

2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2

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[0 : 00] So we're in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and we're looking at verse 10, and the start of chapter 6, probably chapter 6 verse 2 I think.

! 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 10. In John Piper's book, Don't Waste Your Life, he refers to something that he read in Reader's Digest in February 1998, which tells about a couple who took early retirement.

He was 59, and she was 51. Imagine that. They lived in Florida, in a place called Punta Guada, where they cruised on their 30 foot yacht, they played softball, and they collected shells.

John Piper says, at first when I read it I thought it might be a joke. A spoof on the American dream. But it wasn't. This was their dream.

This was their dream. You come to the end of your life, you're one and only precious, God-given life, and let the last great work of your life, Piper says, be before you have to give an account of your Creator.

[1 : 19] Let it be this, playing softball and collecting shells. Picture them before Christ on the great day of judgment. Look, Lord, see my shells. What a tragedy, he says.

Don't buy it. Don't waste your life. It's good luck. You've got what it is. So let me ask you tonight, what are you living for? What is your life about? And I think that's what the whole letter of 2 Corinthians is challenging you and I about.

What is your life about? What is the purpose of your existence? Well, for Paul, it's pretty obvious what he was living for. Look at verse 14. Verse 14. Listen, Christ has not been raised and our preaching is ill.

Sorry, I'm in 1 Corinthians. So let me just get in the right book. 2 Corinthians, chapter 5 and verse 14. He says, for the love of Christ controls us.

Because we have concluded this. That one has died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, but those who live might no longer live for themselves. But for him who for their sake died and was raised.

[2 : 28] Paul was living for Christ. Learning to make Christ known. And so he was totally one-eyed about it. People thought he was crazy. You can imagine, can't he, the careers teacher?

Who taught Paul. What they would have said about him. He was a very bright pupil. School. He went on to university. He was top of the class at university. He came out with an honours degree. And he studied under a top, top teacher, Gamaliel.

And you can imagine what his careers advisor would think. Well, they looked at Paul's subsequent career. That he was a preacher of the gospel. Is he out of his mind? Is he beside himself?

People must have thought he had a nervous breakdown. That he's taken leave of his senses. And there's a hint of that here in this passage. Look at verse 13. Look at what he says. He says in verse 13.

For we are beside ourselves. Other translations say. If we are out of our mind. Your Bible might say. He's crazy. He's lost it. And here in this chapter is Paul's answer to that accusation.

[3 : 34] This charge of craziness. This charge of madness. Call it madness if you want. But what Paul says is there's method in my madness. So the logic of his answer of madness.

So three headings. Number one, Paul's madness. Number two is motivation. Number three is method. So first of all, his madness. Why are they saying this about him? Perhaps they say it about you.

Your friends who grew up with you. They think you've gone mad. Why do people think that a man like Paul is crazy? That he's out of his mind. Well, look what it says in verse 13. Verse 13. For if we are beside ourselves.

It is for God. If we are in our right minds. It is for you. For the love of Christ controls us. Because we have concluded this. That one has died for all.

Therefore all have died. And he died for all. That those who live might no longer live for themselves. But for him who for their sake died. And was raised. A profound revolution has happened in Paul's Life.

[4 : 38] By God's grace. Paul has moved from being eagle centric. With him at the centre. To Christo centric. With Christ at the centre. C.S. Lewis describes himself.

In his spiritual biography. As the most reluctant convert. In all of England. He puts it like this. Commenting on what happened to Paul. And comparing it to himself. What mattered most of all. Was my deep seated hatred. Of authority. My monstrous individualism. And lawlessness. No word in my vocabulary. Expressed deeper hatred.

Than the word interference. But Christianity. Placed at the centre. What then seemed to be. A transcendental interferer. He goes on to say.

Like Paul. That he saw how profound. Is the change. From an egocentric. To a Christo centric. Lifestyle. Now that is what happened to C.S. Lewis. On the top of a London bus. That's where he was converted.

[5 : 34] That's what happened to the Apostle Paul. On Paul's back. Outside Damascus. A kind of Copernican revolution. Took place. In his psyche. So they used to describe.

They used to think. That everything revolved around the earth. And then Copernicus came along. In Galileo. And they discovered. That that wasn't the case. That the earth. Actually revolves around the sun.

And a revolution. Revolution took place. In people's thinking. Maps had to be drawn. Everything had to change. And of course. It severely resisted.

Doesn't it? People didn't like it. But something like that. Happened in the life. Of the Apostle Paul. At Copernican revolution. Now it might not have been.

As dramatic for you. You might not have been. Going on a horse. In Damascus. On the way to Damascus. On a bright light. But something like that. Has to happen to you. To be a Christian. There has to be.

[6 : 30] That Copernican revolution. Where suddenly you find yourself. Not at the centre. It might not be. Dramatic in any way. Shape or form. But it has to happen. Because it's so much.

Of the opposite. Of what we are by nature. Isn't it? Edith lived. In a little world. Bounded on the north. South. East and west. By Edith. That's true of us all.

Isn't it? Edith lived. In a little world. Bounded on the north. South. East and west. By Edith. We are incurably. South.

Centered. It's me. Myself. And I. I might take an interest. In other people. I might do some good things. For other people. But more often. Than that.

Than not. What we do for others. Is designed. To make me feel good. About myself. That is human nature. And what Paul is saying. Here is that. Christ has changed. All that in his life.

[7 : 25] Christ died. In order to take. This human nature. Radically change it. So that we are no longer. Self centred. But Christ centred. Somebody once.

Knocked on Martin Luther's door. And asked. And asked. Does Martin Luther live here? No. Says Luther. He's dead. Jesus lives here now. If somebody knocked on your door.

What would you say? This is what the apostle Paul says. Galatians chapter 2 verse 20. Just go there with me. Galatians chapter 2 verse 20. Paul says this.

I. It's on page 9. 7. 3. Paul says. I have been crucified. With Christ. It is no longer I who live. But Christ who lives in me. For the life I now live in the flesh.

I live by faith. In the son of God. Who loved me. And gave himself for me. Someone knocks on Paul's door. And they would just say. Does the apostle Paul live here? And he would say. No.

[8 : 28] He's dead. I no longer live. I have been crucified with Christ. Christ now lives here. Christ now lives at this address. Christ now lives in me.

And the life that I live in the body. I live by faith in the son of God. Who loved me and gave himself for me. This life. I now live in the flesh. With all it's busyness. And with all it's riskiness. With all it's sacrifice.

With all it's hardship. And with all it's commitment. This life. I now live in the flesh. I live by faith in the son of God. Who loved me and gave himself for me.

In other words. If you want to understand my life. Paul says. If you want to understand. What makes me tick. Then Paul says. You've got to understand the cross. You have to understand. What Jesus did for me on the cross. I'm not living to please myself. I'm not living to get my name in the history books. I'm not trying to get my name in the headlines. I'm not driven by greed. Or by pride.

[9 : 26] As some of the apostles. The super apostles were accusing him of. I'm not driven by pride. Or greed. Or some psychological need. For recognition or affirmation. There's not some needs to be needed.

I'm not driven out of a sense of ambition. But the love of Christ compels me. It's not so much my love towards him. But it's his love towards me and the cross.

The old I. The old self. Of Paul is dead and buried. The I that now lives. Is a new I. A new person. With a new reason for living. And I want to ask you. Has that happened in your life?

Has there been. A Caprican revolution. Or are you still living to please yourself? Think of the decisions you made this week. What do you do with your money?

What do you do with your holidays? Just think of your lifestyle. What is it that's driving you? What's animating you? I'll briefly go to my second point.

[10 : 30] Paul's motivation. What has brought about this radical revolution in Paul's life? And it's too forward isn't it? There's two motives. I don't know whether you saw them. They stand out in the passage.

They almost seem like they contradict each other. But they're at the heart of this change that's happened in Paul's life. They are fear and love. So look at verse 11.

Verse 11. Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord.

This is on, is it? Is it on? It is on. Sorry, I shouldn't bang it then. Verse 11. The fear of judgment. Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord.

We persuade others. So there's a fear of judgment there. Then verse 14. For the love of Christ controls us. Because we have concluded this.

[11 : 28] That one has died for all. Therefore all have died. The love of Christ compels us. The love of Christ controls us. So there are these two.

There are these two great motivations here. Fear and love. Fear and love. But don't they cancel each other out?

Didn't the Apostle Paul say perfect love drives out fear? Well, yes, he did, didn't he? That is profoundly true. If you really know the love of God in Christ. You will not fear the day of judgment. If you fear the day of judgment. It's because you haven't properly appreciated the love of God in Christ. At the cross. If you really knew what Christ had done for you on the cross. You would not be afraid on judgment day.

Perfect love drives out fear. And that brings us to the very heart of the gospel. Which is in verse 21. You see what Paul says about what God has done for us in Christ.

[12 : 25] For our sake. He made him to be sin who knew no sin. So that in him we might become the righteousness of God. God has found the way, isn't he?

To judge our sin. And at the same time spare us sinners. How? By placing our sin on him. There's a story.

It's about a group of tourists. I think Max O'Carrie tells it in one of his books. They're going around. A group of tourists. They're going around one of the slums in Rio. It's a number of years ago. And the woman is shocked at the poverty.

And she says to the tour guide. Look at that little girl there. That little girl sitting in the dirt. Filthy. Doesn't her mother care about her? The tour guide said. Look where you come from is different. Where you come from you hate dirt. But you don't love that little girl. Her mother loves her. But doesn't hate the dirt. And until hatred of dirt.

[13 : 26] And love for that girl. Come together in the same person. She will stay where she is. And until hatred of sin. And love for the sinner. Come together. In the same person.

You and I will stay where we are. In our sin. But the great news of the gospel. Is hatred of sin. And love for the sinner. Have come together. At the cross. That is what has happened.

That's why it's such good news. God hates sin. He's a holy God. He cannot look at sin. He can't look at sinners. God's hatred of sin.

And yet his love for men and women. And boys and girls. Whom he's made in his own image. And likeness. God's hatred of sin. And love for human beings. Comes together at the cross of Jesus Christ. In order to rescue us.

In order to lift us out of our sin. And make us right with God. 2 verses 14 and 15. For the love of Christ controls us. Because we have concluded this.

[14:23] That one has died for all. Therefore all have died. And he died for all. For those who live. Might no longer live for themselves. But for him. And for their sake. Died and was raised.

All that. What happened on the cross. We're not talking about some sentimental love in our hearts. We're talking about an objective thing that happened 2,000 years ago.

Outside Jerusalem. 3 o'clock on a Friday afternoon. One died. And the one who died was Jesus. One died for all.

The all is us. The elect of God. The one is Jesus. The all is us. And when Jesus died. He did something for us.

He did something that benefits for us. So like you're on a football team. And someone scores on the football team. The whole team benefits. Jesus has done something in his death.

[15:18] That we all benefit from. He's taken our sin upon himself. You see. You've heard it many, many times before.

But it needs to go from there. To anything there. That without Jesus. You are still in a mess. You are still in your sin. That without Jesus.

Things are not okay. They are not okay. Between you and God. Judgment day will be horrific. And apart from Jesus. You haven't got a leg to stand on.

Apart from Jesus. You have not got a hope in hell. Literally. Apart from him. Things are not okay. Between you and God. But because of him.

Through him. And in him. You can be reconciled. You can have things fixed up. Between you and God. Look at verse 18. All this is from God. All this is from God.

[16:18] Who through Christ reconciled us to himself. And gave us the ministry. Of reconciliation. There it is again. What did God do for us on the cross through Christ?

He reconciled himself to us. We need to be reconciled to God. It's not just that he needs to be reconciled to us. We need to be reconciled to him.

It's both isn't it? Look at verse 18 again. All this is from God. Who through Christ reconciled to himself. And gave us the ministry. Of reconciliation.

That is in Christ. God was reconciling the world to himself. Not counting their trespasses against them. And entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Let me try and illustrate it like this. You're out of the afternoon.

Well have you seen the cartoon? The cartoon is there. Two caterpillars crawling along the ground. Together. And they're caterpillars that can talk.

[17:15] And the two caterpillars are crawling along the ground. And they're talking to each other. And overhead a butterfly flies. And one caterpillar says to the other. You'll never get me up in one of those. It's hard to imagine.

If you're a caterpillar. That you're ever going to be a butterfly. So crazy. How could that happen? And the other is exactly what happens. No I don't mind butterflies. You go to those butterfly houses. And they land on you. It's quite pleasant isn't it? A butterfly lands on your arm in the garden. You love it. It's nice. They fly around. I don't mind butterflies. They're beautiful things. But creepy crawly caterpillars.

That's a different thing isn't it? And it then starts crawling up your trousers. Freaks you out isn't it? Up the inside of your arm. It's yucky isn't it?

You knock it off. Do you see what is happening here? Do you see what Paul is saying? The thought of a creepy crawly caterpillar edging up your arm is repulsive. But to have a butterfly landed on you is quite different.

[18:13] And that is how it is with God and us. If anyone is in Christ. What? Is he a caterpillar? Well no. No he's a butterfly. If anyone is in Christ.

He is a new creature. And God doesn't see the creepy crawly sinful mess that you are. He sees you in Christ. He sees what you're going to be.

If God wants to look at you as you are. He would be repulsed by what he sees. But he looks at you and he sees you in Christ. And if you tonight do not know that you are in Christ tonight.

Can I plead with you to make sure? That it's an invitation. It's an invitation. It's an invitation. It's an invitation. It's an invitation that you would come into Christ tonight. Just by believing the gospel. If anyone is in Christ. There's a new creation. There's a new creation. The caterpillar has already become a butterfly as far as God is concerned. He sees you in the beloved.

[19 : 14] He sees you spotless perfect as you one day will be. And there's no other way. That a holy God who has fellowship with sinful people. But he can with new creations.

In Christ through the cross. So this is so revolutionary isn't it? This simple message. Of the cross. The apostle Paul is recreated. You and I are recreated. Look at verse 17. Therefore if anyone is in Christ. He is a new creation.

The old has passed away. Behold the new has come. All this is from God. Maybe there's an illusion there isn't there? There may well be an illusion to the story of Noah and the flood.

From how the rain came down. And Noah and his family are safe in the ark. And then after the rain has abated. And the floods go down. Noah and his family step into the ark. And it is a brand new world.

[20 : 11] It's a new creation. And the apostle is saying. That is what happens when you become a Christian. When you come to Christ. And entrust yourself to the Lord Jesus. There's a new creation.

There's a fresh start. There's a new beginning. There is now no condemnation. The condemnation is gone. Because the wrath of God has fallen on him. And you step off into brand new creation. Everything is new. The old is gone. You are reconciled to God. And we must understand this. We must understand this. That Jesus is trying to persuade a reluctant God.

He's trying to persuade God. To do something that God doesn't want to do. No. It says that God was in Christ doing this. And you mustn't think that Jesus is some innocent bystander. Who gets dragged into the procedure against his will.

Jesus is not some innocent bystander. God was in Christ doing this. If your car gets pranged by someone. If you get driven into the back.

[21 : 13] If you get driven into the back of someone on the age of 40. Somebody's got to pay, haven't they? Hopefully the person who's pranged into your car. They will pay.

If they've got insurance. But somebody's got to pay for the repairs, haven't they? But in kindness and in mercy. If it's some fragile little old lady. Turns out she hasn't got her insurance properly sorted.

You might decide in mercy. That she doesn't deserve it. But you will decide in mercy. That you will actually pay her a letter off. So you absorb the cost to yourself.

Well in Christ God absorbs the punishment. He pays the price. He doesn't have to. God the offended party.

The God we've rebelled against. That God was in Christ. That wasn't something happening over here. That God knew nothing about in heaven.

[22 : 14] Jesus twisting his arm to be kind. Jesus is not like that at all. God so loved the world. That he gave his only begotten son. Do you remember the Old Testament? With Abraham and Isaac.

Take your son. Your only son Isaac. Take your son. Whom you love God says to Abraham. Take him to Mount Moriah. And offer him up as a sacrifice there.

How do you feel the pathos of that? God is not asking Abraham. To do anything that he isn't prepared to do himself. Take your son.

Your only son. Whom you love. God gave his son. His only son. Jesus whom he loves. And he gives him up to the cross. Listen to what one writer says.

He says. What we see in the cross. Is all the outrage. Indignation. Anger. And pain. That the sin of the world causes a holy God. And we see that pain.

[23 : 12] And that anger being inflicted. Not on those who deserve it. In ourselves. But being absorbed. In an eternal agony. In the Godhead. God was in Christ.

Reconciling the world for himself. That is the gospel. That is the gospel. That changed Paul. That changed the western world. That turned the Roman Empire.

Inside out and upside down. That came to the UK. And has gone out. To all over the world. From the UK. It is the gospel of the cross. And it is the gospel.

That changed Paul so much. So they thought he got crazy. Just as people think. We have gone crazy. But there is method. In his madness. Let's lastly.

Look at Paul's method. Do you see what it says? Knowing. The fear. Of the Lord. We persuade. It is a fearful thing.

[24 : 09] To fall into the hands. Of the angry God. It is a fearful thing. Tonight. To not have your sin. Covered. It is a fearful thing.

To have the wrath of God. Hang over you. That could burst upon you. At any moment. And if you doubt that. Look at the cross. And see what happened to Jesus. The perfect son of God.

As a sinner. Knowing that. Knowing that sin is serious. That God is holy. Knowing that the fear of the Lord. We persuade. We plead with people.

He says. Verse 14. He says in verse 14. The love of Christ. It is this amazing. Unexpected.

Surprising. Overwhelming love. That God has shown to us.

On the cross. That hems us in. That constrains us. It is. It is like when you go to. One of those football games. Or go to the sales. Isn't it? You go to the sales. In January. And you stand in the crowd.

[25 : 07] On Oxford Street. And you are kind of. Moved into the shop. Even though you didn't really. Move your legs. The crowd. Constrains you. To go in. It compels you. To go in. And so the love of Christ.

Constrains us. He says. Let us meet. Verse 20. We implore you. It is very interesting.

There is nothing. Take it or leave it. About Paul's presentation. Of the gospel. It is not impassioned.

Look at verse 1. We appeal to you.

The last month. The mist is coming. I don't really saw this. The M4 this week. The M4 covered in mist.

And there is motorway madness. You know you are driving in the mist. And there is these mad people. That drive at 70 miles per hour. And the mist comes down. And the traffic is hurting. And people just not seem to slow down.

[26 : 04] There can be horrific pilots. There was once. In the 1980s. And there is a report. I meant to look it up. The exact details. But there are reports of policemen. Actually standing at the side of the motorway.

As these cars flew past them. 70, 80 miles per hour. In the mist. Into the pilots. They were actually literally hurling. Traffic cones. And oncoming traffic. To try and slow them down.

And Paul says. There are men and women. And boys and girls. Hurling along through life.

Oblivious. To where they are going. He sees your friends.

And your family. And your work colleagues. And maybe even people here tonight. Hurling along through life. Towards hell. Towards the judgment of God. Because we must all appear.

Before the judgment seat of Christ. And he sees human beings. Hurling along towards hell. And he knows. There is only one way for them to be saved. And that is the cross of Christ.

[27 : 02] And so knowing the fear of the Lord. I'm constrained and compelled. By the love of God. We persuade. We compel. We urge. We appeal.

There is a judgment. There is a judgment. That none of us can avoid. But there is a way. To face that judgment. Without being condemned. And it is through Jesus Christ. And the cross has.

Totally revolutionized. The way Paul sees things. If you pardon the pun. He is totally cross-eyed. Isn't he? Look at verses 16 and 17. From now on therefore.

We regard no one. According to the flesh. That is a brilliant statement. We regard no one.

According to the flesh. Even though we once regarded. Christ. According to the flesh. We regard no one.

As just another person. Even though we used to think. That Christ was just another person. We regard him. That is no longer. Therefore. If anyone is in Christ. He is a new creation. There is no such thing.

[28 : 00] Tonight. As far as Paul is concerned. As a hopeless. As a hopeless case. Tonight. You. Can have a fresh start.

Even the most unlikely person. I wonder if you believe that. Just meditate. This week. On verse 17. If. Anyone. Is in Christ. Think about that. When you see people. In the street. Or on the bus. Or you sit in your coffee shop. Or you do your work.

Like some of you do. Look in people's eyes. And think. If anyone. Is in Christ. Here is a potential Christian.

Here is a potential new creation. Here is a potential new creation. Instead of seeing people as you once did. Categorizing.

[29 : 00] Labeling people. Pigeoning people. See them all as. Someone. For whom. Christ. Might have died. All distinctions of wealth.

Color. Culture. Religion. Intellect. Third. No more important. If anyone is in Christ. See them as those. For whom Christ died. The high court judge.

The annoying teenager. The drop out. The yuppie. If anyone is in Christ. It is enormously exciting. That what Jesus has done on the cross.

Is so huge. And it is so embracing. It is so far reaching. There is a new creation. Coming out of it. And we are called to take this message. To anyone and anyone. And everyone.

If anyone is in Christ. They are a new creation. If a Richard Dawkins. Or a Brian Cox. Is found in Christ. They will be a new creation.

[29 : 58] See people that way. As people headed for judgment. And needing to be saved. People from home. Christ died to rescue. And there is an urgency. About this. Now look at the last couple of verses. In chapter 6.

Wake up. If you fall asleep. Working together with him. As God's fellow workers. Then we appeal to you.

Not to receive the grace of God. In vain. For he says. In a favourable time. I listen to you. And in a day of salvation. I have helped you. We persuade.

We implore. We appeal. Because time is running out. Now is the time.

For people to be saved. Now is the favourable time. I listen to you. Today is the day of salvation.

I've used this illustration. I'll use it again.

[30 : 57] All my illustrations I use again. But there are three junior daddals on there. And they go for interviews. And Satan says to the junior daddals. What is your message going to be? The first daddals says. Well I'm going to tell the people.

There is no God. The daddals are very busy telling people that in a minute. But Satan says. Well that actually won't work. Because all human beings know that there is a God. The second devil says.

I'm going to tell people. There is no judgment. Well the devil has been telling people that for decades. Hasn't he. For centuries. And Satan says. That doesn't really work. Because all human beings know in their heart of hearts.

That there are judgments. And some of them even place their hope in judgment. They sense there will be a judgment to come. The third devil says.

I'm going to go into the world. And tell them there is no hurry. And Satan says. Brilliant. Go. There is no hurry. So let me ask you tonight.

[31 : 53] Is there a sense of urgency? Are you hanging out for collecting shells? Or stamps? Let's play God. Retire out of London. Is there a sense of urgency about your life?

Do you see men and women and boys and girls. Heading for judgment day? Do you see them as those of home Christ died? Maybe tonight there is a problem between you and God. Are you reconciled to God?

Is he reconciled to you? Do you know that? Because if you don't know that. You've got to fix that tonight. Is there some commitment or cause.

Or idol that is getting in the way. Of the gospel in your life. Maybe you're a Christian. You've been sidetracked by other agendas. And they may be very legitimate. In their own place and in their own way.

But if they're taking away you from this. You've got to do something about it. Is there a relationship perhaps. And that is getting in the way. Between you and God. It's drawing you away from the gospel.

[32 : 56] It's turning your heart cold. Towards the one who loved you and died for you. Be reconciled. To God. I implore you.

I want to persuade you. I want to compel you. I want to urge you. I want to appeal to you. Because now is the day to do it. Now is the day of God's favour. Now is the day of salvation.

Be reconciled to God. Do not live for a moment longer. For yourself. Live for him who died for you. And loved you. So that when judgment day comes.

And it will come. We will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Well we will all have something other than your stamp collection. Or seashells. Or a 30 foot boat.
For whatever it is you are living for.