

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 September 2020

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] Turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. 2 Corinthians chapter 5. One of the things I've missed, I wanted to really welcome Daniel and Carys, who are sitting at the back there.

Daniel is going to be part of the team that is going to be planting a church in Chester for the IPC. We've just approved that at our presbytery and we're really thrilled at that.

If we didn't have endless announcements, we'd have got you up the front to talk about it this morning. And we're really thrilled and delighted about that. I'm going to be praying for you as you go to do that. 2 Corinthians 5. Let's bow our heads in prayer again.

Our gracious God and Father, we wait upon you. And we pray that you would speak to us out of your word this morning. We may be readily formed and molded into the kind of people that your son died to make us.

And we ask this for his name's sake. Amen. I was explaining last week on that video that I think you saw about five minutes of.

[1 : 07] And you've been looking at all week to catch up on you. That we're going to do a short series. Just for three weeks. On how the New Testament describes how we're to live as Christians.

So last week we looked at what it means to be in Christ. This week we're looking at what it means to live for Christ. And next week we're going to look at what it means to do things through Christ. In Christ. For Christ. Through Christ. We saw that in Christ, being united to him, comes up about 200 times in the New Testament. And this morning I want to look at a phrase which in a sense really fits this day as we say goodbye to Chuck and Waima as they leave us.

It's that phrase for Christ. It's the preposition that Paul uses to describe the new direction of our lives. Because we're in Christ.

For him, the apostle, since conversion. So for example in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 15 it says, It's a word that's translated in several different words in the New Testament.

[2 : 25] But they mean the same thing. And you get the sense of it in the way that we regularly use it when we come to the end of our praying. And so we often finish our prayers by saying, For Jesus' sake.

We pray this for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. And what we mean when we say that, or what we ought to mean, is that the reason that we're asking for these things Lord, that the motive in our hearts, the desire for what we're asking, is the glory and the honour and the praise of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we pray this for his sake, so that he would be pleased. That he would be satisfied. That he would be honoured. And so if you're asking, Why do we pray?

We pray for Jesus' sake. We pray in order that he might be glorified, and honoured, and obeyed, and worshipped, and pleased. And here in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 15, Paul is asking a wider question.

Not just why do we pray, but why do we live? Why do we live? What is the motivation behind living as a Christian man, or woman, or boy, or girl?

[3 : 48] And the answer is, succinctly, in that one little preposition, that is joined to the name of Christ. We live for him. That's the Christian.

That's our lives, in a crystallised form, when you boil it down. It's a description of the whole essence, and the genius of the Christ. And in so many ways, that's the hallmark, of what Paul calls the new creation, that Christ has brought in.

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. And all things have passed away, and things have become new. All things. So do you see the connection, between the phrases, between this Sunday, and last Sunday?

And so here's my sermon, really, really simply. If anyone is in Christ, they will live for Christ. You can go to sleep now if you want.

That is the sermon. If anyone is in Christ, they will live for Christ. Can we say that together? If anyone is in Christ, they will live for Christ.

[5 : 00] And again after two, one, two, if anyone is in Christ, they will live for Christ. Let me close in prayer. No, no, no, no. That is the very core, of what a work of grace does in us.

And I want to unpack it, I want to ask two very simple questions. And the difficulty this morning is not understanding it, alright? You'll all understand it, I think, even the littlest one.

The problem is obeying it. So the first question is, what is the root? What is the root of this whole idea? Where does it flow from? Where does Paul find this burning ambition to live for Christ?

No longer for ourselves, but for Him. Where does it come from? The second question is, what is the fruit? What is the root, and what is the fruit, and where does it lead to? Second, So what are its marks in our lives?

Let me touch on each of these. What are the roots of this attitude to life? Where does it come from? How does it arise that Paul says to us, we are a people that no longer live for ourselves, but for Him.

[6 : 16] What is it that makes Paul say, when he writes to another young church, do you remember, he writes to the church in Philippi, in northern Greece, and he says, for me to live, for me to live is Christ.

For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. We are so familiar with that, aren't we? I think we don't realize how odd that is.

What is it that produces that? When it is a genuine and straightforward description of how he lives. What is it that causes him to say, for me to live is Christ?

To die is gain. Well, I think if we asked people, they would say, well, it's really clear. What produces that kind of idea that for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain?

They would say, it is pure fanaticism. It's taking things too far. I was reading again this week, the biography of John Chapman.

[7 : 23] Chapo was an Australian evangelist, and he became a Christian completely out of the world, and he began to understand the gospel, and he had an experience where he learned a kind of gospel outline.

And this is what he said, so I set out to learn the gospel, which I did. Being now thoroughly equipped, I embarked on a flurry of evangelistic activity. The family received the full blast, and a small sermon was delivered at breakfast each day for months.

I remember my exasperated father putting down the newspaper and saying to me one morning, you don't ever eat your breakfast at church, do you? Why must I always have church at breakfast?

It's fanaticism, isn't it? Is that it? Don't people say that to you? He's become a religious nut. I read an evangelistic book this week. My friend's gone mad.

It's a good title. Is that what happened to him? Is that what happened to the apostle Paul? Is that what I'm advocating today, that you become a kind of fanatic?

[8 : 30] No, it's not fanaticism. Paul is really clear on what led him to this point. It's not fanaticism. It's not imbalance. It is love. He says the love of Christ controls us.

Look at verse 14. For the love of Christ controls us. If you look at different translators, they kind of vie with each other to find an adequate way of describing this word.

The word literally means to be hedged in or hemmed in. Luke uses it in his gospel to describe how the crowds hemmed in Jesus. He couldn't escape.

They were all around him. He also uses it to describe how Jerusalem is going to be surrounded. It's going to be hemmed in on every side by its enemies. And the idea of the word is this.

You are controlled by the pressure of something. And that pressure upon you is a constraint or a compulsion.

[9 : 33] And so can you see what it says there? It says the love of Christ compels. The love of Christ controls. The love of Christ leaves us no other option. And Paul says this is what has happened.

This compulsion, this love of Christ has led him to live for Christ. That life is for him. But it's no mere emotionalism.

Paul says it's because he's thought so deeply about all that's involved in the love of Christ. that he's been gripped so strongly by it. So look again at verse 14.

For Christ's love controls us because we have concluded, we've become convinced of this, that one has died for all and therefore all have died. This idea of becoming convinced, it's the picture of after a great deal of thinking and consideration and meditation.

I've realized he's died for all and therefore all have died. That he's died in the place of sinners. So that his death was counted as theirs.

[10:51] He died in our place. He died as our substitute. And Paul has been thinking and pondering and it has simmered away in his heart over the years and he enlarges upon it.

So look at verse 21. That God made him to be sin who knew no sin that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

He's thinking about the love of Christ which is displayed in the death of Christ whereby he became our substitute. But not only are our substitute standing in our place and taking the penalty of our guilt, but our sin bearer.

He became sin for us. He who knew no sin in order that we might become can you see it the righteousness of God. And so what Paul is saying is that once you begin to think about this and once you begin to contemplate the depth of it it overwhelms you.

It overwhelms you and it so grips your life and heart that it affects every aspect of your life. He says, he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves.

[12:10] For him it is the love of Christ that is the root of living for Christ. And I think poetry expresses this better than we do.

So we'll sing to close. We'll sing after the sermon. Love so amazing so divine demands my soul my life my all. We'll close our service at the end of the table and can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood died he for me who caused him pain.

For me who him to death pursued. Amazing love. How can it be? That's the language of the apostle isn't it? Here is love vast as the ocean.

Loving kindness as the flood when the prince of life our ransom shed for us his precious blood who his love will not remember. Who can cease to sing his praise?

That is the language of someone who's been to the cross and says life can only be for him because he's purchased it.

[13:19] He's made us his own. It would be theft. It would be stealing to live in another way.

And you see this is what has gripped the apostle. So this is not something that you hang onto your life in the way that you might hang a decoration or a Christmas tree. It's not something you can produce in other people's lives by persuading them or by external influence.

This is something that comes from within because the love of Jesus Christ has invaded your soul and gripped your life. And so you want to live for him.

Secondly, what are the fruits of it? What does it lead to? Well again, it's very, very simple. It's not difficult to understand at all.

There are two things that living for Christ and the love of Christ leads to. And they are a death we die and a life we live. A death we die and a life we live.

[14:32] What's the death we die? Can you notice that in verse 15? He died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves.

There's a way that a Christian is to stop living. There's a way that somebody who is in Christ is to cease living. They no longer live for themselves.

that is the mark, isn't it, by and large of all of human life apart from Jesus Christ. What's a mark of our culture?

It is that we live for ourselves. Children, I can hear you. Where are you? Did anyone ever teach you that you needed to be first?

Did your mum and dad teach you and say, Anis, you need to be first? Or, Micah, you need to be first? Did anyone ever teach you that? Anyone ever teach you that, Rose? But you know what?

[15:39] I bet if you asked your mum and dad, they would tell you, wouldn't they? That comes naturally to boys and girls. No one ever teaches children that they have to be number one.

It's something within them. To say, me first. The whole bias and the whole tendency of our lives is by and large to live for ourselves.

And we know, don't we, that that self-centered living comes out in some very, very ugly ways in your life and in mine. comes out subtly, doesn't it?

We get better at hiding it as adults. I've known Christian people come and talk to me about their future and when they said to me, this is the issue that's in front of us and they're confronted with the options and what God might want them to do and that it would be very costly, they say something like this, well it's my life after all, isn't it?

It's my life after all, isn't it? And the answer of course to those who are in Christ is no it's not. It's not, it's his.

[16 : 53] Because there is a death to be died and that is living for ourselves. And there is a life to be lived and the life to be lived is to be living for him.

And wherever the Apostle Paul went, that was his life, living for him. And that's why of course, isn't it? That's why the Apostle Paul was so fruitful. I don't think he was so fruitful and blessed so much because he was a brilliant intellect, though he was.

I don't think it was because the Apostle Paul had more gifts than any of us, than the majority of people, though, possibly he had. It was simply because all over his life was placarded all over his life.

There was written for him. And that made him Christ's ambassador. He goes on to say later, doesn't he, he goes on to say we are ambassadors for Christ.

That's what made him Christ's ambassador. Wherever he went, it was for him. And you can see it, they say, as they say, a mile away. And I want to say to you, as I close this morning, as we come to the Lord's table, that living for Christ, living for him, is where true freedom is to be found.

[18 : 22] And it's the only place in the universe where you'll find it. And living for him is the only place where true joy is to be found. And it's the only place in the universe that you'll find it.

Living for him. Being united to him, being in him means living for him.

May God take this truth and burn it onto our hearts. Let's pray together.