

THE MOTIVES OF GOSPEL OUTREACH

2 Corinthians 5:9-21

Last week we reached a halfway point in our journey through the gospel of Mark and it seemed like a good time to step away for a Sunday and focus on something that our church leadership has had its mind on for about a year now and that is **gospel outreach**. One of the things that Jesus said last week was that if you lose your life for His sake and for the gospel's sake, you'll actually find your life. And His sake and the gospel's sake go hand in hand. **To live for Christ is to live for the propagation of, or spreading of, the gospel as well** because the gospel is the good news of His death and burial and resurrection for our sins and anyone who believes will be born again to new and everlasting life through Him. And if that's true, that Jesus is the Christ and only through faith in Him is anyone saved, then what else is more important than that? What else should be a greater priority in our lives than to die to our own agendas and start seeking how God wants to use us to get the gospel out to people?

And I'm glad that our church leadership hasn't forgotten that. That we have right now a vision to get the gospel out and into our community. You know, we never want this church to become so inwardly focused that we just sort of become a country club or have a Field of Dreams mentality where, "If you build it, they will come." Because that's not what Jesus commanded us to do. His command is **G.O. – maybe short for Gospel Outreach!** You know, we can do everything right as a church by having good preaching and good music and good nursery – the big 3 that we want to do well so that folks can experience an enjoyable time of worship here. But at the same time if we don't evangelize our community, or our circles of influence – friends, family, neighbors, coworkers – the reality is we tend to fossilize. Evangelize or fossilize.

And as we get into this topic this morning, I want to ask you a question: What is it that keeps you from sharing the gospel or getting involved in gospel outreach? Is it that you don't know what the clear gospel message is? Don't know how to share it? You don't want to feel the sting of someone responding negatively? Some of you might say something like, "I don't have the gift of evangelism but I certainly have the guilt of it." One thing I don't want us to take away from today is that we all have to be Billy Graham's. I think he had the gift of evangelism. But nevertheless, guilt is not the best motivator and we should all be involved in getting the gospel out to those around us.

So whatever it is that you think hinders you, take that feeling or thought or false motivation and replace it with biblical motivation this morning from the Word of God. Because in one or another, every single one of those hindrances to personal gospel outreach is going to be addressed by the apostle Paul. We're looking at proper motivations for gospel outreach today based on the motivations of what many would consider the greatest missionary of all time. What motivated that man in his heart to give what seems like every ounce of his being to reaching folks with gospel? We see it in 2 Corinthians 5:9-21.

"Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. 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. For if we are beside ourselves it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you.

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 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. Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come.

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Let’s rewind to verse 9 and begin making our way through this text.

I. **MOTIVATION #1 – HEAVENLY REWARDS AND THE TERRIBLE FATE OF MAN WITHOUT CHRIST. (VV. 9-11)**

Paul’s aim is to please the Lord because he knows he’s going to stand before God. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may be recompensed [or receive back] for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” We are all going to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. This word for judgment seat is the word *bematos* from which we get the term Bema Seat. And the bema seat back in Paul’s day would have been a raised platform in town. One of the events that went on in this area of Corinth where the church was located that Paul was writing too, is the **Isthmian Games**, sort of like the Olympic games. They’re called that because Corinth is an isthmus travel corridor geographically. Rather than sailing all the way around Greece, they would travel through Corinth, the neck of Greece (isthmus lit. means *neck*).

And so the main thought of a judgment seat for them would be a place of rewards. And that’s how it should be viewed as Christians. It’s not a matter of eternal destiny, but a place of heavenly rewards based on how we lived for Christ – dealing with our works and service. For the believer, remember, **there is no condemnation in Christ** (Rom. 8:1). We are not destined for wrath. And so any penalties for not serving Christ in this life would then be limited to loss of reward and good works rewarded.

Now most people read something like this, they misunderstand the judgment of God as a pair of scales where if you’re good deeds outweigh your bad, you’re good to go and God lets you into heaven rather than hell. But it’s actually more than that. Our works, and the motives behind our works, actually reveal whether or not we had faith in Christ in the first place because He knows the motives behind our works or deeds. And if our works or good deeds, are us trying to be good enough or be righteous, we’ve missed the point and the motives are wrong. Romans says, the one who doesn’t work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness (4:5).

So we aren’t judged with a pair of scales but whether or not we had faith in Christ and the works we do for Christ are also going to be tested. You can read about this more in 1 Cor. 3:1-15. Christ is the foundation and then we start to build on Him. And we build by our works with gold, silver and precious stones or with wood, hay and stubble. And these will be tested with fire and we all know that wood, hay and stubble would burn up. And so for our works not to burn up and for them to last, we have to have proper motives. What are our motives? Are they biblical? Were we faithful with the gospel message? Did we serve for His glory or our own glory? Paul brings this up because in Corinth there

were false teachers who were merchandising the gospel and selling it. But to God, our works are manifest – laid bare – known fully. 1 Cor. 3:15 says, “If any man’s work which he has built remains, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

This judgment can sort of remind us of a graduation ceremony. Every believer graduates but some receive honors like Christ’s praise and greater rewards that others who weren’t faithful, won’t receive. The overwhelming emotion will be joy, but some may lose rewards that they could’ve had, had they lived for Christ. But the point needs to be taken that how we live now, matters.

❖ **Christ rewards those who serve Him.**

The thought of standing before God someday should move us. And 1 Peter 4:17 says if God judges His people, what will be the outcome of those who don’t obey the gospel? Who haven’t trusted Christ? Revelation also speaks of a Great White Throne judgment where unbelievers are judged and are cast in to the lake of fire, the eternal hell.

If you haven’t trusted Christ, it doesn’t matter how many good works you’ve done. And so to share the gospel in light of judgment is not guilt but **conviction based on reality and obedience and faithfulness**. It is a gracious thing to share the gospel with people who will spend eternity somewhere. And someday, even if they don’t receive the gospel, they’ll at least have to appreciate your attempt. Verse 11 says, “Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.”

One more point I want to make is that we’re going to look a little crazy if we live for Christ. That’s what folks were saying about Paul – he’s beside himself (v. 13)! So expect that the more you love Christ and the more you serve Him, the crazier you look.

❖ **Christians who serve Christ will always seem strange to the world.**

But Paul says, if I look crazy and beside myself in my ministry for Christ, then good! Because it is for your sake. One of things that gets in the way of gospel outreach is that we just love ourselves and our reputation too much. We don’t want to look strange. But Paul here says I’m willing to look foolish for Christ, because that means in reality, I have a sound mind operating according to the truth. You know, the famous evangelist D. L. Moody was called “Crazy Moody” by many. But we don’t remember the name of the many – just Moody’s.

II. **MOTIVATOR #2 – THE LOVE OF CHRIST COMPELS US TO LIVE FOR HIM. (VV. 14-15)**

Paul says, “For the love of Christ controls [or compels] us, having concluded this, that one 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.” That’s pretty simple isn’t it? This is the main motivator I think. When we understand His love for us, we love Him and want to serve Him. So His love begins to govern our actions. **The idea is that of a people who so love Christ that they overflow in their love for Him and for others.**

When you start to grasp what Jesus Christ really did for you that you don’t deserve, and His love for you, it changes you and you begin to live for Him. This is **one of the reasons why He died – so that through Him we would really know what it’s like to live** – to take us out of this miserable selfish state of only living for ourselves and to live through Him and for Him. When we place our faith in Christ, there is a real identity with Him in that we die and are raised with Him to walk in the newness of life as His disciples. He gives us power over sin and power to bear fruit like through our spiritual gifts.

So it's not a fear of condemnation but a new love that compels us. Our old and sinful desires begin to be replaced by new desires. It's a **new life** with a **new identity** and **new mission purpose** as His disciples. And that's important to point out because evangelism is just a step towards discipleship.

- **The goal or result of evangelism is not just conversion, but discipleship.**

The immediate intent of discipleship is to see someone converted by the Holy Spirit but **the ultimate intent is to see them become mature, disciple-makers who live for Him as well!**

But if we want to bear much fruit, we've got to learn to live out that death. Only when one seed dies, being buried in the ground, can it bear much fruit. We have to learn to die to our agenda and live for Christ as well.

We see another motivation though in verses 16-17 where Paul starts talking about new creations.

III. **MOTIVATION #3 – THE DEEP NEED OF MAN TO BE BORN AGAIN (VV. 16-17)**

“Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come.” What Paul is saying is that we don't just see people for who they are on the outside – not by the shade of their skin or nationality – but as whether or not they've been born again by the Spirit of God and become new creations. Everyone who has not believed in Christ is still dead spiritually and unless they receive Christ, receiving the Holy Spirit then, they will stay that way. So we see people as saved or unsaved, new creations or not, born again or not born again. That tells us something doesn't it? That eternal life begins now and not just when we die? He makes us new creations positionally and practically.

- ❖ **We see people as born again or not born again. New creations or not.**

But with that being true, we could care less about the shade of your skin. We're all made in the image of God and all need to be born again because until we are, we're all condemned already. But we John 3:17 says He didn't come to condemn the world but that sinners might be saved through Him.

- ❖ **We see people as sinners for whom Christ died.**

We have the heart God has for them – not to condemn – but to save!

- ❖ **We see Jesus differently – as the Son of God who takes away the sins of the world.**

A lot of folks think Jesus is a good teacher or moral person or just another spiritual icon. Paul thought he was just an average man once too, but now he says, “we know Him in this way no longer.” The reality is He's not a baby in a manger anymore but a risen Savior seated once again in all His glory with which He had before He even came into the world. Look at verse 21 – “He knew no sin” because He isn't the average Joe. He's God in the flesh and because He's God in the flesh and knew no sin, He could then be our perfect substitute and sacrifice for our sin. The Bible says that, “the wages of sin is death,” and so someone had to pay for our sin before a holy God. And that was only God Himself, who stepped out of Heaven to become a man to pay for man's sin.

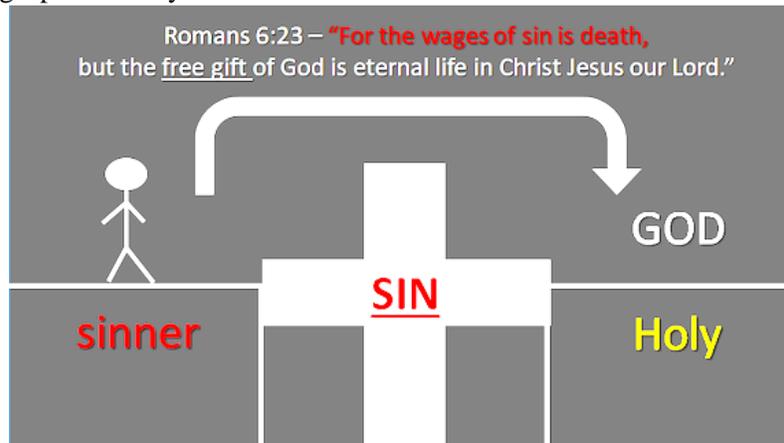
“He [the Father] made Him [the Son] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” That right there is the gospel message folks. If you want to go to heaven, you don't just need a better version of yourself, you need a Savior to pay the penalty for sin that you couldn't pay. You need a perfect righteousness and that only comes to the one who trust in Christ, who took upon Himself, the sins of the world.

If sharing the gospel seems too hard or complicated to you, just remember these 6 simple words: We are saved **by grace through faith in Christ**.

- **By grace** = meaning salvation is free.

- **Through faith** = faith (trust) always has an object, just like you're trusting that chair you're sitting on. What are we trusting in? In Christ...
- **In Christ** = we trust in Christ because He's the One who died for sins and by trusting in Him we are born again by the Holy and Spirit and made new creations.

That's pretty easy isn't it? I like to personally draw it out for people through the bridge illustration because people can see the gospel that way.



And to just demonstrate to people that it's not your message but God's you can show them a few Bible verses. Consider memorizing a few like verse 21 there.

- John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”
- Romans 5:8 – “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”
- Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- 1 John 5:11-12 – “And the testimony of God is this: He who has the Son has the life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”

That's the awesome news we take to people.

IV. **MOTIVATION #4 - WE ARE PRIVILEGED TO BE ENTRUSTED WITH THE GREATEST MESSAGE IN THE WORLD. (VV. 18-21)**

In a day and age where the news is so bad that you have to guard how much time you spend watching it, so it doesn't ruin your day and your soul, we have the opportunity of telling people **the greatest news imaginable** – that they can be reconciled to God through Christ. Paul calls the gospel here the word of reconciliation. It's a big word but it's simple.

Reconciliation = going from a state of war to a state of peace. It's a change in the relationship between two people – you were once at odds but now there's forgiveness and fellowship. The sin barrier is gone.

And then he describes us as ambassadors. “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us.”

Ambassador – a representative of a nation or kingdom.

What ambassadors do is they live on foreign soil representing their kingdom, kind of like how we have embassies in other countries. And as members of God's kingdom, we are His ambassadors in this

foreign country called the world. And I think that's important for us to remember because for one, foreigners are always a little different and strange. They speak another language and that sort of thing but then think that if someone rejects the gospel, they don't reject you ultimately, but Christ, the One we just represent.

And I'll just say that I think a lot of the negative reactions can be held back by just sharing the gospel properly. We're not out to condemn but to save but some Christians think it's their job to condemn when they're already condemned. I think if we want to see people saved, then we're going have a Christlike love for them. We'll be gentle and considerate and compassionate and caring. **Share the gospel in such a way that they know you really care and you're still going to be there for them even if they don't become a Christian immediately.** You're there for their questions if they have any and if you are around them a lot, you can become a steady Christlike presence in their lives they can trust.

Warren Wiersbe said as a young pastor he used to be a little embarrassed to make visits and confront people with the claims of Christ but then he noted that when he started thinking rightly, he saw it as a privilege, as an ambassador of the King of kings. There's nothing to be embarrassed about. What's remarkable to me is that God can make His appeal through us. God can use His Word through us to make His appeal to them. And should someone believe and be saved, what greater joy is there?

And I've been praying that God would His appeal through me this morning. As a pastor-teacher like Timothy, part of my job is to do the work of an evangelist and "beg you on behalf of Christ, [to] be reconciled to God." I can tell you right now from experience that what Paul is saying here is not a joke. He is not crazy. If you will confess your sin to God and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin, He will come into your life through the Holy Spirit and indwell you and make you a new creation. And your life will be changed by it.

To receive the free gift of salvation, just believe in Christ. And in your heart through prayer, express that to God. If you would like to receive Christ this morning, pray with me, *"God I know I'm a sinner and that my sin offends you and because it I deserve judgment and to be separated from you, but I thank you for coming into this world as a man and dying for my sins to pay the penalty for my sin that I could not pay on my own. Today, I want to accept Jesus as my Savior and His perfect righteousness in place of my unrighteousness. And help me, by the Holy Spirit's power and Your Word, to live for You. And it's in Jesus' name, I pray, amen."* If you sincerely prayed that prayer with me in your heart, the Bible says that you have eternal life. 1 John 5:11-12 says, "Those who have the Son have the life." John 3:16 says you have everlasting life."

You know, the apostle Paul knew there was no greater joy than seeing people come to Jesus and live for Him. For Paul, that was his joy and brought him life. Paul, referring to Christ's coming, says this, "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation...?" Who do you think he'd be referring too? Jesus, right? He is our hope and joy and crown of exultation, right? That's actually not what Paul says here. He says, "Is it not even you... [referring to the Thessalonians]... For you are our glory and joy." And in chapter 3:8, "For now we live, if you are standing firm in the Lord." The idea of the Thessalonians knowing Jesus and walking in Him completed his joy in Christ and would be a joy and crown at Jesus' coming. I find that amazing and I pray that through our witness, others might be joined with Christ on that day as well when He comes to get us.

But we have to reach out. And for starters, remember to **pray** for those around you (work, home, neighborhood). **Invite** them to church or church events. **Give them some gospel literature** and ask them to read it or discuss it with you.

And I'm excited to say that we have some new literature tools to use:

1. The c-card tracts – we were hoping would get here by today but will be arriving this week.
2. The gospel eggs and tract – available on the Connection Center.
3. The *Share Jesus Without Fear* study starting next Sunday with Wayne Fisher.