

## In – 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Sitch

1. In this portion of the letter, Paul spends a good deal of time explaining his motives for ministry.
  - a. He'd been accused of impure motives by some of the Corinthians.
  - b. Though they've now returned to a solid confidence in his calling & motive,
  - c. Titus, who brought the latest report from Corinth, brought other news as well.
2. Paul's old enemies, the Judaizers, had shown up in Corinth & had begun their old tricks.
  - a. They said that before Gentiles could be saved, they had to become Jews & keep the Mosaic Law.
  - b. This was totally contrary to the Gospel of Grace Paul taught,
  - c. So one of the first things they did was undermine Paul's authority by attacking his credibility.
3. So in these early chapters, Paul spends considerable time making sure the Corinthians are clear on his motives, on *why* he preached the Gospel.

### II. TEXT

#### A. V. 14a

#### **14 For the love of Christ compels us,**

1. Far from the self-serving ambition he was accused by his critics of, what moved Paul was love.
  2. "Compel" means to hold something together in an unbreakable bond.
  3. What kept Paul *glued* to his calling as an apostle, *cemented* to his task of proclaiming the Good News was the love of Christ.
  4. Meaning *both* the love Jesus had for him, & he had in return for Jesus.
  5. Paul's love was an *echo* of the love God had first shown him.
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6. You see, it *begins* with God, not us.
    - a. 1 John 4:10 says –  
**In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son [as the atoning sacrifice] for our sins.**
    - b. Romans 5:8 –  
**God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**
  - 6a. God loved us long before we cared a whit for Him. It was God's love that changed us from enemies to friends.
  - 6b. During the American Revolution, there was a Baptist pastor in Pennsylvania named Peter Miller who was a friend of George Washington's.
    - a. Living in the same town as Miller was a man named Michael Wittman who made it his goal in life to make Miller miserable.
    - b. He did everything he could to humiliate & disgrace the poor guy.
    - c. One day Wittman was arrested for treason & sentenced to die.
    - d. Pastor Miller travelled 70 miles by foot to Philadelphia to plead for

- Wittman's life.
- e. General Washington said, "No Peter, I cannot grant you the life of your friend."
  - f. Peter Miller exclaimed, "My friend! He's the bitterest enemy I have."
  - g. "What?" said Washington, "You walked 70 miles to save the life of an enemy? That puts the matter in a different light. I'll grant his pardon."
  - h. Miller then took Wittman home, no longer an enemy, but a friend.
- 6c. 1 John 4:19 –
- We love Him because He first loved us.**
7. This is why we often say Christianity isn't religion.
    - a. Religion is man's attempt to *find significance* by reaching *up* to God
    - b. The Gospel flips that over, with the message of a God Who in love reaches *down* to lost men & women to *give* them significance.
  8. This is what grace is all about – It all begins with God, not us.
  9. Were it not for God's love, there'd be no hope.
  10. Because of His love, there is!
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11. God's love is what every man, woman & child is looking for.
    - a. It's the main desire, & the need of every heart, even among those who don't believe.
    - b. The theologian Augustine once said, "You have made us for Yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee."
  12. Our core longing, our one insatiable hunger, is to be loved, to be *wanted*.
    - a. Not *needed* → Wanted.
    - b. When we're *needed* by another, at first it feels good; it's gratifying, because it makes us feel important.
    - c. But it doesn't take long before we find we can't satisfy them.
    - d. It never ends, they need more than we have to give.
    - e. Over the years, I've talked with many couples who after a few years of marriage run into trouble.
      - 1) They thought their mate was going to make them happy.
      - 2) They thought marriage would somehow be the key to that illusive thing called *satisfaction*.
      - 3) But after a few years the happiness they thought their mate would provide didn't arrive.
      - 4) They feel cheated – the one *looked to for it* feels like all the life has been sucked out of them.
      - 5) Our counsel to such couples is – what you're looking for in your mate, no human being can provide – only God, only Jesus.
      - 6) That longing was placed in you so that you'd seek till you find it's solution in Him.
  13. You see, we don't long to be **NEEDED** – we want to be **WANTED**.
    - a. *Need* means some *lack* in the one who needs.
    - b. *Want* speaks of worth *placed in* the one wanted.
    - c. So we long to be wanted, *apart* from need.
    - d. And the supreme evidence of being wanted is when we're wanted so much the one who wants us *sacrifices & struggles* to obtain us.

- When I say that, probably *every woman* here says a hearty “Amen!!!”
- e. This is why we love the classic stories of the guy who works hard for years to obtain his bride.
    - 1) Like Jacob & Rachel.
    - 2) The tales of the knights who endure arduous ordeals to win a maiden.
    - 3) You see, **we are that maiden** – we are the damsel in distress.
    - 4) Jesus is the courageous hero, our knight in shining armor Whose paid the price & slain the dragon to rescue us.
  - f. He doesn't **NEED** us – He's God & needs nothing.
  - g. But He does **WANT** us.
14. Do you hear that? God *wants* you.
    - a. He wants you so much, He values you so highly –
    - b. He went to the cross & paid the ultimate price.
  15. This compelled Paul to endure a lot of hardship so that others would learn of it.
  16. God's love for him was so strong it echoed back in a life that couldn't stop making it known to anyone who'd listen, & even to those who wouldn't.
  17. His life was an *echo* of the voice of God.
  18. If you pluck one of these guitar strings & hold it close to another guitar, without even touching, the string on the other guitar will begin to vibrate & play a harmonic.
  19. That's what we're to be – the *harmony* to God's *melody*.
    - a. That's why we're being conformed to the image of Christ,
    - b. Why the Spirit is tuning us to His likeness. = It's the music of heaven.

#### **B. V. 14b-15**

***14 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if [since] One died for all, then all died; 15 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.***

1. The love of Christ had Paul to alter his entire perspective on life.
2. The Corinthians accused him of preaching & teaching for self-serving ends.
  - a. His critics said he used the Gospel as a mask while seeking to take advantage of them.
  - b. They said he had secret, ulterior motives.
3. He clears the air once & for all.
  - a. Far from being self-serving, Paul understood following Christ means ***dying to self***.
  - b. That's what Jesus had made clear – Luke 9:23

***“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”***

- c. The phrase “take up your cross” didn't mean putting on a piece of jewelry. It wasn't an exercise.
  - 1) It meant only one thing only – DIE!
  - 2) Today we'd say,
    - *flip the switch on the electric chair.*
    - *push the plunger on the lethal injection.*
    - *Put your head in the noose & kick the chair away.*

4. Of course Jesus wasn't advocating suicide; He ended by saying, "***Follow Me.***"
5. The key is in the phrase, "deny your-self" – taking up your cross makes clear what He meant by that.
6. The life we're called to live isn't one of self-interest but God-interest.
7. Our life is to be centered on Jesus, not self.
8. Paul says it this way in Galatians 2:20

**I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.**

9. He says the same here.
10. But he adds the element of love to it because as 1 John 4 makes clear, God is love. When we're living this, love will be the product of our lives.
11. In his book *Written in Blood*, Robert Coleman tells the true story of a little boy whose sister needed a blood transfusion.
  - a. He'd had the same sickness as she a couple years before but had overcome it. His blood held the antibodies she was unable to produce.
  - b. Without the transfusion, she'd die.
  - c. The doctor explained the situation to him then asked if he'd give blood so his sister could get better.
  - d. He hesitated, his lower lip trembling, then smiled & said, "Sure, for my sister."
  - e. They put him on a gurney next to her. Their eyes met & he smiled.
  - f. Then the nurse slipped the needle into his arm & he watched while the tube filled with his blood.
  - g. When the ordeal was almost over, he asked, "Will I die soon?"
  - h. No one had told him they didn't need ALL his blood.
  - i. He thought he was going to die so his sister could live.
  - j. He was willing to because he loved her.

### **C. V. 16**

**<sup>16</sup> 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.**

1. This is one of those places where the Greek is difficult to carry over into English.
  2. He says because self has been ***reckoned*** null & void by our union with Christ, we no longer relate to others the way we did when self-interest ruled.
  3. Before we came to Christ, we viewed even ***Him*** from the wrong perspective.
  4. But no more because now He is our very life!
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5. It's such a blast watching how people's entire lives go through radical transformation when they come to Faith.
    - a. It's natural that someone who's lost is going to hold ideas & opinions that are self-serving.
    - b. Everything from their politics to personal tastes are set by the priorities & values of the world.
    - c. But once they repent & put their faith in Christ, the change begins.
    - d. They realize many of their ideas & values were backwards & upside down

- e. They see things through new eyes because “I” is no longer the main thing; “He” is.
6. In fact – that’s exactly what Paul says →

#### **D. V. 17**

**17 Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**

1. We love to quote this to new believers.
2. But probably all of us have read this & said to ourselves, “If only it were true.”
3. If the old things have passed away & all things have become new, then some of my new stuff looks, sounds, & feels an awful lot like the old stuff!
4. I know the Bible is true & this is the Word of God Who cannot lie, so why is my experience & this verse so far apart? Why the disconnect?
5. What Paul pens here is in fact true.
  - a. Because of what Christ has done, we stand in relation to God in a completely new position.
  - b. All that we’d done was forgiven & forgotten. All that tied us to the Fall was severed & put away.
  - c. Just as Adam stood before God in the moment after he took his first breath, so when we’re born again, we stand before God as *new* men & women.
6. But we don’t stand *just* before God, *yet*.
  - a. We’re still on earth.
  - b. Our spiritual ties to Adam are severed, but we still live in Adam’s fallen world.
7. The key to *uniting* the truth of our *position before God* with our *experience in this world* lies in 2 words – *in Christ*.

**Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ,**

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. In**

1. The key for understanding all of Paul’s theology in the NT lies right here, in these words.
2. Faith for Paul wasn’t just intellectual assent to a set of facts.
3. Faith was *movement* into a relationship of absolute trust in Christ.
4. It was a fundamental change in a person’s whole way of life.
5. A famous tightrope walker once stretched his rope over a portion of Niagara Falls, then went back & forth several times, making look like a walk in the park.
  - a. The crowd applauded its approval.
  - b. Then he upped the stakes & went across carrying a large sack of potatoes.
  - c. Again, he made the trip over & across with ease.
  - d. He asked the crowd, “Who believes I could carry a person across?”
  - e. Everyone agreed he could do it easily.
  - f. He said, “Who wants to volunteer?” *No one* offered.
6. That’s not faith. Faith steps forward at the offer of Christ & says, “I trust my eternal soul to Jesus.”
7. “I know the best thing I can do is to give up *my little life*, for the great, good

- life of Christ in me. I trust Him to carry me safely home.”
8. Such faith hides our life ***In*** Him, & He ***in*** us.
  9. When we live ***consciously in that place***, then the newness Paul refers to here becomes our experience.
  10. I quoted Augustine a moment ago.
    - a. Before he came to faith, he got caught up in some pretty nasty stuff.
    - b. Not long after his conversion, he saw a woman with whom he used to cavort.
    - c. Thinking to renew their old behavior she sashayed toward him calling out his name.
    - d. He turned and ran. She called after him, “Augustine, it is I.”
    - e. He shouted back over his shoulder, “Yes, but it is not I.”

### **B. How?**

1. No one can tell you **HOW** to do die to self. There’s ***no technique*** to it – you just do it.
2. You make the choice to get out of the way & let Christ live through you.

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3. Just as there is deep within us the desire to be wanted, there’s another longing God planted in us that wants to exchange our lives for the life of Christ.
4. We see it in the universal longing ***to be someone else***; to live someone else’s life.
  - a. That’s why books, movies, television, & fantasy are so popular & powerful.
  - b. They offer the ***vicarious*** experience of someone else’s life.
  - c. The world loves to make celebrity of someone else’s life because people want to have those they look up to, then strive to be like.
  - d. Reality TV is a hit because everyday, common people get a shot at celebrity, at fame, at ***“getting a life.”***
5. Though sin has perverted it, this longing to live a different life is deep & universal because in fact, it’s ***what*** we were created for.
6. We weren’t created to exist for self. Our life comes from & is for God.
7. The greatest capacity we possess is the power of choice.
8. And the supreme choice is to give ourselves to God & ask Him to live in & thru us.