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A1342 – October 20, 2013 – 2 Corinthians 5:11-15
Reasoning According To The Spirit

Two weeks back we took some time in 2 Corinthians 5:10 to clarify the nature of the judgment seat of Christ so that we know what to expect when He comes for us. I think, fundamentally the nature of the judgment is not penal or remedial for sin committed in the Christian life but rather an evaluation of our service in the Christian life. When we arrive at the judgment seat we are arriving in resurrection bodies without sin in any sense. Therefore all that is left to judge will be our service; what we did with the gifts, privileges and opportunities God gave us. Paul said in Eph 2:10 that believers “are...created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” The purpose of God in creating us anew at salvation is to do good works. These works were prepared before the foundation of the world. The only question is when the opportunity arises do we capitalize and do them or not? 2 Cor 5:10, If we do them then that is good works and we gain rewards at the judgment seat but if we do not do them then that is bad works and we consequently lose rewards at the judgment seat. So the bad works are essentially missed opportunities that we could have capitalized and received reward but we didn't and therefore there is no reward.

This prospect gives motivates us to abide in Him continually so that when He appears we may have confidence before Him and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming (1 John 2:28). The shame we might experience is temporary, only experienced at His coming and is coming from within us and not from Christ. In other words, due to the fact that we will have just been placed in our resurrection bodies we will momentarily reflect on how much time we wasted living for ourselves when we should have been living for Him. That inner shame is in contrast to the idea that Christ will shame us by saying we are bad believers or calling us a worthless slave or slaying us and casting us into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of

teeth. Those descriptions are reserved for non-believing Israel when Christ comes in His kingdom and not for the believing Church at the judgment seat of Christ. The judgment seat of Christ is therefore an in-house evaluation of what we did with our Christian lives resulting in reward or non-reward. Therefore we should have, like the apostle Paul in 2 Cor 5:11, a healthy fear of the Lord that drives us to desire to persuade men. In context the persuading is persuading them of the truth of the gospel which is spelled out for us in verse 16 as the death and resurrection of Christ. Last time we met, which was two weeks ago, we deduced five principles Paul followed in persuading men from his missionary journey's in the Book of Acts. We said first you have to dialogue with men. Dialogue is necessary to persuade men of anything. Paul dialogued with men in the synagogues and in the marketplace of the various cities he visited. Simply put, you have to talk to men to have any hope of persuading them of anything. Second we said you must dialogue with them from the Scriptures, that is, by assuming the self-authenticating Christ of the Scriptures. His word is authoritative and we reason *from* it because to reason *to* it is to violate the word by assuming authority is vested somewhere other than the Scriptures. And to do that is to assume unbelief is true to begin with and you only confirm people in their unbelief. Third, we said that we always maintain that the unbeliever knows very well the God we speak of and is suppressing this truth he knows in unrighteousness. Therefore we are not seeking to prove to the unbeliever that God exists. God has already done that for us. What we are trying to do is remind them of this God and the fact that when they re-interpret every fact as a fact not paying testimony to Him they are sinfully rebelling against Him. Fourth, we must assert that the world and man are precisely what God says they are. God is the creator and man is a creature of God, responsible to Him but fallen and in rebellion against Him. But God has sent His Son to pay for our sin as our sinless substitute and through faith in Him we are restored to harmony with God. This is what God says the world and man are. We are, in a sense, simply telling them the Scriptural story. If we don't maintain this and grant that the world and man are what pagan man says they are then there is no plan and therefore all is chance since all things spring from chance and then there is no meaning and no purpose. The end of unbelief is total despair. So we must maintain and assert that there is a God who has a plan for man and the world and that every fact is what it is by virtue of its place in God's plan. Finally, we must explain that because there is a plan revealed in the Scriptural story that part of the plan is that there is a day that God has fixed

to judge the world and therefore they should repent. That is, they should have a repentant faith in the Person and Work of Christ before this day of judgment comes. There is no need to face this judgment since Christ has faced this judgment in their stead and by believing in Him they are declared righteous. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. So in short we gathered these five principles together from the apostle Paul's persuasion of men in the Book of Acts and so you can apply these when you seek to persuade men of the truth of the gospel.

Returning to verse 11, why did the apostle Paul seek to persuade men of the gospel? Because of his healthy fear of God due to his certain appearance at the judgment seat of Christ. Paul wanted to be rewarded at this judgment, as all believers should, so that we can enjoy an abundance of rewards that can be used to glorify God.

Now as we continue verse 11, Paul says, **we persuade men, but** in so doing **we are made manifest to God**, that is, our motives in persuading men are clearly seen by Him. God knows all of our motives and we can never hide anything from Him. We can often hide them from men but God looks on the heart. Why does Paul bring this in? Because there were some at Corinth who questioned his motives and thereby were undermining his apostleship (cf 1:12ff). Paul assures them that as he persuaded men he was consciously aware of the fact that he was always under God's watchful gaze. Volunteering his awareness reveals that he had pure motives in his evangelism. We should respond in like manner by consciously living all the time as if God is watching us. Living this way has a healthy and purifying effect upon our lives. Further he says, **and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences**, that is, as a byproduct, I hope that our pure motives are also being clearly seen by you, so that you do not think we have any impure motives. Paul wanted them to know that he had a clear conscience before God and he hoped they would have a clear conscience about his motives as well. Certainly when we are convinced that someone has pure motives then we are able to trust them. Paul wanted them to trust him. Part of his convincing them of his trustworthiness was by revealing that he had pure motives and certainly they could recognize this.

However, in highlighting his purity of motives, verse 12, was Paul beginning again to **commend** himself? Put another way, was Paul boasting? It was

possible that some might think that highlighting his pure motives was boasting. But Paul insists, **We are not again commending ourselves to you but** (what we are doing is) **giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart.** First of all, it was not necessary for him to commend himself to them **again** by giving them all kinds of credentials because he had that when he was first introduced to them years ago. Introductions come only once. Second, rather than introducing himself again he was giving them an occasion to be proud of him so that they would have an answer or defense against certain ones who took pride in externals. Here it becomes quite obvious that there were two parties or sects at Corinth; one was pro-Paul and the other was anti-Paul. One looked at things through the lens of the Spirit and the other through the lens of the flesh. Therefore the two groups interpreted Paul's methods and motives of persuading men differently; clearly the two groups were basing their judgments on two different standards, and therefore there are a series of contrasts here that rest on the two different standards that were being applied to interpret Paul. Put another way, in one group's eyes Paul was doing things properly, reasoning *from* Scripture, even though this didn't get a lot of results; and in the other groups eyes he was doing it improperly; he should have been reasoning *to* Scripture and they thought this would get more results; therefore Paul should change his method. This is the same problem Paul faced in 1 Corinthians 1-2, although granting that many had come over to Paul's side now who were formerly against him. There was large disagreement at Corinth over how Paul went about persuading men of the gospel. Some wanted him to use the methods that were so commonly used by the world. These methods all start with man as ultimate; others knew that Paul's method was to start with Scripture as ultimate but they were somewhat ashamed of him. So the series of contrasts here are how the two groups interpreted Paul's persuasion of men. Of course the important thing is to interpret Paul from the Scriptural standpoint and not the pagan standpoint. The Scriptures and paganism interpret the same facts differently. Paganism is just the flesh; we need to be careful because we as Christians share the flesh; so we can think in terms of paganism even though we're not supposed to. But apparently there were some at Corinth who evaluated Paul on the assumption that paganism was true. We would say they were still fleshly; they had not grown to understand the many differences between

Scripture and paganism, in how we think and in how we know and thus how we should speak the gospel to men.

The first difference in interpretation is here in vv 11-12. Paul claimed pure motives; the pagan flesh interpreted this as boasting, but the Scriptural view is that this was reason to be proud of him and it provided ammunition against those who thought according to the pagan flesh. First, it would give those who thought Scripturally **an occasion to be proud of him**. From the Christian point of view the fact of Paul's pure motives before both God and man was something to be proud of. There's nothing wrong with being proud of someone because they live their life openly before God and men. That's a good thing, it's a testimony! Paul had sought to persuade men with pure motives, simply looking out for the best interests of unbelievers and proclaiming the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. They could be **proud of him** for this even though the positive response was not always abundant. Second, it would give his followers some ammunition against the anti-Pauline sect who took pride in the use of human or fleshly reason.

Human reason was the order of the day being just 65 miles down the road from Athens. The Corinthians took pride in being able to use human reason to convince people. They thought Paul should use it because it would make the gospel more effective. However, Paul didn't boast in human reason in persuading men. What Paul considered important was the internal condition of his heart; that he consciously lived his life in the sight of God with pure motives by preaching the gospel message. What really matters is not whether we are adept at making human arguments but whether we have inner humility before God such that we simply preach His word. Therefore Paul was not commending himself but giving them reason to be proud of him and artillery to fire against those who boasted in the flesh.

Verse 13, the second contrast. **For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you.** The Greek **beside ourselves** means "unable to reason normally." We might translate it, "For if we are unable to reason normally, it is for God; if we reason normally, it is for you." By "normally" Paul refers to reasoning according to the flesh. The flesh reasons autonomously, that is, as if self is the law. This is sinful rebellion against God. As Christians we should not reason in the "normal" way, that is, according to the flesh. Instead we should reason according to the Spirit, that is, in submission to the Scriptures. And yet, when we do it sounds like

nonsense to those who reason according to the flesh. To unbelievers it sounds like nonsense because they do not the Spirit of God; to believers who live according to the flesh it also sounds like nonsense. In both cases they are reasoning according to the flesh which says, "I will decide, I am the ultimate authority." For an unbeliever or a believer to do this is to recapitulate the Fall. That's what Eve did in the Garden. She made herself out to be the final arbiter. But the reasoning of the Spirit says, "God is the final arbiter and I subject my reason to His thoughts. I think His thoughts after Him."

So if we reason by the Spirit, from the Scripture and in subjection to the Scripture as we persuade men then those who reason according to the flesh will say **we are beside ourselves**, that we are out of our mind. For example, when Festus heard Paul reason according to the Spirit in Acts 26 he said, "You are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad." He interpreted the reasoning of the Spirit as nonsense. He actually claimed in the original text that it was irrational. Now it is nothing of the sort of course because our God is a rational God, not according to fleshly reasoning but according to true and proper reasoning of which He is the root and ground. But men of flesh come to this conclusion because they are suppressing the truth in unrighteousness and professing to be wise they themselves become irrational fools. The Christian way of thinking is the only way of thinking; it is God's way of thinking and the only thinking that makes sense even of the idea of thinking. So if we present the truth the world will say, you are beside yourself, you are mad. Paul experienced this and you will experience this if you employ reasoning according to the Spirit. However, when they say you are out of your mind it means that you are not thinking sinfully as they but righteously as God. So you should take it as a compliment if someone tells you you are mad. And you should expect as much. Finally you should know that you are pleasing God when you do this. As Paul says, **it is for God**. You are reasoning this way for Him, for His glory. You are thinking the way God wants you to think. Your thinking is supposed to be derivative of His thinking. Indeed, to think one of God's thoughts is to think a better thought than all the combined thoughts of the greatest human philosophers, scientists, etc...Even one thought of God is higher than all of man's thoughts. Now we might point out that Paul didn't let Festus get away with calling him irrational. Instead he told him, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of truth and rationality." That is, it is you who are mad, Festus, not I, you are a creature of God in rebellion against him and it

is your fleshly thinking that is madness. It is quite an interesting dialogue. Immediately after King Agrippa who was also there, and a man well-versed in the OT Scriptures, said to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." You should learn from this dialogue. Festus and Agrippa heard the same words but Festus interpreted them as irrationalism, he was reasoning after the flesh; but for Agrippa, the words were persuasive, that is, the Spirit of

God was at work in the midst of Paul's words and he was getting a glimpse of what it is to reason correctly for the very first time in his entire life! The Spirit was giving Agrippa eyes to see and ears to hear and he was very near persuaded to become a Christian. To this Paul responded that he would pray to God that whether in a short or long time he would become a Christian and all who heard him that day. So, verse 13a, it is for God that we reason according to the Spirit, a reasoning which the world considers madness!

However, on the other side, Paul says, **if we are of sound mind**, that is, if we reason according to the flesh in the way that the natural man reasons then we sound just like the world, we speak on their terms and the world says, you are sane, you **are of sound mind**. Come join us, you speak very well. But if we are to speak in this way **it is for you**, says Paul. That is, we do it to please the natural man's fleshly way of thinking. Now that said, surely this does not please God and surely this does not win people to Christ. So we are not going to reason in terms of the flesh with men. We are not going to appear to them of sound mind. This is nothing more than being politically correct. No. If we are to please God we must be of unsound mind to the world, we must be willing to be considered a fool. But not to worry, in so doing we will at least be pleasing God and at least it will be a message that is true and rational and that can be used by God to open their eyes and bring them to salvation.

So then Paul was impelled to speak as if insane! And why was he impelled to think and speak and sound so out of touch with fleshly reason? "Because" verse 14, **the love of Christ controls us**. Christ's love impels us forward; it urges us to resist fleshly reasoning. It is the love of Christ that drives us, impels us to certain logical conclusions. Perhaps you have not thought through the compelling logic of Christ's love as pre-eminently displayed on the cross. If not Paul had and so let us think through the logic with him. The logic is verses 14-15, **That one died for all, therefore all died; 15and 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. The end is obvious, that we should no longer live for ourselves but for Him, the one who is the very embodiment of the gospel. Let's see how he moves logically to this end.

There are four links in this logic chain. The first link in the chain is **That one died for all.** Who is the one who died for all? Adam. Not Jesus, don't say Jesus, everybody wants to say Jesus, we're not to Jesus yet, there's a chain to get to Jesus and that chain starts with the one man Adam who **died for all** or in place of all since He is the first human. The second link in the logic chain is **Therefore all died.** Who are the all who died? That's us, the human race. Why is that logical? Why if Adam died for all is it logical that all died? Because we were in Adam. So when he died we died. The human race began with a solitary human being, one man, in whom all men were seminally and from whom all men therefore derive. Adam is the father of the human race. When he sinned we sinned and so when he died we died. Even Eve died when Adam died because Eve came from who? From Adam. You say, that's not fair, I didn't sin in the likeness of Adam, I didn't eat the fruit. But when you posit that line of reasoning you're reasoning according to the flesh. That is sinful thinking. It literally is sin. Any thinking that is not God's thinking is sin. You have to stay with the reasoning of the Spirit and the reasoning of the Spirit is that the one man Adam died and therefore all humans died because we sinned in Him (Rom 5:12, 15). Now look at the third link in the logic chain. Verse 15, **and He died for all.** Who is the one who **died for all** this second time? Jesus. This is Jesus. Look at the chain again; Adam died for all, therefore all died and so Christ died for all. Do you see that the same group that died in Adam is the same group Christ died for? So much for limited atonement. So much for the idea that Christ died only for the elect. For whom did Christ die? Christ died for all men in Adam which is each and every human being. This is unlimited atonement. If I'm reading the Bible rightly then all men died in Adam and that is the identical set of people Christ died for. So what unlimited atonement means is that Christ died for all men that died in Adam. Now it does not mean that all men who died in Adam are saved in Christ; that would mean that all men would ultimately go to heaven and that is what is known as universalism. We're definitely not saying universalism. But what we are saying is that Christ died for all men provisionally on the cross. But the application of the cross is only to those

who believe. So if you don't believe Christ provided salvation for you but you don't enjoy it until you believe and it is applied. That's the unlimited provision of the atonement with a limited application to those who believe. Unlimited atonement is what the text teaches here and many other places. But it's not only textual, it's also logical. Paul is compelled by this logic, if all died in Adam then Christ died for all. You can't, textually or logically, deny the unlimited atonement. The other view commonly held is limited atonement, sometimes called particular or definite, it has a series of names, but what it says is that Christ died for all kinds of men but not all men without exception. And what they mean is that Christ died only for the elect. The elect are saved they say and so therefore Christ only died for the elect because the cross saves. If Christ had died for all men then all men would be saved. However, the missing ingredient in their thinking is that a person must believe in order to have the provision applied to them. They have the cross automatically applying itself. But the cross work is a provision only that is applied at the point in time when a person believes. So the provision is for all but the application is only to those who believe. That's why we hold to unlimited atonement and this verse teaches it just as strongly if not more so than many others. For example, Rom 5:18, "as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men." 1 John 2:2, "and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world." 2 Pet 2:1, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves." Over and over the Scripture show the unlimited provision of the atonement. And here that's what we're seeing. All died in Adam, Christ died for all. That's the logic of it and that's what impresses Paul so much in this passage. When he says in verse 14, **having concluded this**, the Greek word means to come to a conclusion after a cognitive process. Paul thought about the love of Christ and from that he saw the love of Christ for all men, that the one Christ died for all and from there he reasoned back that one died for all and all in him. So Paul concluded that this was the brilliance of God. It is why we have to maintain a literal Genesis. If you ditch that all died in the one literal Adam then you have to ditch that the one literal Christ died for all. They are interconnected in such a way that without one you can't have the other. So if you ditch the fall in Adam then you ditch salvation in Christ. It's that simple. That's the

brilliance of our God in structuring history in this way. The culminating effect, Paul says, is the love of Christ that impels us, urges us forward to continue to persuade men with this logic that is to the natural, fleshly man, utterly irrational, but is in all truth soberly rational.

Now the purpose or end or goal to which Christ's love for us is pointing, namely, the final link in the logic chain of verse 15, **so that they who live**, that is, those of us who have eternal life because we have believed, **no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who died and rose again on our behalf**. We are not here for ourselves, we are not here to live for ourselves, we are here to live for Christ. Is that how you are living? I hope you are not wasting your life on yourself. You are here to live for Christ. Christ is life. Don't waste your life on yourself. If I may move you some way by directing you to this sobering logic and to live for Him who died and rose again for you. Live for Christ, that's why He died for you, that's why He died for me, that's why He died for all, so that those who receive eternal life through faith in him might stop living for themselves and truly live by living for Him!

There is no one else, there is only Christ. Note the gospel content at the end of verse 16, a parallel to 1 Cor 15:3-4, that Christ, who is the Son of God, died and rose again on our behalf. That is the gospel and that alone is the gospel. To be the gospel it must include Christ's person and His work, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that He died and that He rose and gives eternal life to all who believe. Have you believed in Him? Have you personally put your trust in Christ and what He has done for you? There is no other name under heaven by which men may be saved than the name of Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter if you go to church all your life, no one is going to be saved by going to church. It doesn't matter if you have been baptized, no one is going to go to heaven because they were baptized. It doesn't matter if you attended Bible studies or you believe in God or you followed Christ. All that matters is that you believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died for your sins and rose again. There is no other gospel and Paul said if anyone preaches any other gospel let him be anathema. Have you believed? Believe in Him today and know with certainty right now your eternal destiny.

In conclusion, the logic derived from the love of Christ by which we persuade men is compelling; the one man Adam died and all died in Him but Christ died for all that all who believe in Him will live their lives for Him. If you

haven't believed in Him believe in Him today, what are you waiting for? If you have believed in Him, persuade men to believe in Him. What are you waiting for? Are you not impelled like Paul from the love of Christ to persuade men? We've explained how. All that is needed is your response. We have short term mission trips that can be arranged, we have fair ministry and outreach. There are people who are lost and dying.

[Back To The Top](#)

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