

10. Learning to Be Motivated by the Love of Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we will all stand at the judgment seat of Christ to receive our rewards. Any works that have eternal value will be rewarded. Any works that only have earthly or temporary value will be burned. We saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to do those works that have eternal value so that they can rejoice and be filled with joy as they stand at the judgment seat of Christ. However, there are many people who are not Christians. Instead of standing at the judgment seat of Christ to receive rewards, those people will stand at the great white throne judgment described in Revelation 20:11-15 to be judged for their sin. Then, they will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where they will experience eternal judgment for their sins.

In 2 Corinthians 5:11, we read, “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.” The word that is translated “terror” means *fear or reverence*. Notice the way this word is used in Hebrews 2:14-15 to refer to those who are not Christians. Those verses say, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” The unbeliever is held in bondage by the fear of death. In contrast, Ephesians 5:21 uses the word to speak about reverence for God. That verse says, “Submitting to one another in the fear of God.” In reverence to God, we submit to one another with godly reverence. Paul used this word the second way in this verse because he was persuading the people in Corinth to view the integrity in his life because he knew that God saw his integrity.

That is why Paul goes on to say in 2 Corinthian 5:12-13, “For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have *an answer* for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. For if we are beside ourselves, *it is* for God; or if we are of sound mind, *it is* for you.” Paul did not need to boast about himself as the false teachers were doing in that time. Instead, he was telling the Corinthian Christians how to answer those who were boasting about themselves instead of serving the Lord from the heart. Apparently, these false teachers had said that Paul was insane. That did not surprise Paul because those against Christ said the same thing about Christ. John 8:48 says, “Then the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?’” Paul told the Corinthians that they knew him well enough to know that he served the Lord from the heart.

Paul then went on to tell why he served the Lord from his heart. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” Instead of self-glory, which is the goal of false teachers, Paul said that he was motivated by the love of Christ. The word that is translated “compels” means *to hold completely or to hold something together with a hand*. Acts 18:5 says, “When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus is the Christ*.” In Acts 18:5, we see that Paul was held completely or compelled by the Holy Spirit.

Here, we see that Paul was held completely or compelled by the love of Christ. That was what motivated the life of Paul because it made him realize why Christ had died for him.

Paul realized that Christ had died on behalf of every person because every person is spiritually dead. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Paul said that the fact that Christ died for us was motivated by His love for us. Paul said that should give us the desire to no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died for us. Peter expressed a similar thought when he said in 1 Peter 2:24. “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.” The fact that we have died to sin makes it possible for us to live for righteousness. The Lord gives us the strength to live a righteous life as we yield to Him moment by moment. This is a wonderful fact that we want to help our children fully understand.

That is why 2 Corinthians 5:16 says, “Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer.” Here, we see that Paul shows us that once we are motivated by the love of Christ, we will view other people differently. We will not view them by their appearance, their money or any other thing. Instead, we will see their spiritual need. This happens because of the fact that we look at Christ differently. In Matthew 1:21, we read, “And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” We look at Christ as the One who saved us from our sins and so we want others to know this same good news.

In fact, we have been totally changed. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” At the moment we placed our faith in Christ, He made us a new creation. We now have both physical life and spiritual life. John 3:6 says, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Here, we see that we received physical life when we were conceived by our physical parents. We receive spiritual life at the moment we are born of the Holy Spirit. We are immediately made a new creation and we now have a desire to live for the things that are eternal instead of just living for the things of this world. That means we now have a desire to do what is right instead of a desire to do evil. The Holy Spirit also gives us the power to do what is right at every moment that we are yielding to His power.

That is why 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 says, “Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” The word that is translated “reconciled” means *to bring back together those who have been separated*. This word is used six times in the New Testament – three here in verses 18-20. It is also used in 1 Corinthians 7:11 to talk about a husband and wife being reconciled. Then, it is used twice in Romans 5:10 where we read, “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” The death of Christ made it possible for us to be brought back together with the Father. Now that we have been saved by His death, Christ is certainly able to keep us by His life.

Paul described the things that happened in His life and also happen in our lives because God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ. First, we see that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. The word “ministry” means *service*. Here, we see that every Christian has been commissioned to serve those who are not yet Christians by helping them to understand how they can be brought back to God through Christ. In John 20:21, we read, “So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’” We have been sent to share the message of reconciliation with others.

Second, we have been given the word of reconciliation. The “word of reconciliation” means that *the message we have been given to share is trustworthy* and will transform the lives of those who respond to the Word of God by placing their faith in Christ. We do not share our own opinions or even our own convictions. Instead, we share the message of reconciliation from the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The Word of God will reveal his or her own heart to each person. Our opinions or convictions cannot touch the heart.

This ministry that is given both to Paul and to us is described in 2 Corinthians 5:20-21 where we read, “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” An ambassador is one who speaks for another and delivers the message of that person. Paul said in Ephesians 6:19-20, “And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Paul asked for prayer because he wanted to be a faithful ambassador for Christ and deliver the message that Christ gave him to deliver. We need to pray the same prayer so that we can share the message of Christ boldly with others as a faithful ambassador.

Our message is summarized in verses 21. We see that Christ did not have any sin. However, He took our sin on Himself as He hung on the cross. He did this so that the Father could place the righteousness of Christ on us at the moment that we repented of our sin and placed our faith in the death and resurrection of Christ as the payment for our sin. It is the love of Christ for us that motivates us to share this message with others so that they can also experience the love of Christ in their own lives. As we show our children how we carry out this ministry by sharing the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians, we are equipping our children to carry out that same ministry. As our children watch us share the Gospel, they learn how to share the Gospel. This helps them to understand how to share the Gospel with others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example what it means to be motivated by the love of Christ.