



9/17/26

*We haven't talked about reasons to rehearse the gospel to ourselves lately, and I think it's very interesting that the next reason, #16, goes so perfectly with today's passage. Today's passage speaks of how the love of Christ can be our motivation. Milton Vincent says in *A Gospel Primer*, "The Bible teaches that genuine love in my heart for God is generated by an awareness of His love for me, and nowhere is the love of God more clearly revealed than in the gospel... Preaching the gospel to myself is a great way to keep God's love before my eyes." I pray that you and I will keep His love before our eyes today and see what wonderful things He teaches us as we let His love be our motivation.*

*Blessings,
Jonna*

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

In this part of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he has just said something that kind of freaks me out. He said, "Try to discern what pleases the Lord." Okay, that's not so bad. BUT... then he said, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." Ummm... yikes! Now, this is talking about God's "bema" seat. This is different than the judgment that will be rendered on unbelievers. This bema seat of Christ is for the believers, when God will examine our works, what we did by faith in Him. We will receive reward for what we did that honored Him, and we will suffer loss of reward for what we did that honored our own flesh.

There's both relief and a wakeup call in that judgment. The relief is that I won't lose my salvation for what I did on earth. That was secured for me when I believed and confessed Jesus as my Lord. The wakeup call is that what I do to honor God here and now has eternal impact. If that doesn't matter to me, there's a chance that I either don't truly know the Lord or that I am not pursuing a deeper relationship with the Lord.

I have a friend who once told me that she wouldn't leave her husband if he cheated on her. I'm pretty sure I remember her saying that in front of him. You know what he did NOT do right

after that? He did not go out and cheat on her? Why? He loves her and wants to honor their relationship and his commitment to her before God. That's the same kind of honor and commitment I need to have toward the Lord. I don't choose to cheat on Him (sin against Him) just because I know He'll forgive me. I seek to love Him with all I've got because He loves me with all He's got. O Lord, let that be my heart!

I bring this up because vs. 11 starts with the word, "Therefore." So... therefore, because I'm going to someday appear before the Lord to receive some kind of eternal reward for how I honored Him on earth... and I really want there to be plenty of room for reward... not because of getting stuff, but because of knowing that I pleased Him... Therefore... "Knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade others." The fear of the Lord... an awe inspiring reverence that recognizes how huge He is and with what authority He rules. Paul's motivation for trying to convince others to follow Jesus is that he was keenly aware of the reverence God deserves and he wanted others to know Him as well. He said, "I know God knows why we do this. I want YOU to know it, too."

Then he said, "We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you." Some people may have accused Paul of being crazy. He didn't have a trendy, cool outward appearance. What he had was a genuine heart for the Lord. Whatever they saw in him... crazy or in his right mind, he wanted them to see that his heart for the Lord was authentic. If they saw that, maybe they wouldn't get caught up in the deception of those who were in it for appearances and not for authentic love of the Lord.

In Vs. 14-15 Paul said, "For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised."

The love of Christ is what holds us together and motivates us to live for Jesus, because His love compelled Him to die for us. In truth, there is nothing good about living for our human passions. They're temporary and they bring no lasting satisfaction. Jesus' love for us is from everlasting to everlasting. Living for Him is a worthy plan.

Vs. 16-17 ~ "From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

We no longer see ourselves according to the temporary physical, and we no longer see other people in the temporary physical, and we no longer see Jesus in the temporary physical. Because of Jesus, we are new creations, with the old self gone and the new self alive in Christ.

I remember being so ashamed because so many of the bad choices I've made in life were as a believer in Christ. I shared my sadness over that with a friend... I said I tainted what God did

to restore me through salvation. She laughed and said, "That's silly. If our newness in Christ were dependent on us living perfectly, no one would be able to enjoy being a new creation in Christ." I don't think I will ever grasp how incredible the love of God is, that He's so merciful and kind to continue to give me new mercy every morning. Every morning I get to remind myself that my slate is clean because of Jesus. The beautiful thing is, when the love of Jesus is what controls me, I am already doing what pleases Him. His pleasure is what brings me the most joy.

Vs. 18-19 ~ "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

God gave us who are reconciled to Him the ministry of reconciliation so that we can call others to Himself. He wants heaven to be crowded. Right now, God is patient and merciful, not counting the sins of the world against them while He gives them room to repent and turn to Him.

Vs. 20-21 ~ "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."

I am His ambassador. I represent Jesus. I have the privilege of inviting others to experience the wonderful beauty of being compelled by His love. I have the wonderful privilege of telling others that Jesus chose to take on our sin and become sin in our place, to take the punishment we deserve and give us His righteousness instead. I have the privilege of inviting others to be reconciled to Jesus and the Father so that they never face His wrath, and the judgment we do face leads to reward with Him. What about that would I be ashamed for people to know? O Lord, please help me to represent You authentically without concern of outward appearances, but only what's in the heart.

There are four "therefores" in this passage because of what God has done for us and who He is...

- *Therefore, we persuade others.*
- *Therefore, we see from an eternal perspective, not the temporary physical.*
- *Therefore, we are new creations in Christ.*
- *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ.*

That's a pretty wonderful calling with an incredibly wonderful motivation for our worship... Jesus Christ. What compares to Him? Who has done for me what He has done for me? O Lord, I truly want to be Your faithful ambassador, seeking to please You in reverent awe of Your perfect love and majesty. Praise Your name!