

THE APOSTLES' MOTIVATION

May 31, 2015

II Corinthians 5:1-21

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” II Corinthians 5:14

If a meter could be designed to measure your zeal for Christ, would you submit to its evaluation, or resist? Do you live for Christ, or do you live to achieve mere earthly goals—man-made definitions of success? Is your life lived for yourself, or for God? What motivates you?

The apostles suffered severe persecution, and ultimately martyrdom. Yet their zeal never faltered. Paul confessed that he “suffered the loss of all things” for Christ, and testified, “For to me to live is Christ” (Philippians 3:8, 21). In II Corinthians 4 he mentioned his suffering, which is further reported in 11:24-33, describing it as “bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus” (4:10). Yet he did not despair nor was he downcast. What motivated such endurance and zeal? And should not that motivate each of us to selfless service for Christ?

In chapter 5, Paul cited three motivating forces. First, though the body is destroyed by sufferings for Christ, “we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (v. 1). Second, “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body” (v. 10). Third, “the love of Christ constraineth (controls) us” (v. 14).

Christ’s love for His people is an oft-repeated theme in the New Testament, and is cited as the reason for selfless devotion to Him. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, **who loved me, and gave himself for me**” (Gal. 2:20). None can separate God’s people from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:35). It is “the love of Christ which passeth knowledge” (Eph. 3:19).

The hymnist identified Paul’s motivation when he wrote, “Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all.” Do you meet this demand? Paul expounded this love, explaining that:

1. Christ’s love wrought our deliverance from the consequences of sin (14, 21).
2. His love provided not only a substitute to suffer divine judgment in our place, but also the motivation to be a living sacrifice (15; rom. 12:1-2).
3. Such love, having delivered us from wrath, transforms us from mere physical existence into a spiritual life in which everything is known for its spiritual importance (16-17).
4. God ordains and orchestrates all of this in order to reconcile us to Himself (18-19).
5. Once reconciled to God by the love of Christ, we become His ambassadors by whom reconciliation is urged upon others (20-21).

These consequences of divine love controlled the apostles, prompting them to abandon this world, to live as pilgrims and die as martyrs. What measure of this zeal for Christ do you possess?