

Confession #5:
We've Sometimes Missed Our Mission

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Text: 2 Cor. 5:1-16

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Series: 2 Corinthians

Introduction: Open your Bible this morning to **2 Corinthians 5**. We are in a series in 2 Corinthians called "Confessions of an Imperfect Church". Our confession today is: "We Have Sometimes Have Missed the Mission".

Corinth was very much an imperfect church, and Paul wrote this letter to them trying to correct their errors. Most of the New Testament letters were written to correct wrong practices. Well Paul confronts a wrong practice in 2 Corinthians 5.

This morning I want to challenge the framework by which you see all of your life. I want to give you a framework to build your life around. We often compartmentalize our lives, don't we? We feel and act like Christians at church, but we go home, and sometimes we don't feel so Christian. We go to work, and sometimes we forget who we belong to. If that hurts you to hear that, that's good. That's the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Listen to His voice!

But we need a framework that carries out the Christian mission in all areas of our lives. We are not just Sunday Christians. We are sold out Christians. True Christians want to honor Christ in every area of life.

So how can we keep the mission of Christ front and center? What should be foremost in our minds as we live our life?

I. Our mission requires anticipation: Be Longing for Heaven (vs. 1-8).

A. We're all broken – but Christ's full redemption will bring us wholeness.

We need to be forward looking to the end of our mission, when Christ will come and restore all things and bring them back to righteousness and true holiness. Paul talks about this in verses 1-8. We talked about this last week, but let's review.

2 Corinthians 5:1–8 (ESV) — “For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, 3 if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. 4 For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always

of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

So Paul tells us in verses 1-8 that He's longing for heaven. Thinking about heaven gives Paul courage and encouragement. And there's a good reason to long for heaven. He's burdened. His body is broken. He's weighted down. He's not liking living in this body of pain a lot of the time. Some of you are saying, "Wow, Paul was human!" That's right. Paul was not a superhero. He had the same weaknesses as we all have. But he longed for heaven. Don't you long for heaven?

Christians feel out of place in this world.

We are strangers and foreigners. Have any of you ever lived in another country? **You just don't get the customs.** How many of you ever tried to take a foreign language? How many of you remember very much of what you learned? Very few! Why? Because trying talk in a different language is fun for about 2 minutes. Then it feels like you've got marbles in your mouth. And most of the time you try saying something you end up saying something very stupid. If you are going to try to learn, you've got to be ready to be laughed at. Why? Because it's hard. Then try to live in a foreign country. You feel out of place. Everything feels different. You long for home. That's what Paul's getting at. We are not at home in this world. This world is so messed up!

We are all living in a body that's broken.

We need Christ to fix us. That's called redemption. Christ comes to save us. Not just to justify us and forgive us. But He's come to transform us. Anyone who says they are forgiven by God and justified, but there are no fingerprints of God on him, and there is no evidence that they are growing and changing, then they are not forgiven. With forgiveness God gives us transformation. With God's mercy comes a metamorphosis of your life. Saved people start getting healed in their heart and mind. God starts talking to them through the Bible and setting their mind and their thoughts straight.

Babies grow, right? Anything with life in it grows. If you aren't growing in Christ, then you should think about whether or not the life of Christ is really in you.

Ok, this message though is for believers, and if you know Christ you know you are messed up. You know you are broken. You feel it. Every day thoughts go through your mind, and you have to stop them. You have to "*gird up the loins of your mind*". That's Peter's way of saying, you've got to control your thoughts. You can't just let your mind wander where ever it wants to. Why? Because your mind and heart are broken. You are still in a fallen world. You've got to fix your mind on heaven. Paul talks about how he sets his mind on heaven and eternal things in Colossians 3. He says...

Colossians 3:1-3, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden

with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

And so you are like Paul, you are longing for heaven. You are desiring to be with Christ. How many of you feel that way this morning. If Christ came right now it would be alright with you. You are longing for that moment. Well, that’s normal for a Christian. You should feel that way.

B. To die is to be immediately present with Christ, that’s something to anticipate!

If you are a Christian, when you die, you will be immediately with the Lord. “To be absent from the body” is “to be present with the Lord” (verse 8, NKJV).

What happens when we die

Verses 1-9 – Paul is talking about what happens to a believer when he dies. He says he doesn’t want to be found without the tent of his body. He says that’s like being unclothed. What in the world is he talking about? He’s talking about what happens to believers when they die and go to heaven before the Second Coming of Christ.

Being with Christ before the Second Coming is an amazing wonderful thing, but the kingdom has not arrived yet. Christ has not yet come to destroy sin, Satan, death, and wickedness in the earth. On the earth, Christians are still being trampled on. When you see what heaven is like before the Second Coming, the Lord’s people in heaven are always praying for Christ to come quickly and bring a recompense for evil.

Look for example at **Revelation 6:9-10**, “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls [they do not yet have their glorified bodies, they are just souls] of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. 10 They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?””

So if you know Christ, you go straight to heaven, but you are just going to be waiting for Christ to come again and bring justice to the earth. When he comes, all the saints in heaven get their new glorified bodies first.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

So we are longing for heaven, but when we arrive in heaven, we are going to be longing for the Second Coming. We are going to be asking Christ, “How long, sovereign Lord before you will judge?” We are going to be awaiting that moment when we come with Christ and judge the earth, and Christ sets up His kingdom! King of kings and Lord of lords!

And when Christ comes, He will restore heaven and earth. **2 Peter 3:9-13**, “The

Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. 11 ¶ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

So Paul goes from teaching us about anticipation of our mission to satisfaction in our mission. We know what God will ultimately do, but what should we do?

II. We need the right motivation in our mission: Be Pleasing to the Lord (vs. 9-11).

2 Corinthians 5:9 (ESV) —“So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.”

We are not here to please our selves. “Just two choices on the shelf: pleasing God or pleasing self.

The Right Part for the Car

If I have a car, and the timing belt goes, I may want to please myself and take a short cut. I might want to put a rope in there and make due. But it’s going to blow my engine. In the same way, we need to have the right motivation.

Without the right motivation, our works are vain. **1 Corinthians 3:11-15**, “For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and **the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.** 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, **he will receive a reward.** 15 If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”

There is a fiery test of my works at the Day I see Christ. I want my labor to count for eternity, not just now.

2 Corinthians 5:10-11 (ESV) —“10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.”

III. We need the right domination in our mission: Be Controlled God and Not Self (vs. 12-16).

A. Dominated by God's work in our heart. The focus is on the heart, not the outward appearance. Not commending the appearance, but letting God work in your heart.

Are you truly controlled by God? Or are you controlled by the opinions of others?

Paul has been totally misjudged. "12 We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart."

The people at Corinth were judging everything by outward appearances. Paul is actually referencing 1 Samuel 16, "Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart".

Paul is saying, we should take joy in leaders that have humble and God-centered hearts. We should be filled with joy and boasting in "what is in the heart".

There wasn't much to Paul's outward appearance. In fact, Paul loved to boast at how unqualified he appeared as far as outward credentials. Paul was a ball of weakness. He wasn't eloquent. He wasn't handsome. He had some prestigious learning, but he called his education a bunch of trash. I mean this guy would never make it in today's media savvy environment.

But see, that outward stuff is so superficial. The power of the Christian life is in the heart! It's not in the outward appearance. Are you humble? Are you broken? Are you surrendered to God? Are you compassionate? Do you feel God's graciousness to you and His welcoming presence? Do you sense the comfort of God the Holy Spirit? What is going on in your heart? That's the measure of Christianity.

It's not knowledge. You need knowledge to know Christ. You need a sound understanding of who He is. But you can be wise and go to hell. It's not service that gets us in. We can't get into heaven on anyone's coat-tails either. Family won't get you in.

True Christianity is heart religion. It's practicing the presence of God in your heart. This is really important, because in a few minutes we're going to talk about your ministry. And we've got to get out of the mentality that your ministry is only in the church. Yes, you have a significant responsibility to believers. You must edify them. That's the ministry of edification. But later we'll find that we all have a "ministry of reconciliation". And that is made possible by you constantly practicing your worship for God in every action. You are constantly loving and devoted to God in your heart.

Paul says, let's boast in the heart, not in appearance. Appearance can be very mistaken. God looks on the heart!!

Sometimes being controlled by God means you come off as totally insane. That's what Paul says in verse 13, "For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you".

B. Dominated by God's love.

His Love Controls Us

14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;

The word “control” here means to “be gripped by”¹ to be “laid hold of”.² The idea here is that the realization of Christ’s love for us moves us and actually controls us. The realization lays hold of us and grips our soul and causes us to obey Christ.

Christ’s love controls (grips, seizes) us. Christ’s love controls me when I consider that He **DIED** for me. Christ’s death is my death. My penalty is paid. This is Paul’s point. Christ’s death was *substitutionary*. I know Christ loves me and all his elect because He died for them all. We are all united to Him in His death. **Verse 14**, “have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died [LITERALLY “ALL HAVE DIED”]”. God looks at us in Christ and reckons Christ’s death to be our death.

What is it that proves Christ’s love? Answer: His death.

Explanation: If you are in Christ, you are set free from eternal death in hell! Gehenna will not be your eternal home. You will never be burned in hell for one moment even though you deserve it for all eternity. Why? Because Christ took your hell. He died your death. When Christ took hell on the Cross, it was your hell. You are united to Him in His death. Paul says, Christ’s love for me constrains me, controls me, grips me. That is because He took my death and hell on Calvary.

Illustration: It is as if I am sentenced to the electric chair, and I sit down to go to my death, and the foreman of the prison stops me and says, “Wait! Your death penalty has already been carried out on another. You are free to go!”

Are you controlled by Christ’s love? Is the fact that Christ loves you the center of your universe? Why would He love me? Because that’s the kind of God Christ is! He loves unworthy sinners. There is nothing you can do to earn His love. There is no work that He requires. It is an absolutely free gift to all who believe.

Are you gripped each moment with Christ’s love? Does Christ’s love overwhelm you and drive you?

His Love CHANGES Us

15 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.

Christ radically changes our desires, or love. Christ died so that we would no longer be ruled by our depraved desires but be ruled by Him. We no longer “live for ourselves”.

Illustration: When I was in college I was to spend a summer evangelizing in Philadelphia. I had just a couple weeks in Chicago to see Jill before I left. I didn’t have to be convinced to pursue her while I was home. Her parents had certain rules when we were together. They were always close by, but I did not need a lot of motivation to spend time with Jill.

¹Friberg, Timothy ; Friberg, Barbara ; Miller, Neva F.: *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich. : Baker Books, 2000 (Baker’s Greek New Testament Library 4), S. 367

²Strong, James: *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*. electronic ed. Ontario : Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996, S. G4912

The moment she said, “Would you like to come over?” I did not need a lot of convincing. I thought of her beautiful smile, her dark hair, blue eyes. My answer was always “of course!” Because she is beautiful to me. She makes my world stop. Her love seizes me.

The Love of Christ Changes Me!!

I can never be the same! 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV) — 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

This change dominates me because I am a new creation. Ezekiel 36:26–27 (ESV) — “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”

Galatians 2:20 (ESV) — 20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And 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.

C. Dominated by God’s perspective.

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer”.

1. When we come to know Christ our view of **people** changes.
From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh

Paul no longer evaluates people according to external, temporary, earthly standards. In other words, in this world, Bill Gates is different than the man who collects Bill Gates’ garbage as we measure them according to earthly standards. Gates is a millionaire. The garbage man is not. They differ in wealth, social standing, and their ability to help themselves. Gates has the clear advantage. But as believers, we no longer judge people according to earthly standards. Having become Christians, we know there is no difference between Bill Gates and Bill Gates’ garbage man. They are both sinners in need of a Savior. Neither have a standing with God. Bill Gates’ riches, social standing, and abilities and intellect will not help him with Christ. Bill Gates and all men need Christ!

2. When we come to know Christ our view of **Christ** changes.

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer”.

Paul also says he evaluates Christ differently now that he is saved. **Verse 16b**, “yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more”.

Saul the Pharisee viewed Jesus differently than Paul the Apostle. He no longer viewed Christ as simply a Jewish rabbi that was turning people away from Judaism. Now He viewed Him as the God of the whole world and the only Saviour, God in human flesh.

Kent Hughes comments:

At one time Paul, as an arch-Pharisee, had judged Jesus Christ according to the flesh and found him to be wanting. To him, Jesus was a messianic pretender who pushed too far and got what was coming to him when he was condemned by the Sanhedrin and crucified by the Romans. In fact, Jesus' crucifixion proved to Paul that Jesus was cursed by God because the Law in Deuteronomy 21:23 categorically states that "a hanged man is cursed by God" (cf. Galatians 3:13). Jesus' suffering on the cross was therefore an emphatic and deserved rejection of Jesus' messianic pretensions.

The personal irony now for Paul in Corinth is that he himself had come to suffer the same disregard and rejection by some in the Corinthian church.³

Conclusion: We need to know our Mission! Next week we'll talk about exactly what that mission is – Christ reconciling sinners to Himself!

We need to a solid anticipation of what Christ is going to do. This world is not our home. We need to have the right motivation for the mission—not pleasing self, but God. We need to have the right domination – controlled and changed by the love of Christ.

³ Hughes, R. K. (2006). *2 Corinthians : Power in weakness*. Preaching the Word (117). Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books.