

# Gospel Shepherding

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:11-21

July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010

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## ❖ Introduction

Last week, we looked at a number of critical components of the true Gospel of Christ. In these verses that we are studying today, we jump into the middle of Paul defending his ministry and specifically his Godly motivations for coming to Corinth and ministering to the new believers there. The church at Corinth was clearly a young church with many issues to work through. But there is a notorious group frequently called the Judaizers that would travel around following Paul and sowing seeds of doubt amongst the Gentiles about the truth of Paul's instruction as well as the authenticity of his authority.

We are also jumping the middle of Paul shepherding a church that God created through Paul's ministry. He didn't just come through town one day and declare the gospel and then move on to leave the church to languish. Instead he continued to shepherd them through tough times and through the many doubts and questions that arise as we live our new lives in Christ.

## ❖ Exposition of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:11 - 21

*<sup>11</sup> Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.*

- ◆ Paul's ministerial efforts are motivated by an appropriate fear of God. In the Scriptures, fearing God, properly understood, is a good thing. It is the foundation for all knowledge and here we see that it is foundational in evangelism. But also note that for the believer, the fear of God is not the same as being afraid of Him (where we are afraid of His wrath being unleashed upon us) because His perfect love has cast out that fear. (1 John 4:17-19) Knowing though, that all of our works will be refined by fire (1 Cor. 3:9-15) should shape the way we think about our lives. Furthermore, because we know that the wrath of God will be poured out on unbelievers, we are compelled to proclaim the gospel longing to see God's mercy revealed.
- ◆ The other concept that Paul may have in mind here is that because he understands the wrath of God to be poured out upon sinners, his desire is to declare the gospel to the lost in hopes that God will save many.
- ◆ Paul reiterates the confidence he will have in the day of refinement and he is intimating that those who are falsely accusing him and disparaging his ministry may not have the same confidence.

*<sup>12</sup> For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart.<sup>13</sup> For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you.*

- ◆ There is no need for Paul to explain his manner of life to the Corinthians because it was all in full view to them. But his current defense of his ministry was so that they might know how to respond to the accusations against him. Even if Paul was crazy, God would be glorified by his ministry. But if he was stable and wise it is an advantage for the Corinthians in responding to the opposition group and they should dismiss the falsehoods spread by his detractors. It is unfortunate however, that Paul even had to give these defenses and explanation to those whom he deeply loved and lived with in such a manner that they should have no problem defending him.

*<sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;<sup>15</sup> 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.*

- ◆ Notice also that Paul is motivated by Christ's love and that this motivation is not inconsistent with a fear of Christ's tribunal.
- ◆ Christ did not die so that we might live, He died so that we might die—He lives so that we might live. If we are united with Him in His death, we will also be united with Him in His resurrection. But we cannot partake in His resurrection if indeed we have not first partaken in His death. (Romans 6)
- ◆ Furthermore, Christ did not die so that we can have lives filled only with pursuits pleasing to us. Christians are those who live to please their Lord and are not living simply to please themselves. Pleasing the Lord brings pleasure to the Christian. In fact there is profound joy in knowing that God can even be pleased by the way we live our lives by faith.
- ◆ We see here and later the magnitude of the atonement in that Paul says that Christ died for *all*. We also know that not *all* are saved. So then, who did Christ die for? Christ died for the Elect, the Church, those whom the Father had given to the Son (John 6:35-40) Christ did not die because we believe, instead we believe because Christ died for us. So that those who live, now live for Him.

<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.*

- ◆ It appears that again Paul has in mind here his opponents who have been regarding him according to the flesh, that is, by those things which are seen. The fact that he no longer regards anyone according to the flesh does not mean that he does not evaluate what he sees but it does mean that we do not simply make our judgements by outward appearances. Rather, we evaluate everything by the Word of God and we are trained by the Spirit to distinguish good from evil.

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

- ◆ When we are made alive in Christ our old nature, which was characterized by being enslaved to sin, is put to death and we are given the Spirit which begins the work of sanctification. The new creation does not come in along of the old creation, with the exception of the flesh which has yet to be redeemed but comes under the dominion of the Spirit at our second birth. This rebirth and transformation is so significant that it is never without effect. This work of grace, revealed and begun by God, is an efficacious work, that is, it is a certainty that the work will be completed and the work will accomplish all that God intended.

<sup>18</sup> *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,<sup>19</sup> that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

- ◆ Paul was first reconciled to God, by God and then he was given the ministry of reconciliation. God has made this world in such a way that the ministry of reconciliation is declared by the reconciled. The reconciliation is necessary because there was once hostility between us and God. By God's good mercy and providence, He removed the enmity and granted peace between Himself and the elect.
- ◆ Just as in verse 15, Paul teaches the magnitude of the reconciliation; God had in mind to reconcile *the world* to Himself. (1 John 2:2) It is unfortunate that we have believed with our eyes and not the Scriptures in that we are tempted to think that the Elect is a small remnant or fraction of the world. The bible teaches inescapably that it may be said that Christ died to save the world. Even though we know that this does not mean that Christ died for every last individual, we do know that the atonement of Christ secured the salvation of a countless multitude. Isaiah 49; Acts 13:44-48; Revelation 7:4-14.

<sup>20</sup> *Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.*

- ◆ When we declare the Gospel and call men and women to believe and repent, we should act as though God was speaking through us.

<sup>21</sup> *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

- ◆ We see the vicarious atonement of Christ in this glorious verse. But this was not a simple sacrifice; we see here the righteous dying for the unrighteous. While Christ was made to be *sinful*, that is, full of sin, He was not a *sinner*.

### The Extent of Christ's Atonement

		WORLD	
		ALL	SOME
SIN	SOME	Universal Damnation	Universal Damnation
	ALL	Universal Atonement	Limited (Definite) Atonement

When Jesus instructs us to make disciples of all nations, part of this is to teach them everything that He had commanded. After the Gospel conversion, there is a lifetime of shepherding, nurture, admonition, weeping, rejoicing and bringing the Word of God to bear in all areas of the Christian's life. In this section of the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to Corinth we see a prime example of Paul doing so in the midst of the Corinthians struggles with sin and temptations to believe the lies of the enemies of the Gospel. The Christian life is very much about being equipped.