and you have a new life and you're in Christ. Say amen if that's you. There is therefore now no what?

How much condemnation is there for you? There is now no? There is now how much condemnation? No condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh.

[9 : 08] You say, well, what about if we walk after the flesh? Can't walk after the flesh. You're born again and in the spirit now. The people who walk after the flesh don't believe in God. I believe in him. I believe in him. And I walk in Jesus.

In Romans chapter 8 verse 34, the Bible said, Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Can you imagine this? Can you imagine this? Let's suppose you compared this to a courtroom setting and you saw judge God sitting on the throne, although it will be actually Jesus, who's the judge according to the Bible.

And Jesus is sitting on the throne. He's the judge. And Jesus is your lawyer also at the same time. And if the devil walks up and says, but this guy sinned, Jesus said, I paid his debt. I'm his lawyer.

I'm his judge. Shut up. That ought to be pretty interesting. Amen. Jesus goes up and say, I paid his debt. Who can condemn him? Who can accuse a born again Christian? If Jesus is a judge, jury, and everything else.

[10:07] Jesus is all of that. One more verse for you. Boy, you ought to memorize these verses because the devil comes to you, reminds you all the time, tries to make you have all these negative thoughts about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, about our God.

John 5, 24. The Bible says, Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me. And there are three promises I wish you'd say out loud with me.

What is the first one right behind my head here? He that hears my word and believes on him that sent me. Number one, has. Has what? Has. Does it say will have, hope to have, maybe have?

I hope that'll work out. Does it say that or does it say has? Eternal life. I mean, you can say what it says. Has. And what do we have? What do we have? That means life it doesn't end.

Can you say we have? All right. Not only do we have everlasting life, but it says, and we shall not come into what? Now, those that are in Christ Jesus, there's no more condemnation.

[11:05] We shall not come into condemnation. You know what Jesus said? If you believe in me, you've trusted me, you've allowed me to pay your sin, that I took your sin, there will be no condemnation for you. There's now no condemnation.

By the way, what happens? You have passed from death to you have passed from death to you have passed from hell to heaven.

You have passed from those that are going to die to those that aren't going to die. You pass from those that are going to be out of the presence of God to those that are going to be in the presence of God. So just let me start off by saying this on the judgment seat of Christ. We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, but it's not the negative thing that you've probably been raised and taught that it was.

It's not the God's going to make you pull down your little britches and whip you on your little backside because of all the sin you've had. Jesus paid your sin debt. Can you say amen right there? Can you say amen?

Jesus paid your sin debt. By the way, there's another judgment that's mentioned in the Bible. So I just want you to maybe right beside the judgment seat of Christ right in the margin, great white throne.

[12:07] In Revelation chapter 20, verses 11 through 15, you'll find in verse 11, and I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it from whose earth, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away and there was found no place for them.

And to not take the time to read all that passage, here's what it says. There's God, it's actually Jesus sitting on the great white throne and he's going to be because God has given all judgment to the son and he's going to open a book and that book's going to be the book of life and he's going to open it and their name won't be found in the book of life.

Their name won't be found in the book of life. If you're a born again believer, if you truly saved, your name's in the book. It's not in the Baptist book. It's not in the church book. It's not in what the pastor's book thinks.

It's not on my iPad. It's not on my prayer list. It's in the book of the lamb. It's in God's book of life. Your name is written there. How many of you got your name written in there? Say amen. So he says their name is not found in that book and then he said, now open the other books and buddy there, he will bring forth everything that's ever said or done and he will bring forth thoughts and he will bring forth all that and he will show them.

He will judge them according to their works because no one ever paid their debt. They remain in their sins and their sins will be brought before them. I do not remain in my sins because I'm a born again believer.

[13 : 21] I believe most of you are born again and you do not remain in your sins thanks to what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary and those whose names weren't found written in the last book of life will be cast into the lake of fire.

We will be judged for rewards. I won't take the time this morning. We've already done it in other messages when we went through 1 Corinthians and other places but we'll be judged according to rewards.

Now let me say this before I leave this point and go to the next verse. Listen to this. This is no game. Your Bible reading, your prayer time, your service, your church attendance, your holiness, your separation from sin, is no gain.

There is a God in heaven who is going to reward your faithfulness, who is going to reward your love for him, who's going to reward your service to him, who said that even a cup of water given in his name, who said if you receive a prophet or a minister of righteousness in the name of a prophet you'll receive a prophet's reward.

There is a God in heaven and I just want you to know something. Please listen to this. You are not just like free. I'm never going to be judged. I'm not ever going to have to go through that bad stuff. There is going to be, hey, it's like the Olympics.

[14 : 30] There's a gold medal, there's a silver medal and there's a bronze medal. It's like at the end, God's going to look and say, boy, you've been faithful. You've honored me. You've honored my word. You've lived out who you were.

You've lived up to what I did in your life. You've allowed the Holy Spirit to lead in your life. There is a reward seat. I hope you will live knowing that. Second thing in the verse, go to verse 10 with me if you would.

2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 11, excuse me. We persuade men. The Bible says, knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. We're made manifest unto God and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

See, Paul says, there's the terror of the Lord. Now, I want you to read a verse with me and I just want you to understand something. You don't have an inside with God except through Jesus Christ.

And you need to get a hold of this. We are saved and don't deserve it. We are saved and didn't earn it. We are saved without any merit of our own.

[15 : 30] We're saved because we serve a good God. Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 4 verse 18, and if the righteous scarcely be saved, if a righteous man barely gets saved, what in the world will happen with the ungodly and the sinner when they stand before him?

I'll stand before God. Now, listen to this. I'm going to tell you something. I'll stand before it. Let me say it this way. The apostle Paul will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and there won't be. Man, that's the apostle Paul.

He deserves salvation because he did this and this and this and this. Paul will stand before him and it will be for by grace are you saved through faith. And that not of yourselves, it's a gift of God, not of works.

We're saved. You're not saved by your church membership. You're not saved by your church attendance. You're not saved because you give money. You're saved by the grace of God. Man, wake up and realize this. He's an awesome God.

He's a powerful God. He's a terror God. Now, what's that mean? It's not the way that like scary or fright or dread or horror. it refers to a person that inspires fear, astonishment, and amazement.

[16 : 35] If you have the opportunity, if you have the opportunity to talk to some really big famous person, you might stumble over your words because this guy's so important. If they put you on TV, you might get a little befuddled because you wouldn't know what to say.

Well, just imagine this. Our God is far bigger than that. We speak of God or Christ and the fear of God. We're talking about a deep reverential sense of accountability to God or Christ.

It's kind of like when they come from the home office and they walk into your place of business and when they walk in, they walk in with their clipboards and their checklists and they're going to check you over and see how you've been doing at your job and it's time to check you over and you know what?

You may have been doing everything you know to do right but you're kind of nervous about that. Well, listen to this. There is a great God in heaven. Don't take him for granted. Now, the apostle Paul wants people to be saved.

He's persuading people but really that's not what he's going here. Right here, what he's talking about is he wants them to know that he is a man of God, that he is the guy bringing the gospel and that he wants them to believe in Jesus Christ.

[17 : 41] He wants them to be convinced that Paul is a man of integrity, that Paul has been preaching the Bible, that he doesn't need a letter of commendation. That's the way it starts off in chapter 3, that Paul is a man of God.

He said, I have done right and I do right because I know God's watching and I know God's in charge and I know I'm going there. Paul has lived a transparent life, a transparent life in front of them and before God and he says in the verse, chapter 5, verse 11, he says, we are made manifest unto God.

God knows me. God knows me. God knows who I am. God knows where I am. God knows what I'm doing. I'm made manifest him but I'm also made manifest in your consciences, in your consciences.

The question became, will you listen to me or will you listen to the critics that are against me? Paul did not commend himself. Look at verse 12. That's how you know he's talking about persuading men.

He said, wait a minute, I'm not bragging on myself. I'm not trying to prove that I am somebody that can do it. Verse 12, Paul said, we commend not ourselves again unto you but give you an occasion to glory on our behalf that you may have someone to answer them with glory in appearance and not in heart.

[18 : 47] For whether we be beside ourselves, whether we be crazy or not, it's to God. Whether we be sober and serious, it is for your cause. Do you realize what's happening? See, the apostle Paul says, I know there's a great God in heaven and there's these guys that come down and buddy, they come down from Jerusalem and they're all dressed the right way and they say they got letters from Jerusalem and they say they're obeying all these rules and they're all worried about external things.

They're always worried about what's on the outside of you. They're always worried about that and Paul said, I'm not about to do that. Those guys may glory in their appearance but not in their heart but I don't want them to divide the church.

You see, Paul was worried because if you could attack Paul, if you could divide, if you could get half the church already said, well, I'm of Peter back in 1 Corinthians and I'm of Jesus and I'm of Paul and Paul's like, wait a minute guys, get your eyes where they need to be.

Let's get our eyes on Jesus. They were divided. They were defending Paul and Paul doesn't want to see them lose, leave the faith and be messed up by these attacks. Paul knows that if the critics can attack and destroy the pastor, then they can destroy the church.

Paul knows that bragging on yourself or tooting your own horn or telling people how good you are, that's of no value. So Paul said, I don't commend myself.

[20 : 01] Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10, 18, for not he that can, for not he that commendeth himself is approved but who the Lord commendeth. So Paul said, I don't commend myself.

I want the Holy Spirit to commend me. I want the Holy Spirit to do it. Really, they should have been glorying in Paul. That churchman is saying, man, we have a man of God, Paul. He has taught us the truth.

In verse 12, it says, we commend not ourselves again unto you but give you occasion to glory on our behalf. You should glory on our behalf. Chapter 12 and verse 11, I am become a fool in glory and you've compelled me.

I ought to have been commended of you for nothing am I behind the chiefest of apostles. Paul said, guys, I ought not have to tell you I'm a man of God. You should know it. You have watched my life.

It's been in front of you all the time. You know who I am. You know how I preach. You know how I live. You know me. You ought to be thanking God for me. I ought not have to brag on myself and these guys come down from Jerusalem and all they do is come down with all these external things.

[20 : 59] He said, you ought to know that you have a man of God. Paul said, the only boast I can have is in the Lord Jesus. The only thing I can brag about. Paul said, if I want to brag, I have to brag about Jesus.

2 Corinthians 10, 17, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 9, 16, I preach the gospel, but I have nothing to glory of.

Paul said, even if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to brag about because God put it on me and God pushed me into it and God told me to do it. He said, the fact is, if I'm going to brag in 12, 9, and 10, he said, if I'm going to brag, I'll brag about my infirmities because when I'm weak, then is he strong?

You see, Paul said, there's a God in heaven. There's a God in heaven. Paul wasn't about commending himself or being worried about his outward appearance and what men would think about him.

So that leads us to the third thing and one of the main things in the whole point. Look at verse 14. The love of Christ constrains us. That ought to be what works in your life.

[21 : 59] Yes, you're going to be standing before the judgment of Christ and yes, God is an awe-inspiring, reverential God that we ought to have that attitude, but can you imagine that God took on flesh and lived among men and saved us?

The second Corinthians chapter four, verse 14, for the love of Christ constrains us because we thus judge that if one died for all, then we're all dead.

Paul loved Jesus because Paul knew that Jesus loved him and Paul couldn't get over Jesus loving him. You know, Paul looked at the situation and said, now wait a minute, I know me.

I know I'm the chief of sinners. I know that if anybody ought to go to hell to love me, I persecute the church. I can't believe he loves me, but he loves me. He loves me. He loves me. Jesus loves me. I know I don't deserve it.

I'm a sinner. I'm wicked. I ought to go to hell, but Jesus loves me. Jesus loves me. Jesus loves me. Jesus loves me. And that's taken control of my life.

[22 : 58] It makes me get up in the morning. It pushes me. It controls me. It constrains me. It pressures me. Jesus loves me. It became his controlling factor. He was greatly impacted.

Jesus had died for all. That all were in their sins and dead and on their way to hell, but Jesus died for all. He paid their sin debt. Look at verse 15. Paul said, can you believe it?

And he, and now that, and he that died for all that they which live should not live henceforth unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again. Paul said, he loves me. He loves me.

I can't get over it. He loves me. Do you realize I deserve to die? Do you realize I deserve to go to hell? But Jesus died and took my place and he died in my place. How can I not live for him? How can I not get up in the morning and say my life, my time, my talents, my treasure, everything belongs.

He died for me. He took the cross for me. He bore my sin for me. He did everything for me. How in the world can he not be the dominating life factor in my life?

[23 : 56] How could it not be that Jesus is everything to me? How can it be? If he died for you, how do you live for yourself? If he died for you, shouldn't you be living for him?

Shouldn't you be waking up in the morning and saying, I can't believe I've been loved like that. I can't believe I've been cared for like that. I can't believe that someone's done so much for me. Verse 16, Paul didn't look on outward appearances.

Wherefore, henceforth know we know man after the flesh, yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth we know no man. Paul wanted to see people saved. Paul loved carrying the gospel.

He wasn't trying to get people to conform outwardly. He didn't choose who he'd work with based on their flesh or outward appearances. These Judaizers came down and they said, if you really want God to save you, you've got to get circumcised.

If you really want God to save you, you've got to turn into a little Jew. That's what you've got to do if you really want to be saved. And Paul said, I really don't care about that. That's not the point. I'm here to tell you Jesus loves you.

[24 : 53] I'm here to tell you Jesus died on the cross for you. I'm here to tell you that Jesus is the answer. I'm here to tell you that Jesus has done the work in your life. You know, Paul had known Christ on a physical external basis, but he said, I don't even do that anymore.

He said, though we have known Christ as the flesh it sent forth. No, we him no more. You see, Paul didn't go around and say, let me look at you and say, let me see here. Are you the right color? Are you the right height?

Are you the right sex? Are you the, are you, do you have the external qualifications? Paul looked at everyone and said, every one of your sinners and every one of you deserve to go to hell, but Jesus paid the price. You can be saved. And he came out.

Paul said, I'm not looking at Jewish people. See, there's Jews, man. They were marked. Everybody knew who they were. And the apostle Paul said, that's not the motivating factor in my life. Now go to the last verse, verse 17. Look what he said.

Therefore, if any man being Christ, he's a new creature. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new. You know, we all start in the same place. We're all messed up.

[25 : 53] Every one of us, before we got saved, we're just as wicked and dirty as everybody else. And we were just as hell deserving and just as hell bent, hell bound as anybody else.

But then God did something in our lives. God came down and convicted me of my sin. God came down and convicted you of your sin. And God showed you, you'd sin against the Holy God and God showed you your need.

And God made you a new creature. All of a sudden, it wasn't, you aren't a Jew and you aren't a Gentile. You're a born again Christian. All of a sudden, you're not a, you're not an American citizen or a Russian citizen.

You're a born again Christian. Paul said, I don't look at these external things. I know God makes old men new. I know God makes old men new. No matter who you are, no matter where you come from.

This is not paying for sin, but continuing on as a completely new person. I want you to look at 2 Corinthians 5, 17, just a couple of minutes and I'll give our invitation. Look at what happens. If you're in Christ, you are underline a new creature.

[26 : 51] You're a new creature. You're no longer Jewish and you're no longer Gentile and you're no longer sinner and you're no longer sinner. You're no longer the old person you used to be. Something miraculous took place in your life.

You are not who you used to be. You are not who you used to be because Jesus came in. All things, old things are passed away. He said, let me just take all that old stuff out of you and just throw it all away.

Paul, your circumcision doesn't matter to me. Your baptism, Austin, doesn't matter to me. It's not what you've done that matters to me. It's the grace of God that changed you. That's what matters. That's what matters.

All things, old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new. We're a completely new creation. New in Christ. New in what he's done.

I was sitting in Idaquipa years ago with a guy named Daniel Araujo. He's a pastor and Daniel was one of the most dedicated, diligent, godly men I'd ever known. He wasn't out of my ministry. He was already saved when I got there.

[27 : 50] He was already pastoring when I got there. We were sitting one day and I was telling him how wonderful the gospel was. I said, have you not seen what God does? I have seen drunkards become pure men. I've seen prostitutes get saved.

I've seen homosexuals get saved. I've seen God do great works. And I tell you, Daniel, you know when that happens, you can't even tell who they used to be. And he said, oh, I know that, brother. And tears started streaming down his face.

And he said, you know who I was, don't you? And Cusco for somebody came with the gospel. And I said, no, I said, you know, you've always been the most godly guy. He said, I was a fallen down drunk and a man shared Jesus with me.

And I said, there's not a trace of that in you anymore. I would have never, ever dreamed that about you. And he just looked at me and said, I know I'm a new creature.

Isn't that wonderful? Behold, all old things are passed away and all things are made new. We are new creatures. Are you born again? Do you know that if you died, you'd go to heaven?

[28 : 48] Are you somebody new? I didn't ask, did you join the church? I didn't ask, did you change? Did you turn over a new leaf? I didn't ask if you made a new year's resolution. We're not talking reformation, but a formation.

We're not talking about continuing and saying, but being a completely new person. This person is a new creature. Are you? Are you? Has God done a work in you?

Please, please don't tell me Christianity did a work in you because you're on your way to hell. Please don't tell me Baptist did a work in you because you're on your way to hell. Please don't tell me you fixed yourself up.

Realize that everybody who's ever been born again was wicked and dirty and filthy and deserved to go to hell. None of us can look down our nose at anybody because all of us have sinned against the Holy God. And when you know that you're ready to be saved.

And by the way, if you are saved, you do not look back and say, well, I wasn't all that bad a guy. You do not do that. You look back and say, I know I deserved hell. I got saved and I was seven years old.

[29 : 49] But let me just tell you something. And by the age of seven, I'll be honest, I had not become a fornicator and adulterer. I was probably a liar. I hadn't even become much of a thief. Just to be honest, at seven, I hadn't done a whole lot of stuff wrong yet, but I was just as hell deserving as anybody who's ever lived.

I was just as hell deserving as Paul, the chief of sinners. I was just as hell deserving. And then Jesus stepped in and he changed me and he changed you. Two things.

Number one, if you're not a born again believer, if you're not a new creature, if God hasn't changed you, today is the day. Something inside of your heart, the Holy Spirit speaking to you and saying he's talking to you. This message is for you.

You're not a new believer. You're not a new creature. You're not a different person. You're just faking it. If that's what's going on, you ought to just confess right now. Oh God, forgive me. I'm a wretched man. I don't have anything that makes me worthy of being saved, but I trust you and you can be saved today.

But then I'd say to the rest of you, you know, you said so gladly you were born again. You're so excited that you're a new creature. You're so excited. You're so excited that we're not going to stand before God and have to answer for all of our sin and all of our past.

[30 : 56] But when that happened with Paul, Paul said, let me tell you, it's the love of Christ that constrains me. Paul said, I'm a new guy. If one died for all, how can all of us not live for him? Paul said, man, I'm telling you, love took control of my life.

I love Jesus and I want to talk about him. And yet so many of us are born again believers and we've accepted all the benefits, but love hasn't yet taken control. that's why you're half-hearted in your love and half-hearted in your devotion and half-hearted in serving God.

That's why it doesn't show up in your faithfulness and it doesn't show up in your prayer and it doesn't show up in your Bible study. It doesn't show up in your giving. Let's just be honest. God may be dealing with you to say, I did save you and you know I did.

So act like it. So respond to my love. Let my love push you. Let my love push you to live out who you are. Let my love make you who I made you to be.

You're a new creature. Now act like it. Father in heaven, I love you and I thank you and I praise you for the chance to serve you. I pray that your name would be honored and glorified. I pray you'd speak this morning to hearts.

[32 : 07] I pray you'd save somebody. God, there's somebody here this morning that's not sure they'd go to heaven if they died. I pray you'd deal with them. I pray God that you'd have them today to make a decision to say, based on the Holy Spirit's conviction, I know I'm a sinner.

I know I deserve hell and I'm trusting Jesus Christ as my Savior. God, save somebody. And God, I pray you'd wake up some Christians with some young men and women in this room, some older men and older women in this room that are just playing with you.

They don't take you seriously. They don't take your word seriously. It's not real to them. And I'm just praying that you would convict and change and work in our lives so we'd become what you've called us to become. You have been listening to Austin Gardner, pastor of Vision Baptist Church.

For contact information, location, service times, or more audio and video recordings, log on to www.visionbaptist.com. www.visionbaptist.com.

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