

THEME: "A Christian's Motivation" #10

Passage: II Corinthians 5:11-21 (v14)

Last Week: "Living for Eternity"

- We need to understand God's purpose v1-5
- We need to be confident about our real home v6-8
- We need to have the right ambition v9-10

Introduction:

The following ad once appeared in a London newspaper: "Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful." The ad was signed by Sir Ernest Shackleton, Antarctic explorer. Amazingly, the ad drew thousands of respondents, eager to sacrifice everything for the prospect of meaningful adventure.

Today In The Word, August, 1989, p. 33.

What motivates people? Love? Fear? Ambition? Greed? Desire? Social pressure? Any number of things can affect how we live. But a Christian's primary motivation should be *faith* in God's word. One of the most motivated men who ever lived was the apostle Paul. In the span of a few years, he carried the Gospel to major portions of the Roman Empire, with the intention of taking it to Spain, called by Clement of Rome, "the limits of the West."

But in Corinth, Paul's motivation had been disparaged by a group of men who deemed themselves "super apostles" (2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:11), but who were in fact, false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13). Much of this letter, as these verses, is Paul's defense of his ministry.

As John MacArthur notes, "Paul faced a dilemma. If he did not defend himself, the Corinthians might abandon him in favor of the false teachers. Yet if he did defend himself, he left himself open to the charge that he was prideful commending himself. To refute the false accusation that he was guilty of self commendation, Paul was forced to give a defense."

What motivated the apostle should motivate us as well. While his words apply especially to those in vocational ministry, they should be true of every believer. Paul speaks of four things which should motivate us.

I. THE PROSPECT OF STANDING BEFORE OUR LORD V11-12

A. "Therefore" connects v11 with v10, which speaks of our appearing before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged in regard to our service as the Lord's servants. Ref. v10, "so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds. . . ." NASB. "receive".

B. This is not a "servile" fear but rather a fear of displeasing the Lord (v9) by failing to live as we should.

C. Our conduct should be based in part on our fear of this event! David Garland, “Whatever it is that one’s fears the most . . . is what one will serve the most.” Thought: We should not be careless about the way we live. Honor God by pleasing Him first and foremost.

D. Paul is confident that his motives are well-known to God and *should have been* to the Corinthians as well, **v11b**.

E. He wanted the Corinthians to be able to respond effectively to his critics, who “take pride in outward appearance”; understanding his *true* motivation, **v12**. His was a *God-fearing* ministry, not a “man-fearing” one!

II. THE CONSTRAINING POWER OF CHRIST’S LOVE V13-15

A. If Paul seemed to be “beside himself,” it was because of his zeal “for God.” “So many Christians are *subnormal* that it makes a *normal* Christian appear *abnormal*!” Ref. **Mark 3:20-21**, “Then [Jesus] went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, ‘He is out of his mind.’”

Acts 26:24, “And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, ‘Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.’”

B. On the other hand, if he was in reality “of sound mind,” it was for the benefit of the Corinthians, not for that of his reputation.

C. Paul was *motivated by love* not pride! Verse **14** can speak of either Paul’s love for Christ or of Christ’s love for him. Both are true!

1. “Compels”, means to surround, to hem in.” It was used of Jesus being “held in custody” in **Luke 22:63**. Paul was a prisoner of love!

2. His “compulsion” was based on his “conclusion!” Ref. **v14b**, “having concluded this.” Because Christ died “for all, then all died.” NASB.

3. Note what verse says, *not* that all were dead but that when Christ died, all died; **all “in Christ,”** as the following verse makes clear. Note also **Colossians 3:3**, “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

John MacArthur, “[Paul] did not say, “all were dead,” which would have described every sinner who ever lived, since all are dead in sin (**Ephesians 2:1**). He was not talking about a condition, however but an event—the believers’ union with Christ in His death.”

D. Note **v15**. We who have been “buried with him” (**Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12**) have also been raised with him, enabling us to “walk in newness of life,”

Romans 6:4. To walk in newness of life is to live no longer for ourselves but for Christ, as *disciples!*

III. THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE GOSPEL V16-17

A. The Corinthians had evaluated Paul “according to the flesh” in comparing him with his critics, who “take pride in appearance,” **v12**, NASB; this is how he had so wrongfully evaluated Christ before his conversion.

Note. His defense before Agrippa: **Acts 26.9**, “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”

B. When a person is “in Christ,” two things are *always* true (**v17**).

1. He is a new creation, part of God’s new creation!

a. Just two words in Greek, “new creation!” *Kainos* speaks of new in quality.

b. “The new has come,” *ESV*. The verb here is Perfect Active, a present, continuing, permanent state! We are *regenerated* (**Titus 3:5**); born again (**1 Peter 1:23**).

2. “The old has passed away,” *ESV*. Here, the verb is Aorist; gone for good at a point in time past!

Ref. **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**. Philip Hughes, “The exclamation ‘behold!’ sounds an unmistakable note of spontaneous jubilation.”

C. The reality that faith in Christ transforms a person forever is a powerful motivation! We have the answer to the world’s problems!

IV. OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS GOD’S REPRESENTATIVES V18-21

A. Note the connection with **v17**, “all things.” *ESV*, “All this is from God.” Because of the transforming power of the Gospel, we have a message to deliver to the world!

B. The message is simple: “be reconciled to God,” **v20b**. The verb (*katallassō*) and the noun (*katallagē*) used in **v18**, **19**, and **20**, each speak of God restoring us to his favor.

1. Our word “reconcile” well represents the Greek terms which mean “restoring a relationship between individuals.”

2. The Greek root, *allassō* spoke of “change” or “exchange.” Here it is the exchange of enmity for friendship.

C. The means of this reconciliation was Christ, **v18**, **v19**; “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself.” Read **Colossians 1:19-22**. **Romans 5:10-11**, “For if

while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

D. God did not “impute” our trespasses (violations of his Law) to us because Christ became sin on our behalf, **v21**.

1. This does not say Christ became a *sinner*; he knew no sin!

2. Rather, he *became* sin in the sense of being the sin-bearer for us! **Galatians 3:13**, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’”

3. The result of Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf is the enablement of believers to *become* the righteousness of God in Christ! Ref. **1 Corinthians 1:30**, “And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”

E. We bear this wonderful message of reconciliation as God’s *ambassadors*, **v18b, 19b, 20**.

1. While Paul was speaking here of his ministry to the Corinthians, in a wider sense, it is our ministry as well!

2. We, like he, speak *for* God. What a privilege! What a responsibility! We speak God’s word not ours!

Conclusion:

Would you say that the majority of those who profess to be Christians live in accordance with these four realities? Sadly, too many have accepted Christ as their Savior without realizing His true position over us. One day we will answer to him for how we served Him, for what motivated us. May people say of us, “You’re beside yourself!” as we live for God’s glory and for the good of others. Let me urge you, be reconciled to God today.