

**Paul's Driving Motivations
2 Corinthians 5:11-13**

In 1926 fresh-out-of Harvard news correspondent John Roots sat in a waterfront room in Canton. With him was a man named Mikhail Borodin a communist revolutionary who was at that time acting as an advisor to Chou-En-Lai the first premier of the People's Republic of China.

These men began to talk about the presence of Christian missionaries in China. In this conversation Borodin the communist revolutionary confessed to the correspondent that he had at one time been fascinated with the New Testament and most particularly with the Apostle Paul.

And why was he so fascinated with the Apostle Paul? He was fascinated because when he read the accounts of Paul, he saw in Paul a true revolutionary, someone who was willing to totally sell himself out for what he believed in.

Borodin, himself a revolutionary who would later die in a Siberian labor camp, certainly knew the real thing when he saw it and he, though unable to see validity of Paul's cause, was able to identify in Paul that same the revolutionary fervor that he so admired.

And where does this story about Mikhail Borodin and his perspective of the Apostle Paul and Paul's revolutionary fervor lead us?

This story leads us back to our study of **2 Corinthians** and to a new text, **2 Corinthians 5:11-15**.

Let me now read these particular verses for you and see what they say? And I will be reading from the New American Standard Bible. And what do they say? They say this. **“Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. (12) We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart. (13) For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. (14) For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all**

died; (15) and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”
So these are the verses that we will begin to examine this morning.

And what will be the question that we will be seeking to answer? What drove Paul to live a revolutionary lifestyle?

And what is my hope for this message as we seek to answer this question? My hope is that as we consider the driving motivations of Paul's life, may it lead us, when we have considered these motivations, to adopt a similar revolutionary lifestyle where our personal comforts will become far less important to us than our primary concern, which would hopefully be serving Christ and advancing His work.

So, what was Paul's first driving motivation as outlined by Paul within our present text? Paul's first driving motivation was the fear of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:11-13). So now let us begin our examination of **2 Corinthians 5:11-13** and see if this is not so.

We will begin by looking at **verse 11**. And how does this verse begin? It begins with these words, **“Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.”**

Paul had just spoken to the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 5:9-10** about having to appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that he might be recompensed for the deeds done in his body whether good or bad.

Now was that a big deal to Paul? Was it a big deal to Paul that he would have to one-day stand before the judgment seat of Christ? Absolutely! He was not in any way taking the prospect of having to appear before Christ's judgment seat lightly. We know this because it was the prospect of this very thing that led Paul to make it his ambition to always live his life as pleasing to the Lord whether at home or absent based on **2 Corinthians 5:9-10**. Therefore we have to conclude that for Paul to appear before the judgment seat of Christ was a big deal.

Was this because he feared that when he stood before Christ's judgment that he might find himself condemned? Was this why Paul, in light of the

judgment seat of Christ, made it his ambition to always live his life as pleasing to the Lord? No, This was not the reason!

We know this was not the reason because Paul in **1 Corinthians 3:10-15** stated very clearly that the purpose of the judgment seat of Christ in respect to His church was not to condemn but to reward.

But even though Paul did not fear condemnation, as one who had exercised faith in Christ, he did continue to fear the Lord. And because he continued to fear the Lord, the thought of one day standing before His judgment seat was in fact a very big deal to him. And it was such a big deal that Paul in essence told his readers in **2 Corinthians 5:11** that his ongoing and continuing fear of the Lord was a primary motivation for him to always live his life in a manner pleasing to the Lord, which in this particular verse expressed itself with him seeking to persuade men.

Isn't this what we see in **verse 11**? And again what does it say? It says this. **“Therefore [reflecting on what I have just told you about the judgment seat of Christ and], knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.”**

So, what did Paul mean when he referred to the “fear of the Lord?” When Paul referred to “the fear of the Lord” he was talking about his reverential awe of Christ, knowing that Christ is the judge and His judgments matter (Galatians 6:7-8).

Let me read for you **Galatians 6:7-8**. And what do these verses say? They say this. **“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. (8) For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”** And how will God exercise His judgments? He will exercise His judgments through Christ. How do we know this? We know this because Christ said so. Listen to His words in **John 5:22-23**. And what did He say? He said this. **“For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, (23) so that all will honor the Son even they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.”** So, what is the message of the Scriptures? Don't mess with God's Son for He is not someone to be trifled with since God the Father has entrusted all judgment to Him.

So let me ask you this question. Do we believe this? If we do then we should fear Him, giving Him the reverential awe that is due Him, knowing that He is the judge and His judgments matter. And if we respond in any other way other than with fear, or in other words with reverential awe, then it certainly should raise the question in our minds as to whether we even know Him.

But if we know Him and if we are aware that He will in fact judge us at His judgment seat and that His judgment matters, we will fear Him and will therefore of course seek to live our lives in a manner pleasing to Him very much like Paul did.

So, what does Paul say next in **2 Corinthians 5:11**? He shared with his readers how his fear of the Lord had impacted one very specific area of his life. So, what was this one specific area of his life that he chose to highlight?

So let us continue to read the verse and see what it says. And what does it say? It says this. **“Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.”** So, what was the one specific area of his life that Paul chose to highlight as being impacted by his fear of the Lord? It was his commitment to persuading men. Isn't this what the verse says, **“Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.”**

But now we come to a very important question. What did Paul mean by this? What did Paul mean when he told his readers that because of his fear of the Lord that he and his associates were persuading men?

I know that some of you might think that Paul is referring to persuading men about the truth of gospel, which of course we find Paul actually doing on numerous occasions such as in **Acts 17:4; 18:4; 19:26; 26:28; 28:23**. But this is not what Paul is seeking to persuade men to here in this context, at least not directly. So if he is not trying to persuade men about the truth of gospel here in this particular text, then what is he trying to do?

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:11, was seeking to persuade the Corinthians as to the fact of his personal integrity. This is what he meant.

Paul had been appointed by Christ to be an apostle to the Gentiles. But his opponents were now threatening his effectiveness through their false charges and were disrupting the very people that Christ had called him to reach.

Therefore Paul believed he had no other alternative, because of his fear of the Lord and knowing what God had called him to do, than to seek persuade the Corinthians of his integrity in order to protect them, those very individuals that Paul had been sent by Christ to serve.

I believe that we will see this very clearly as we continue to read the verse. So, what is the next thing that Paul told the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 5:11**? This is what he told them. **“But we are made manifest to God.”** Paul certainly, by this phrase, is addressing some kind of concern in respect to himself and his associates.

In other words, though certain Corinthians might have been questioning Paul’s personal integrity and the personal integrity of those ministering with Him, the inference of Paul’s words in **2 Corinthians 5:11** was that God was not one of those.

And how did Paul know this? He knew this based on the testimony of his conscience as we have already seen in **2 Corinthians 1:12**. And what had he said in **2 Corinthians 1:12**? This is what he said. **“For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.”** So did Paul believe that these attacks against him by his opponents were justified? Absolutely not!

So, what did Paul say next? This is what he said. **“Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God [in other words, we are made manifest to God as men of integrity as testified to by our conscience. And then he goes on to say]; and I hope that we are made manifest (as men of integrity) also in your consciences.”**

Paul, in Corinthians 5:11, was in effect putting before the Corinthians a choice. They could either listen to the testimony of their consciences in respect to his integrity or they could listen to the lies of his critics. This was in essence what Paul was doing here in **2 Corinthians 5:12**. And certainly this was not an unreasonable challenge that Paul put before the Corinthians.

He hoped, based on the extended time he had spent with them, that when they responded to this challenge that they would remember how he had

proclaimed not himself but Christ as Lord and himself as their servant, as we saw in **2 Corinthians 4:5**; that they would remember how he had called them to be reconciled to God, as we will see in **2 Corinthians 5:20** and finally how he had done so with holiness and godly sincerity as we saw in **2 Corinthians 1:12-14**.

And again what was Paul's hope in providing the Corinthians this challenge in **2 Corinthians 5:11** to consider their consciences rather than the attacks upon him by his opponents? His hope in issuing the challenge was that as the Corinthians looked to their consciences, that the moral faculties of their consciences would exonerate him and declare him to be a man of integrity. And again this was not for his sake but for their sake and for the Lord's sake.

Now having expressed himself in this way to the Corinthians, Paul was well aware that his critics would very likely accuse him of boasting. So most likely anticipating this charge led him to say what he said in **2 Corinthians 5:12**. So now let me read this verse for you. And what does it say? It says this. **“We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart.”**

So how does he begin the verse he begins with these words, **“We are not again commending ourselves to you.”** He begins the verse with a denial of the anticipated charge.

And then what does Paul say? He says this. **“We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart.”** So, what did Paul provide the Corinthians?

Paul, anticipating that his critics would charge him with boasting based on what he said in 2 Corinthians 5:11, provided the Corinthians some direction in terms of how they should answer his critics in respect to this charge.

And let us look at the verse and see if this is not so. And what did Paul say? He said this. **“We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart.”**

So, what was the answer that Paul provided them? The answer that Paul provided them was based on what he believed was true of his critics in contrast to what he believed was true of him. And what was that? Paul believed that his opponents were more concerned with externals rather than the heart. Isn't that what Paul in essence was communicating when he, in speaking of his opponents, said, **“Who takes pride in appearance and not in heart?”**

Paul's opponents were all about appearance. What they were concerned about was oratorical eloquence, rhetorical excellence, flowery letters of commendation, and impressive personal displays. But this was not what Paul was concerned about. Paul was concerned whether he in his heart was fully devoted to the Lord and his service to others. And it was this contrast that Paul noted at the end of **2 Corinthians 5:12** that he hoped would provide the Corinthians with the answer they needed to give to their critics.

In other words, Paul wanted the Corinthians to be at a place in their lives where they could proudly declare to his critics that they believed Paul's heart to be pure and that his ministry was solely motivated by his love for God and for them.

And then what does Paul say in **2 Corinthians 5:13**? This is what Paul said. **“For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you.”**

In this verse we get an insight into Paul. So let me ask you a question. Were there times in Paul's life, because of his love for the Lord and his love for others that he would become so passionate that people in viewing his outbursts might think that he had lost his mind? And the answer is absolutely, yes!

The root of the word translated “beside ourselves” literally means “outside of oneself,” or in other words “being out of one's mind.”

And I believe that the specific case in point that Paul had in his mind when he wrote these words was the “severe letter” that he had just written to them prior to this epistle. A letter so pointed and so hard hitting and so passionate that he knew that there were some in Corinth who thought he was losing his mind, a perspective that Paul's opponents were to use against him.

So let me ask you this question. Was Paul trying to persuade men, more specifically the Corinthians, of his integrity? And what is the answer? Yes! In fact, he was at times so passionate in defending his integrity that certain individuals had thought he had lost his senses, or in other words he had lost his mind. And what was at the very core of his passionate defense? His fear of the Lord and knowing that one day that he would have to stand before Christ's judgment seat to be recompensed for the deeds done in his body whether good or bad, and he knew that this judgment mattered. And this leads us to our prayer.

May God give us the grace to fear Him so that we would be highly motivated to live our lives in a manner pleasing to Him.