

WHAT COMPELS US

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-17

Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences. For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you.

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

On April 29, 2015 the Baltimore Orioles played the Chicago White Sox at Camden Yards in Baltimore.

The game was one of 162 that season, but this particular game set an unexpected record. For the first time in Major League Baseball history a game was played before zero fans. No one attended the game.

The fans were locked out. Violent riots that day in the city of Baltimore caused baseball officials to close the gates. The game was played to keep from having to make it up later in

the year, but without any spectators.

Here's how one reporter described a moment in the game, "Chris Davis might have hit the quietest home run for the home team in Orioles history... The only muffled cheers came from a pocket of die-hards locked out of Camden Yards... On this day, 30,000 Orioles fans were muted. The wild applause was silenced.

There were no fans to stand for a standing ovation. Just Davis' teammates in the dugout coming over for high-fives. Davis commented, "*When you're rounding the bases, and the only cheers you hear are from outside the stadium, it's a weird feeling.*" This was the kind of feeling to which Paul had grown accustomed.

Spiritually speaking, Paul hit home run after home run... *He preached to kings... He wrote the lion's share of the NT Scriptures... He planted churches all over the Mediterranean world... Paul applied salvation by grace through faith in a way that changed the world...*

Yet seldom did anyone cheer for Paul when he rounded the bases. There may've been a few friends in the dugout giving him a high-five, but the only cheers came from *outside the stadium - from heaven itself.*

No *standing Os* for Paul. No wild applause. The only cheers he heard were muffled, and from far, far away.

Yet amazingly, Paul didn't need the cheers of earthly fans - or man's applause. He had a deeper motivation.

In this AM's text he talks about what propelled him.

The fear of God... the love of Christ... and the way he saw people... were driving forces in his life.

Here's an outline for this morning's study: **the fear of God, the love of Christ, and the way we see people...**

He begins in verse 11, "**Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...**" Paul had just spoken of "**the judgment seat of Christ**" - or the "**bema-seat.**"

Every Greco-Roman city had a "**bema.**" In the agora, or market, there was a decorated, raised platform. It was where local officials conducted town business.

*Awards were passed out and court was held at the **Bema.*** It was a place of reckoning - where people were held accountable for the good and bad they'd done.

And Paul had stood before the "**bema**" in Corinth.

You can read about the incident in Acts 18. Paul was falsely accused and shuffled before the regional magistrate. In the end, his case was dismissed and he was released. The frivolous charges were dropped.

But Paul knew the tension - the fear and trepidation that comes when your destiny is no longer in your own hands - when your fate is being decided - when you're exposed and vulnerable to the speculation of others.

Here he refers to it as a "**terror.**" It's fearful and frightful - and it's an experience we'll all undergo one day. For we will all stand before the **bema of Christ.**

In contrast to how Chris Davis felt about hitting a home run with no one in the stands - when Paul served the Lord, I

doubt if he even noticed that the stadium was empty - that there were no fans in the stands - that no one cheered him or even booed him.

For he cared about the judgment of one person. As an ole saying goes, “He played to an audience of One.”

Paul knew he would be subject to the scrutiny of His Lord, and that was enough to preoccupy his concern.

Let me remind you, there’s a difference between the judgment seat of Christ and the Great White Throne of Judgment. Unbelievers, not believers, are tried at the end of the age at God’s Great White Throne. There the judgment is based on a person’s deeds. And this will be disastrous for anyone who hopes they were good enough for God. The Bible warns, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” No one’s performance is satisfactory. Everyone at God’s Great White Throne is judged *lacking*, and ends up cast into the lake of fire.

People are saved by the work of Jesus, not their own works. This is why believers are spared God’s Great White Throne, *but we will all stand at heaven’s bema.*

In 1 Corinthians 3 we’re taught it’s our service for the Lord that will be tried. We’ll see “of what sort it is...”

In other words, our motivation will be *inspected*. Did we serve our Lord Jesus sincerely and joyfully and gratefully - or did we do it from selfish motivation?

Everyone who stands before the *bema* is assured of heaven. It’s the reward for their service that hangs in the balance... *and that alone is enough to create some sweaty*

palms and trembling knees. “**Terror**” is still an appropriate word. Not that we’ll fear hell for ourselves, but we’ll fear that we fell short of keeping others from going there. Trust me, that will be frightful enough.

Paul lived under the realization that he would be held accountable by Jesus for *the grace he’d received and the truth he was shown.* **He didn’t need the applause of man to take seriously his calling from God.**

And so he did all he could to *“persuade men.”*

And notice the word he uses... When Paul preached he wasn’t making a suggestion, or merely offering an opinion. He wasn’t content for you to walk away, thinking, *“That was interesting. That was entertaining.”*

Rather, Paul tried to be *persuasive.* He wanted to wrestle your mind from its previous position and force it to draw a new conclusion. He called men to *repent.*

The Greeks were the ancient philosophers. They were used to intellectual sparring and philosophical debate. They weren’t afraid to challenge someone’s world view. And this is the approach we need when we share our faith. The goal is not just to inform, or entertain, or make a person feel good - it’s to persuade them to come under the authority of *the Lord Jesus.*

Paul’s intent was to *“persuade men...”* but he hoped he didn’t have to persuade the Corinthians, and he knew he certainly didn’t have to convince God....

He says in verse 11, **“But we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.”**

In the marketplace - in the public square - Paul was aware

he needed to prove his character. To win the minds of people, you first have to win a hearing, and you can't do that unless you conduct yourself and your ministry with integrity. Paul knew there were no free passes among the heathen. Respect had to be earned. *And this is a lesson for us...* don't resent it when the people you're trying to reach hold you at arms length until you first prove to them that you can be trusted. **The world has every right to scrutinize our integrity.**

But not so with God and His people.

God knew Paul's motives. He was honest with God. And even if he wasn't, there's no hiding from God anyway. The Lord showed His servant grace. God knew Paul's flaws, but also saw the apostle's sincerity.

And Paul hoped he had earned the trust of the Corinthians. He'd spent time with them. *They knew him and he knew them.* He had certainly done enough to prove to them his sincerity and his love for the truth.

Both God and the Corinthians knew Paul's heart.

Paul writes, **"For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart."** Paul proved the legitimacy of his ministry by the motivation of his heart.

Whereas, there were critics of Paul in Corinth who relied on appearance. They expected to be respected as a pastor simply because they looked the part. They were all about the right persona and image. In contrast to Paul, their boast was in appearance, not in heart.

I know pastors today who go to great effort to appear sincere. They dress, and talk, and act like they think a pastor is suppose to dress, and talk, and act. They've got business cards, and ordination certificates, and all the pastoral trappings. *But where are their scars?*

How have they laid down their lives for the Church?

Show me their faithfulness and their commitment. There's more to being a minister than just appearance.

Paul didn't worry about *looking-sincere* in the eyes of people. He was all about *being-sincere* before God.

In fact, when it comes to appearance Paul didn't have much to brag about. Remember, shortly after his conversion Paul escaped persecution in Damascus by being lowered from the wall in a basket. Apparently, in order to fit in a basket, he wasn't a big or tall man.

There's a third century novel called "[*The Acts of Paul and Thecla*](#)" that gives a written description of Paul.

"[He was small in size with meeting eyebrows, with a rather large nose, bald-headed, bow-legged, strongly built, full of grace...](#)" Rather than tall, dark, and handsome, Paul was short and stocky. He had Jewish features - a big nose, and bushy eyebrows. He was also bald and walked like he'd been riding bareback.

Add to that, Paul's eye condition. They were often infected and bulging with puss. If sunglasses had existed, he would've hid behind some Ray-Bans...

I'm sure his body was tired and twisted. And he was

tattooed with scars from his beatings and stoning...

As they say, *Paul had the perfect face for radio.*

Hey, the apostle would've never made the cover of GQ magazine, but all this made him a walking lesson that in ministry it's heart *not appearance* that matters!

Yet Corinth's false teachers - Paul's critics - were just the opposite. To them, *appearance was everything.*

They looked like FCA leaders - the big men on campus - muscular, rugged, good-looking jocks.

These were people who tried hard to be cool. They were the Christian hipsters - *tall on appearance, but short on substance.* These were the preachers who wore designers jeans, got tatted up, and put product in their hair. These guys were more about *marketing* than *ministering*. They had *lots of hype* but *little holiness.*

Hey, I'm not against being fashionable and relevant, and trying to reach the culture. But Paul was proof, **the greatest determinator of a pastor's success is not the labels in his wardrobe, but the longings of his heart.**

Remember, God's calling of David. The Lord sent Samuel to the house of Jesse to choose a new king.

Jesse had seven sons - strong and strapping young men - and they each passed before Samuel... but six times the verdict was the same, **"Neither has the LORD chosen this one."** That is until number 7 walked in...

He was a little guy - the runt of the litter - and he'd been in the fields tending sheep. I'll bet he reeked.

But the Lord spoke to Samuel, **"Arise, anoint him; for this is**

the one!" Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon *David* from that day forward."

It reminds me of the sports section in the newspaper before a big game. I'm not sure if they still do it, but it used to be that on the Friday before the Georgia-Florida game the AJC experts would compare the strengths and weaknesses of both teams, and pick a winner.

There were two columns - one for the Dawgs and one for the Gators. They'd analyze the *rushing game, passing game, defense, special teams, coaching* - the team with the edge in that area got the check mark.

Then they'd add up all the checks and the team with the most was declared the prognosticator's pick.

But the last category in the newspaper's list was by far the most important. For after *rushing, passing, defense, special teams, coaching* - the sports writers added a final category - they analyzed the **intangibles**.

And this is always the trickiest and most subjective evaluation to make - the *intangibles* are the ingredients not seen with the naked eye - the subsurface traits.

These are the components that don't show up on the stat sheet... Yet all football fans know that it's the heart of a team - their grit and determination that's most vital.

And so it is in serving the Lord. It doesn't matter how you look, or speak, or posture - if you're sincere and pure in heart the Lord can and will use you mightily!

God's criteria is different than ours. As Samuel was told, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." When the Corinthians evaluated a ministry they looked at the paint job, and never bothered to peek under the hood.

Corinth emphasized image and sophistication, which meant if Paul ever acted a little crazy, and didn't cater to the proper protocols - he was further alienated.

He says in verse 13, "For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you."

The phrase, "*beside ourselves*" meant "off your rocker" or as they say, "a few fries short of a happy meal" or just plain "nuts." At times, Paul's obedience to God made him appear crazy to the people around him.

If you've never had this experience; trust me, follow the Lord long enough and you will. Out-of-the-blue God's Spirit prompts you to speak to a stranger... or go to place for no particular reason... or make a phone call to someone who haven't spoken to in years...

To obey you have to battle thoughts like, "*this is crazy... what am I doing... this makes no sense...*" And it especially stings when other people think the same.

But here's the beauty of obedience. What starts out looking and feeling "crazy" often ends with God working a miracle... *the stranger embraces Christ - the unplanned place becomes the site of a divine appointment - the random call is received*

in the nick of time... Paul had enough of these experiences that he concludes, “if you think we’re crazy, it is for God...”

At times obedience to God caused Paul to do a crazy thing, but at other times obedience to God led him to take the solid, sound, stable course of action.

It worked both ways. This is why he says, “if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you.” Paul was willing to do *the crazy* or *the common-sense* if he could help the Corinthians.

Either way, Paul didn’t take an opinion poll before he acted. He never strategized decisions to be politically correct. Paul’s sole motivation was to obey Jesus!

In the end, he didn’t give a rip what people thought of *him*. It wasn’t about protecting his image, it was about pointing people to Jesus and bringing glory to God.

For Paul says in verse 14, “The love of Christ compels us...” *All that Paul endured - every rigor demanded of him - every road the man was called to travel - he did so because he was overtaken by the love of Jesus. The love of Christ held him in its grip!*

As John wrote (in 1 John 4:19), “We love Him because He first loved us.” Love is devotion’s catalyst.

Here in Chapter 5 Paul mentions three motivations for serving Jesus: **rewards**, and **fear**, and now **love**.

All three are powerful - but without a doubt the highest and holiest incentive for serving Jesus is love!

Knowing in your heart of hearts that Jesus loves you prompts a person to want to love Him in return.

That Jesus, the Lord of glory, died to save you, rose to live in you, will come again for you, in the meantime promises to live with you - this is what captivates and dominates a person's heart. This great love causes a person to go anywhere, do anything for Jesus' sake.

A person motivated by the love of Christ is like the Ever Ready bunny - he keeps going and going...

If you're tank is full of love you'll never run out of gas.

Paul speaks of Christ's love, **"because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died..."** Here's a biblical truth about our salvation: when Jesus died, we died with Him. Our sin nature was crucified with Christ.

Think of it like **"copy and paste."** Your computer allows you to copy text from one document, and paste it into another. And God can also **"copy and paste..."**

Spiritually, He copied you, living in the 21st century, and pasted you on the cross alongside Jesus in the 1st century. You now share in all that Jesus accomplished.

When Jesus died the *old, sinful you* died with Him. Romans 6:6, **"our old man was crucified with Christ."**

But why did Jesus die? "That those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." We died with Jesus in order to live with and for Jesus. We died to our old desires and lusts to rise with Jesus and enjoy a brand, new life.

In Christ every Christian has a new identity, a new nature, a

new disposition, a new love, a new purpose, even a new power - and God figures the least we can do is embrace this new life, and live it to the fullest...

This is why Paul says in verse 16, "Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer." Here's a verse with profound implications. Understand verse 16, and it'll revolutionize how you see yourself and others...

Paul uses Jesus as an example... On earth the disciples knew Him as a man. They related to him physically. They *shook hands and rubbed shoulders*.

Several years ago Popular Mechanics published an picture of what a first century Jew probably looked like. If you think Jesus was a red-headed Irishman, or a dark-skinned African think again. Jesus was Jewish.

But here's the deal, now that Jesus has ascended to heaven it really doesn't matter what He looked like, for today we relate to Jesus spiritually... The fact He was human is theologically important, but the specifics - *His height, weight, skin color, etc.* - is no longer vital.

This is why God didn't provide us photos or portraits of Jesus. They would only get in the way of us knowing Him. Today we relate to Jesus *spiritually* not *physically*.

And this is the way God wants us to view one another. Since we're new in Christ, alive spiritually, *why focus any longer on the physical, outward person?*

Why not look beneath the surface? As best we can, God

wants us to look beyond our outward appearance and relate to ourselves and to one another spiritually.

And the first way to apply this principle is personally. *Why get bummed out about your own appearance?*

It's been said, "Mirrors show us what we look like, not who we are." The real you isn't the outer person, it's the person of the heart. As we discussed earlier in Chapter 5 our body is just a tent. It's temporary housing - it's the outer shell that cracks and weathers.

In fact, a Christian is like a pecan. You're more than just the shell. Actually, you've got to crack the shell to get the nut. *That's the real you... you're the **nut** inside!*

Literally, in God's eyes I'm the tasty, delicious nut.

Years ago, I ran across a quote by super model, Carole Mallory. She stated, "Everywhere I went my figure followed. But I learned I am not my figure."

She's learned not to let her appearance define her.

You're looks are not you. You're personhood involves more than *how fit you are*, or *how skinny you are*, or *how athletic you are* - the real person is who you are deep down inside. You are what you are spiritually.

Guys, the next time you see a super model - or just a pretty girl - remember you're not looking at the girl.

The real person is underneath the wrapping paper.

As a matter of fact, give it time, and that wrapping paper will wilt, and sag, and lose a lot of its luster.

In one of Arthur Conan Doyle's novels, Sherlock Holmes states, "The most attractive woman I ever knew was hanged for poisoning three little children for their insurance money." *So much for outward beauty...*

And yet, we as humans are attracted to appearance.

I read of a woman who posted a fake profile on an internet dating site. The profile photo was of a friend - *a professional model*. Despite the pretty picture the woman tried to paint herself as disgusting as possible.

Here's her self summary, "I enjoy kicking cups out of homeless people's hands," "I tell my parents I'm in law school so they'll continue to pay my bills," "I do me... if you can't handle me at my worst you don't deserve me at my best." The obnoxious confessions continued.

Well guess what? The fake profile got 150 messages in 24 hours. In the 2 weeks the profile was online 1000 men sent messages. It was the lure of appearance that drew these men to a woman who would ruin their lives.

That's why this morning's passage is so important. It teaches us that appearance can be deceptive...

The flashy pastor might be a disaster.

The pretty girl might be an ugly person.

Appearance doesn't reveal the real person. Learn to see others, even yourself, for who they are spiritually.

So if you're overweight... keep working your plan to lose a few pounds! *If you got a beard...* man, trim it every now and then... *I'm not saying we should ignore these things, just*

don't get all that caught up in them.

Certainly, don't get bummed out by them. The *real you* is the *inner you* - a *new you*. You're transformed in Christ - you're being fitted for God's Kingdom. God loves you! You're *body* is just a pup tent that one day you'll trade in on a glorious mansion!

For in verse 17, Paul writes triumphantly, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Realize Christians are a new species of creature, that prior to the first century, never roamed the Earth.

You might know people who believe aliens are coming to our planet... *well, they're already here*. In Christ we're the aliens. This world is not our home.

If you're in Christ you are "*a new creation.*"

Yet someone might ask, *in what ways have old things passed away, and have all things become new?*

I'd like to know because when I go home today I'll walk into the same ole house, to the same ole husband, with the same ole kids, and the same ole problems. What's passed away? What's become new?

If you looked at me and my circumstances on the outside there wasn't a lot of difference in me the day before I was saved, with the day afterwards. There was a smile on my face and a bounce in my step, but I was the same height and weight - the same eye color - etc!

It was *inwardly, spiritually* where the transformation took place. God put *His Holy Spirit* in *my hollow spirit*.

The OT talks about the transformation that occurs in the believer in the following terms... *God takes out our heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh.*

Before I embraced Jesus I was hard-headed and hard-hearted - stubborn and stuck-in my ways. I was a tough nut to crack. But Jesus changed me. He took by calloused heart and made it as soft as a baby's behind.

A transplant occurred in me. God's Spirit took out my heart of stone, and replaced it with a loving, and sensitive, and pliable, and even teachable heart.

When I embraced Jesus I instantly became alive to God. His love and nature flooded mine. He changed my tendencies. **He made me compliant rather than defiant.** My heart was filled with love. I now loved God and other people - even people I'd never loved before.

I know Jesus delivers from drugs, and alcohol, and the like... but there was a time early in my life when racial prejudice darkened my world. I don't blame it on being a *southerner*. I blame it on being a *sinner*.

Racism is not about *skin*, it's about *sin*.

But at 20 years old, Jesus saved me, and the very moment He did my attitude toward people changed!

A light shined into my darkness. I suddenly loved you, because Jesus loved you - *regardless of your flesh tones*. My hard-heart became a soft-heart.

Verse 16 is just **the first step**. We need to look past the flesh, and its color, and see each other spiritually.

But the problem in America today isn't a lack of racial sensitivity - there is a *hyper-awareness* in our society.

We're constantly encouraging white people to stop hating black people, and black people to stop hating white people, *but where has this gotten us? **Now people just hate everybody equally.*** It takes more...

We need the love of Jesus to fill our hearts - a love that's outside of us. We need to humble ourselves, and admit our self-centeredness, and let God's love overwhelm our prejudices and make us new creations.

And Jesus can do that! He'll reach deep inside and turn your outlook topsy turvy. A new creation has new instincts, new impulses. Old stuff no longer prevails...

How we do work, friendships, pastimes, hobbies, music, parenting, marriage, even race is transformed.

In Christ, ***all things*** really do become new!

I love to tell Carrie's story. I got her permission again this morning. Carrie's maiden name is **Goldsmith**. You know her as **Yeager**. When Carrie first started coming to Calvary Chapel she left the party scene... she gave it all up for a new life in Jesus. And she was committed.

Carrie grew spiritually by leaps and bounds.

Until a former boyfriend resurfaced. He cruised into her life and she was tempted by his money, his charm.

One night, she came to a crossroads. She refused to be a hypocrite. She had to choose one or the other: *the boyfriend*

or Jesus. She said she got in her car and just started driving - she was in deep thought as she drove.

She said she drove by our church in Stone Mountain, down to the old cemetery on the edge of town. To this day she doesn't know why a creepy cemetery...

But as soon as she pulled in, the headlights of her car hit a tombstone, engraved with the last name, "Goldsmith." She said it was as if God was shouting from heaven - "*The old has passed away - you are a new creation in Christ.*" That moment was the turning point for Carrie. Her life has never been the same!

And if you're in Christ, you too are a new creation, so *live like it!* Put aside the old life, and celebrate the new!

Hope Jahren is a scientist who loves to write about plants. And she says a plant's survival is dependent on sinking its roots. A plant can't survive without roots.

And the same is true of a human. We all sink roots.

We choose an *identity*. We link our *destiny* to that identity. We develop an *affinity* to certain tastes and types that support that identity. We get rooted in a lifestyle. *We either take root in Christ, or in this world.*

But listen to how Dr. Jahren describes a seed when it starts to put down roots in the soil. She writes, "*No risk is more terrifying than that taken by the first root. Once the first root is extended, the plant will never again enjoy any hope of relocating to a place less cold, less dry, less dangerous. Indeed, it will face frost and drought without any possibility of*

flight. Taking root is a gamble, but if the seed takes root it can go down 12, 30, 40 meters. The results are powerful. The tree's roots can 'swell and split bedrock, and move gallons of water daily for years, much more efficiently than any pump yet invented by man.' If the seed takes root, then the plant becomes all but indestructible."

And this describes the choices a Christian makes. In the beginning sinking roots is a gamble. *If I sink my roots in Christ will I be limiting myself? There're things I'll have to give up. I'll be reducing my options!*

And that's all true. This is why sinking roots requires faith. But if you trust the Lord and send your roots deep into Christ the results are truly powerful. You tap into a spring of joy, and satisfaction, and power that'll never dry up. This is what produces indestructible peace.

Let me be honest, my goal today is to change your mind - to persuade you that Jesus is a better way!

So here's my final question, *will you stay rooted in the lusts and deceptiveness of this world - or will you take root in Christ, and learn to see life through Him?*