

Introduction

1. Throughout the first seven chapters, Paul is defending himself and his ministry against false accusations and mistreatment by the Corinthians
2. Throughout the process we have learned a number of things:
 - a. The role that suffering and comfort play in our lives
 - b. When Paul defended his change in plans, we learned the value of maintaining a clear conscience before God and men and the importance of being trustworthy in what we say
 - c. When Paul encouraged the Corinthians to forgive a repentant brother, we learned how one person's sin can affect the entire church body, the value and purpose of church discipline, and how love and forgiveness should be expressed when repentance is demonstrated
 - d. We also learned about Paul's adequacy as a servant of God, in contrast to the false teachers:
3. In our passage today Paul is still defending himself but now reveals his motivations and influences behind his actions—and each of these sets Paul apart from the false teachers who had brought false charges against Paul and attempted to poison his relationship with the Corinthians

A. Paul was motivated by the fear of the Lord (READ 11-12)

1. A hallmark of Paul's ministry was his passion for persuading (lit. convincing) people of the truth of the Gospel and their need for Jesus Christ:
 - a. Acts 18:4: **"And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks."**
 - b. Acts 19:8: **"And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God."**
 - c. Acts 19:26: **"You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all."**
2. Paul's motivation for persuading men is found here in our first verse: **"knowing the fear of the Lord"**:
 - a. The fear of the Lord to which Paul refers is explained in the immediately preceding verse (10): **"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."**
 - b. Knowing that he would ultimately face Christ and have to give account of his actions, Paul made it his ambition to please the Lord (v. 9)
 - c. However, knowing that all men would face Christ also motivated Paul to preach the Gospel to others and persuade them of their need for a Savior
 - d. Paul hoped that this motivation—the fear of the Lord—would be evident to the Corinthians and serve as a means for them to defend him against the false teachers (11b-15):
 - 1) It was evident to God, but he hoped it would be evident to them (11b): **"but we are made manifest (known) to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences."**

- 2) They had every reason to be proud of Paul (12): **“We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us...”**
 - 3) This should have served as their defense to the claims of the false teachers against Paul: (12b): **“...so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart.”**
3. Practical Application:
- a. Paul hoped that his fear of the Lord was evident to his readers, and would serve as their defense against the false claims of those who were accusing Paul
 - b. My question for us is whether or not others see the same fear of the Lord in us
 - c. Unfortunately, many Christians (including me, at times) lose sight of the fact that someday we will have to stand before Christ and give an account of our life and actions (Paul says so right here in chapter 5)
 - d. Do you think if we kept this in the forefront of our minds that it might change some of our behavior?
 - e. I am keenly aware of some of my weaknesses and sins, and also know that I am more susceptible to stumble and fall when I either forget or ignore the fact that someday I’m going to stand before Jesus and might have some explaining to do
 - f. How about you?

B. Paul was controlled by Christ’s love (13-15)

1. Regardless of what the false teachers may have claimed regarding him, Paul did what he did for God and for others (13): **“For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you.”**
 - a. In all but two instances in the NT, the Greek word *existemi* is translated as to be amazed or astonished
 - b. One exception is Mark 3:21 where it is translated as **“has lost His senses”** (in reference to Jesus)
 - c. The other exception is here where most translations render it in a similar sense as **“beside ourselves”** or **“out of our minds”** because it is contrasted with **“sound mind”** in the next phrase
 - d. However, it is unclear what Paul means by **“if we lost our senses, it is for God”**
 - e. He may have been responding to an accusation that he had lost his senses or was out of his mind as a means to discredit him
2. Unlike the false teachers who prided themselves on external things (e.g. like **“appearance”**), Paul was motivated by Christ’s love (this is the SECOND motivation; 14-15): **“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.”**
 - a. The word for control here has many meanings including to control, constrain, guard, crowd around, press upon—the general idea here is that the love of Christ so gripped Paul that it controlled or compelled his behavior
 - b. There are two ways to understand **“love of Christ”** here:
 - 1) Objectively: The first way is to understand it as Paul’s love of Christ (e.g. he was compelled because he loved Christ)

- 2) Subjectively: The second is that it refers to Christ's love for us (e.g. Paul was compelled because Christ loves us)
- c. While either option is a valid interpretation, the second option (that Paul was controlled by the fact that Jesus loves us) is better supported by the context since Paul specifically refers to how Christ loved us:
 - 1) He died for all men (14a): **"One died for all..."**
 - 2) Those that accept this gift have died in Him (14b): **"Therefore all died."** (see Colossians 3:3 and Galatians 2:20)
 - 3) And He did this so that we might no longer live for ourselves, but for Him (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"**
- d. This conviction that Christians are to live for Christ and not themselves was a controlling force in Paul's life:
 - 1) He not only chose to live for Christ himself
 - 2) But, he made it his life mission to persuade others to do the same—in fact, in Colossians 1:28 Paul wrote that it was his mission in life to **"present every man complete (mature) in Christ"**
 - 3) This was diametrically opposed to the motives of the false teachers who were in it for themselves or improper motives (see 2 Peter 2:1-22 to get a glimpse into their motives)
3. Practical Application:
 - a. What controls you?
 - b. What's the driving force behind what you do, how you live your life, the decisions you make, how you spend your time and your money, the things you value and what's important to you?
 - c. The driving force in Paul's life was what Christ did for us and it directly controlled how he lived his life, not just in those areas that impacted him personally but how he invested his life in the spread of the Gospel
 - d. I think Christianity has become a bit narcissistic here in the United States with the focus on self (e.g. what God can do for me, my likes and desires, my comfort, my prosperity, etc.)

Church Hunters video

- e. Have we fallen into the trap of being controlled by our own desires, goals and comforts, or does Christ's for us and others compel us to live in a way that promotes the Gospel?

C. Paul was influenced by a new and different perspective (than the false teachers; 16-17)

1. Paul has already described the false teachers as those who **"take pride in appearances and not in heart"** (12)—likely a reference to how they viewed themselves and others
2. To the contrary, Paul states this (16): **"Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even through we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him in this way no longer."**
 - a. To recognize someone according to the flesh means to see only what or who they are from a human and earthly perspective

- b. Paul writes that there was a time when he viewed Christ in this way (“**even though we have known Christ according to the flesh**”)
 - 1) This is a reference to the time before he was saved when he perceived Christ as merely another human religious leader and his followers as trouble-makers and criminals
 - 2) That all changed after Paul was saved when he came to realize Jesus was God’s Son and the promised Messiah
 - 3) He no longer saw Christ according to the flesh (“**yet now we know him in this way no longer**”)

- 3. In the same way, Paul no longer saw believers according to the flesh, but from a new and different perspective (17): “**Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.**”
 - a. There are two approaches or interpretations to this verse:
 - 1) The most common approach is called the OBJECTIVE view which is reflected in most English translations:
 - a) This view interprets this verse to mean that believers are new creatures or creations in Christ—the old person is gone and the new person is now here
 - b) If this was Paul’s intent, it appears he was saying that he no longer saw people according to their flesh, but rather as new creations in Christ (contrasted with the false teachers who only focused on the flesh)
 - 2) The second approach is called the SUBJECTIVE view which is reflected in the NIV: “**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!**” (NIV)
 - a) The NIV takes the Greek text a bit more literally (lit Greek. “**Therefore, if anyone in Christ, new creation! The old is gone, behold new has come**”)
 - b) This view indicates not that the Christian is a new creation (though that is true), but rather that Christians have a new perspective on creation; they see God’s creation in a new and different way than before
 - c) If this was Paul’s intent then it appears he was saying that unlike the false teachers who only saw people based on the flesh, Paul saw them differently because of his new found perspective in Christ
 - b. I hold to the second option, but it’s not imperative to determine which Paul implied because both are essentially true—believers are new creations in Christ because they are now partakers of the divine nature; they also have been given renewed minds through which to see both creation and Truth
 - c. What is important here is that Paul saw people differently than the false teachers did:
 - 1) They chose to view people according to the flesh and used them for their own personal gain
 - 2) However, Paul chose to view people through the lens of the Gospel and served them so that he might present them perfect and complete in Christ

- 4. Practical Application:
 - a. Let me ask another simple question—does the way you view or treat people reveal a fleshly or worldly perspective or a new, Christ-like perspective?

Trying to maintain my composure when helping nasty Indiana sale rep

- b. My fleshly perspective:
 - 1) This woman is nasty
 - 2) She has no right to attack my co-worker
 - 3) I don't need to let her treat me this way
 - 4) She doesn't deserve my help

- c. New Christ-like perspective:
 - 1) She's unsaved and this is how unsaved people sometimes behave
 - 2) She's blinded by the devil
 - 3) She needs Jesus
 - 4) Don't blow an opportunity to be a Christ-like example or dishonor Christ by my own actions