*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 4 - 9

*Second Corinthians Chapters Five, Six and Seven*

**Monday, May 4 2 Corinthians 5:11-15**

*“Christ’s love urges us on”*

For Paul the reason for doing something was as important as what was done. Christ also stressed this principle in the Sermon on the Mount where he criticized those who did good things – like fasting, praying, or giving – for the wrong reasons (Matthew 6:1-18). Paul was reared in a religious world that glorified the deed and ignored the motive. But in his relationship with Jesus Christ he came to realize that fear or guilt or a sense of duty or a desire to impress God or others were woefully inadequate as reasons for sharing the gospel.

In verses 14 and 15 he reveals the secret that drove him to spend his life the way he did: “Christ’s love urges us on.” Paul’s primary focus was on Christ’s love for us, not our love for him. The belief that on the cross Christ acted on behalf of the whole human race became the foundation of Paul’s thinking and action. The fact that every person he met was the object of God’s eternal love defined the nature of his ministry. This is why Paul’s evangelism never exploited or manipulated people. He had come to love them the way Christ did.

*May our ministry with others, Lord, be motivated by your love for them. Amen.*

**Tuesday, May 5 2 Corinthians 5:16 – 6:2**

*“A new creation”*

Paul gospel was that when any person became a Christian then God made him or her a part of the new creation community within humanity that began when Jesus died and was raised from the dead. Whatever that person’s life was before (“the old”) is now behind them, and they have begun a new kind of life. Therefore, from a biblical perspective, to use the word *Christian* about a person is to refer to someone who is committed to the person of Christ, the body of Christ, and the work of Christ.

Paul was not discussing a newness that was merely cosmetic, like a new hairstyle or a new set of clothes. Rather, he was talking about an inner change that only God could make through the Holy Spirit who comes to lives in us when we are born again (John 3:3). It was a newness that ties together our past, our present, and our future. It was a newness that, while not seen immediately, would eventually reflect itself in every area of life. Christ’s coming into our lives creates a new unity, a new direction, new goals, and a new commitment.

*You are continually changing me, Lord, into the new person I have become. Amen.*

**Wednesday, May 6 2 Corinthians 6:3-13**

*“Our hearts are open to you”*

Once again, Paul seeks to answer his critics and defend his ministry from accusations of being an unethical, self-appointed peddler of the gospel. He argues that the trials he has endured give witness to the genuineness of his ministry. He paints a word picture of the price he paid to share the gospel. Some parts of the price were general in nature – such as troubles, hardships, and calamities. Other parts were inflicted by other people – beatings, angry mobs, and imprisonments. Some of the costs were self-imposed – working to exhaustion, enduring sleepless nights, and going without food.

Paul seems to be saying here, “If I’m the self-seeking person that people have said I am, how do you explain what I have gone through on your behalf?” The price a person is willing to pay is a very powerful argument for his or her sincerity. Paul concludes this section by reaffirming his love for them, his willingness to be open and honest with them, and asking them to be the same with him.

*There is a cost to Christian ministry, Lord, but it is worth it. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 4 - 9

*Second Corinthians Chapters Five, Six and Seven*

**Thursday, May 7 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1**

*“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers”*

The command of 6:14 is restated in different words in 7:1, both of which are supported by the intervening argument from Scripture, which has its own demand in 6:17. The main point of the passage is Paul’s call to the Corinthians not to “be yoked together with unbeliever,” which is the specific application of the more general exhortation to “purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit” (7:1). This, in turn, is Paul’s application of the Old Testament injunction to “touch no unclean thing” (6:17).

The “yoke” was a wooden bar or frame by which two draft animals (such as oxen) were joined at the heads or necks for working together. Paul uses “yoked together” as a metaphor referring to any kind of joint participation that significantly impacts one’s own identity. Thus, believers who identify themselves with Christ are not to be in such close relationship with an unbeliever that the unbeliever’s lack of faith hinders the believer’s commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

*Show me my impurity, Lord, so I can confess and turn from it. Amen.*

**Friday, May 8 2 Corinthians 7:2-10**

*“Godly sorrow leads to repentance”*

Paul’s reflection on the situation in Corinth highlights the power of the gospel. Paul does not minimize the fact that the rebuke of the “tearful letter” he had written after his difficult and contentious visit to Corinth caused the Corinthians personal, emotional pain. But v. 8 makes clear that he is not offering an apology for the letter. Nor is Paul speaking as a counselor who is primarily concerned with the feelings of the Corinthians and willing to share openly his own emotions by way of example.

Central to applying this passage in our own lives is understanding Paul’s definition in v. 10 of “godly sorrow.” Paul uses the term to identify the heartfelt grief over our rebellion against God that leads to a decisive turnaround in our orientation and behavior (i.e., repentance). It is a grief that leads us to view our lives, and in particular our sin, the way God does and to change accordingly. Godly sorrow refers not to God using our heartaches, but to the heartache that comes from recognizing our sin.

*May the pain of being aware of my sin, Lord, cause me to change my ways. Amen.*

**Saturday, May 9 2 Corinthians 7:11-16**

*“By all this we are encouraged”*

Paul cared deeply about the Corinthians’ relationship with him not merely because he had grown fond of them, but because he was their spiritual father in the gospel. So, just as their rebellion had caused him great pain, their repentance brought him great joy, since his primary goal as an apostle of the new covenant is not to bring God’s judgment for sin but the joy of experiencing God’s gracious forgiveness. As an apostle, Paul’s happiness was bound up in the salvation of those whom God had sent him. By their repentance, the Corinthians had shown themselves to be part of this number.

Paul’s concern was not with the fate of the one who had wronged him or with his own status as the offended one, but with the salvation of the Corinthians. The issue at stake was not popularity but the gospel. In the end, Paul’s confidence that God was at work among the Corinthians through experiencing “godly sorrow” for their sin is confirmed. They have passed the test. As a result, he is encouraged.

*When I have done someone wrong, Lord, help me to make it right. Amen.*