



First Baptist Church At The Villages

COMPANION STUDY TO MESSAGE: *CONFIDENCE IN TELLING THE GOOD NEWS (5/17)* •

STUDY TITLE: CONFIDENCE TO LIVE AS AN AMBASSADOR OF CHRIST •

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-18 • FOR USE 5/17 THROUGH 5/23/2020

MAIN POINT

The closer we become like Christ, the stranger we look to the world and the stranger the world looks to us. If we are not careful, we begin to view non-believers as strangers rather than those Christ died for. We are “out of our minds” because of our love for God, but also so our neighbors can experience God’s great love in and through us.

INTRODUCTION

As your study time begins, use this section to focus your mind and heart on the topic of this lesson.

When have you been asked by an authority figure in your life, “what were you thinking?”

What is the craziest thing you have ever done that can be shared with this small group of friends? (Please use some discretion!)

What are the obvious implications when someone asks you, “are you out of your mind?”

The relationship between the apostle Paul and the church at Corinth could be defined as complex. He cared for them and knew them intimately enough that he could address specific problems in the church and hold them accountable. But Paul also seemed to be constantly defending his apostleship and his actions. In this passage he explains that he has been completely open with the church, but there are those who seem to question his sanity.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-13.

How would you explain the term “the fear of the Lord”?

The word “fear” may bring to mind a phobia—such as the fear of public speaking, spiders, or the dark. Our word phobia comes from the same Greek word “phobos” used in this verse. While the term is used in the New Testament to refer to a general sense of fear or terror (Matt. 14:26; 28:4), it is also used, as it is in this verse, of the reverential awe believers have for God. This reverential awe for God, in light of His perfect holiness, righteousness, omniscience, and omnipotence, leads a person to live in obedience to Him.

How does this “fear of the Lord” motivate us to persuade others to follow Christ?

To persuade means “to convince someone.” A primary focus of Paul’s life was to share the gospel with others. He gave evidence from Scripture that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Paul proclaimed that faith in Jesus is the only way to be made right with God. He presented the truth and allowed God’s Spirit to bring conviction and confirmation. Paul’s motivation for this work came from the fact that he had experienced a personal encounter with the risen Lord Jesus. He went from persecuting Christians to preaching Christ and starting churches. This focus on preaching the gospel, making disciples, and teaching them to grow in Christlikeness were hallmarks of Paul’s ministry.

Describe an experience when you, or someone in your church, have been accused by others of being “out of your mind” for your radical obedience to Christ.

| READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-15.

What are some other synonyms for the word “compels”?

The primary motivator for Paul was his love for God. Paul shared the gospel because of the love of Christ—this could mean his love for Jesus or the Savior’s love for him. Certainly apart from Christ’s amazing love Paul could not have known or loved Christ. This was what compelled Paul to continue to share the gospel. In the same way, the love of Christ compels us to share the gospel.

What are some things (positive and negative) that motivate people to live for God and share the gospel?

What does it look like for a follower of Jesus “to no longer live for himself, but to live for Christ”? Give specific examples.

| READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-17.

What does it mean in verse 17 when it says, “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation”?

What does it look like for “old things to pass away”?

What are the some of the characteristics of a follower of Jesus? What “new things” does a believer experience?

When anyone experiences God’s salvation, they are said to be in Christ. This means they are joined with Christ (in His death and resurrection, Rom. 6:3-11) and so experience forgiveness of sin and eternal life. It is only in this new relationship that they become a new creation. In Christ, the believer experiences a transformation Paul elsewhere described as a “renewing of [the] mind” (12:2). This transformation is not a one-time event but an ongoing process where we surrender ourselves to God so He can bring about a continuing renewal.

Being in Christ means the old has passed away. This certainly includes sin and its selfish actions that are part of everyone’s life before they come into relationship with Christ. These old things also include worldly human viewpoints and value systems, which were especially prevalent in the lives of the Corinthian believers. Paul noted those old things have been replaced by the new. This includes a new relationship between God and humanity (believers), as well as a new relationship between believers—who make up the body of Christ. These new things include a new way of life—one guided and controlled by Christ rather than by worldly (sinful) human thinking. This newness will be culminated in the new heavens and new earth that will come one day (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1).

CONTEMPLATION & APPLICATION

Identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to your life.

In what ways are you different from who you were before becoming a follower of Christ?

What motivates you to live for God and to share the gospel?

Do you verbally share the gospel on a regular basis? If your honest answer is 'no', ask yourself 'why?'.

Familiarize yourself with these scriptures, often referred to as the 'Roman Road to Salvation':

- **Admit that you are a sinner**
 - Romans 3:10
 - Romans 3:23
 - Romans 5:12
- **Know that sin has a consequence, death**
 - Romans 6:23a
 - Revelation 20:14
- **Realize that God loves you**
 - Romans 5:8
- **Salvation is a free gift from God to you**
 - Romans 6:23b
- **You must ask God for forgiveness and to save you**
 - Romans 10:9-10
- **Like any gift, God's salvation must be received**
 - Romans 10:13

NOW LIVE-OUT THE SCRIPTURES: Pray, asking God to: (1) restore to you the joy of your own salvation, (2) repent of any apathy toward lost people, whom Christ loves, and (3) ask God to give you boldness to share your personal testimony of salvation (and the gospel) with someone this week.

PRAYER

Thank Jesus for dying for your sins and for rescuing you. Ask the Holy Spirit to continue renewing your mind so that you reflect Christ's perfect character to a lost world.

COMMENTARY (additional background and/or explanation of the verses to help in

understanding the biblical text)

| 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-18

5:11-12 The fear of the Lord is the awe and respect due to Christ as the judge of a believer's works. A prominent OT wisdom theme (Pr 1:7), fear of God may not be forgotten by NT believers (Ac 9:31; Rev 15:4). The Corinthians needed to be reminded of this fear in terms of their

treatment of Christ's apostle. Paul's motives were pure, both before the Lord he feared and before the people he served.

5:13-14 Paul's opponents probably had suggested that he was religiously unbalanced (see Ac 26:24). He was "insane" in that Christ's love compelled him into vigorous apostolic ministry. On the other hand, his ministry among the Corinthians had never been that of a madman (1Co 2:1-5). Indeed, he had kept his "third heaven" vision private for 14 years until he mentioned it later in this letter (12:1-10). The heart of Paul's message was that the Jewish Messiah had died on behalf of all kinds of sinners (1Co 15:3). Jews as well as Gentiles were included in Jesus' substitutionary death (Rev 7:9). In union with Christ, sinners who believe the gospel have died to sin and have been raised to walk in a new way of life.

5:15 The phrase those who live refers to believers who are now spiritually alive (Eph 2:4-6). Christ's death and resurrection ministry have become the pattern for the believer's death and new-life ministry. Paul personally modeled this as well.

5:16 The phrase in a purely human way is a good rendering of the Greek text (lit "according to the flesh"). There are always two conflicting perspectives on a situation: the natural versus the divine. A natural view of Christ led to His crucifixion and to Paul's persecution of Christ-followers. After the light of divine revelation broke in on Paul on the Damascus road, he could no longer know Him in this way (Ac 9).

5:17-18 The words in Christ refer to being in union with Him. Genuine conversion begins life transformation, but not by reforming the old nature. The indwelling Spirit creates divine life in believers (Rm 8:8-10), enabling a life of new things. Other NT passages communicate this truth by using language such as "born again" or "regeneration" (Jn 3:3-8; Titus 3:5; 1Pe 1:23). Those who were enemies of God have now become friends by being reconciled to Him. God's wrath against sin was satisfied in the death of His Son. Sinners—who formerly put self-interest above God's glory (Rm 1:21; 3:23)—have been brought to cherish God as their highest treasure (2Co 4:6). The ministry of reconciliation—being an agent of this good news—was Paul's special responsibility, but the task belongs to all who have received this ministry.