

Before we move on to our passage for today, I would like to bring out few points in the previous passage that I did not share. When Paul uses the tent analogy for our body and tells us that God has a building for us that does not wear out, he was probably thinking of the tabernacle and how it was replaced by the temple that Solomon built. For centuries the place of worship for the nation was the tent that Moses was told to construct when he met with God on Sinai. David wanted to build a permanent structure and gathered the material for his son Solomon to build it. It was magnificent. When Paul wrote this, the temple was still standing and was one of the most beautiful structures in the world. The illustration is fitting, for Jesus is in the tent of our bodies now, even as we are being shaped to be the living stones of the eternal temple of God (1 Peter 2:5ⁱ).

The other point that spoke to me was the word that Paul used for a guarantee (5:5ⁱⁱ). He told us the Holy Spirit is our guarantee that we will have an eternal dwelling that swallows up our present tent with life. The modern Greek usage of the word Paul used for guarantee is an engagement ring. How fitting since we are the bride of Christ. The Holy Spirit is our engagement ring that assures us we will be the bride at the wedding feast of the lamb (Revelation 19:7ⁱⁱⁱ).

Now on to today's passage. ^{1a} *Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.* 2 Corinthians 5:11a Whenever you see the word "therefore" you should look back to see what it is there for. In the previous paragraph Paul was teaching us that our bodies are like tents that are wearing out. We long for our heavenly home, our eternal bodies that are without a sin nature, to be swallowed up by life (5:4^{iv}). The Spirit of God in us guarantees that day is coming, and so we are of good courage. We walk by faith, not fixated on this passing world, aiming to please God in all we do. We know we will give an account of our lives to God.

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord... We had an elderly couple come every winter for several years. They must be with the Lord in heaven by now. Every year the husband would explain that "fearing the Lord" meant reverencing him. Well, that is one aspect, but the word does not exclude fear of judgment or discipline. If we are going to stand before the judgment seat of the glorified and risen Christ who abhors evil and did all that could be done to make us holy, we should fear the Lord's righteous response. Yes, He died for all our sins, but the Scriptures also tell us He chastens those He loves (Hebrews 12:6^v). If we continue to habitually sin, we are trampling on the grace of God. It is spiritually healthy to fear the Lord, for the Scripture tells us that it causes us to turn away from evil (Proverbs 16:6^{vi}). We should love Him and fear Him at the same time (Deuteronomy 10:12^{vii}).

Paul asks if we should continue in sin that grace might abound and responds, ² *By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?* Romans 6:2 Acts 9:31^{viii} tells us that the early church walked in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit and multiplied. Fear and comfort sound contradictory unless you know the nature of the Lord. The fear of the Lord restrains us from allowing our old nature to dominate our lives. And when we walk in the Spirit it attracts others to Jesus. Maybe this is one reason the church is dwindling in the western world. We are losing the fear of the Lord and allowing our old nature to dominate our lives. We want the comfort, but we avoid the fear of the Lord.

We have no fear of standing before a holy and righteous God and declaring how we wasted our time and resources or even worse, ignored the leading of the Holy Spirit and shunned the opportunities that God put before us.

Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. Knowing the just wrath unrepentant sinners will face should put in our hearts a desire to persuade others to repent and receive Jesus as their Savior. This has been the passion behind many successful Spirit led evangelists. If we recognize how destructive sin is and the justice it deserves, we will have a passion to persuade others. How can we not want to rescue them by pointing them to our gracious Savior who is ready to forgive and has paid the penalty, unless of course we harden our hearts? Do we really know the fear of the Lord? Apparently, it was one driving force behind Paul's successful ministry.

When we were in Israel, I was speaking at the location of the Upper Room (Greek Orthodox Apostles' church). A wife of one of the leaders sat by herself sobbing. I asked her later what God had been speaking to her. She said she heard people crying out, "Save us! Save us!" May God give us a passion to share the salvation Jesus offers all.

Paul's fear of standing before God and giving an account kept him continually seeking God's direction. It was one of the things that made him such a radical world changer (Acts 17:6^{ix}). He invested every moment in serving the gracious God who opened his eyes to the indoctrination that led him down a hardhearted path. Knowing the great investment of grace and mercy that God had bestowed on him, how could he stand before God if he rejected that call? How could he not persuade people to turn to God? It was not with the persuasion and rhetorical skills of the orators, but by sincerity and integrity and a heart of great conviction.

^{11b} But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. 2 Corinthians 5:11b Paul's conscience was clear. He knew God knew he was completely surrendered to the will of God and ready to do whatever God called him to do to see others saved. It had nothing to do with personal benefit or glory. He lived in such a way that he could say something similar to what Jesus asked, "*Which one of you convicts me of sin?*" John 8:46 Check your conscience and see if you see any wrong actions or motives in my life. That is a bold statement! But it came from a man who knew he was fully surrendered to God. That was his persuasive power: the sincerity of his life (Acts 18:4^x; 28:23^{xi}). May we all come to that point by the grace and mercy of God.

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. 2 Corinthians 5:12 Paul is not giving them a new letter or recommendation or his calling and reviewing all the mighty works God has done through him. He is sharing his heart for the Lord and his faith in God and His promises. When his detractors start deriding his appearance or an oratorical lack of eloquence, Paul wants the Corinthians to be able to point to his heart. As he wrote in the end of the last chapter, what matters is not what is seen, but the things that are unseen (4:18^{xii}). It was the opposite of the false teachers' way of convincing the people. Remember that God told Samuel that he was not to look on the outer appearance for God looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7^{xiii}) The heart of the speaker gives the power to the message.

Some people boast in outward appearances even today. The heart of man has not changed. We can be impressed by homiletical skill, slick presentations, and emotional

appeals. But if the heart is in the wrong place, it is meaningless at best and may even detract from what God is doing.

I noticed this when I was first called to preach. I would watch speakers and tried to determine what made them effective. Eventually I realized it was not a technique but a personal communion and commitment of the heart. It was sincerity and integrity that allowed the Holy Spirit to move hearts through their preaching.

This led me to the biographies of the men and women whom God had powerfully used in the past. They all have something in common and it has nothing to do with outward appearance. It was their time spent in communion with the Lord, almost always in the early morning hours. They met with the Lord and His Word. Or as Paul said in chapter three, as they beheld the glory of the Lord they were changed into the same image, from glory to glory (3:18^{xiv})! That is not just for pastors, preachers, missionaries, or teachers! It is for every child of God. Your loving heavenly Father gave His only Son so you could be in fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit. If you do not devote the time, it will not happen. **We give the Lord our time and service, and that is wonderful, but if it is to have a lasting impact, we must give Him our heart.** That is most clearly seen in letting Him have the limited commodity of time He has blessed us with. Of course, we can live all the time for Him, but what do you think your spouse would say if you never took time to talk from your heart with each other?

I know it is easier to get busy with all the things before us that we think we need to do, but Mary has chosen the good portion, to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to His heart (Luke 10:42^{xv}). Jesus wants a love relationship with us! That means taking the time to sit at His feet and share our heart with Him and hear His heart for us and for the world that we will encounter each day.

The Corinthians, who were in the Spirit, knew Paul's heart. That was the answer they were to give to the opponents of Paul. They did not know the hearts of the false teachers, but they knew Paul's heart. And that is of greater importance than any outward thing. Paul's treasure was Jesus. They knew it. The important thing for Paul was what was written on his heart by the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 31:33^{xvi}; Ezekiel 36:26,27^{xvii}). He knew that was incomparably greater than outward appearance.

Kent Hughs quotes Dods explanation: *The ironical tone in this is unmistakable, yet it is not merely ironical. From the beginning of Christianity to this day, Churches have gathered round men, and made their boast in them. Too often it has been a boast "in face," and not "in heart"—in gifts, accomplishments, and distinctions, which may have given an outward splendour to the individual, but which were entirely irrelevant to the possession of the Christian spirit. ... The same thing is seen every day, on a smaller scale, in congregations. People are proud of their minister, not for what he is in heart, but because he is more learned, more eloquent, more naturally capable, than other preachers in the same town.*^{xviii} I could not say it better than that.

¹³ *For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.* 2 Corinthians 5:13 One translator interprets this verse as, ¹³*If I acted crazy, I did it for God; if I acted overly serious, I did it for you.* 2 Corinthians 5:13 (MSG) Sometimes we can seem a little crazy in the eyes of this world. Think of David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant, or Gideon taking an army of 300 to attack an innumerable enemy coalition, or the shepherd Moses making demands of Pharaoh. Paul's radical relationship with God made him seem a little crazy at times. Because of the verse that follows I think

of this relating to how Paul must have been caught up in the ecstasy of the love of God (2 Corinthians 12:4^{xix}; 1 Corinthians 14:18^{xx}). But when it came to shepherding the flock of God, he was down to earth and persuasive. Both were manifestations of the Holy Spirit in Paul but expressed in different ways. One was uncontainable joy. The other was God's specific directions addressing mental faculties of the congregations' spiritual needs.

I am reminded about a true story I read long ago. A man went to visit his uncle who was a priest who had gone on a sabbatical to a remote small lake. They had a nice quiet dinner together and retired for the night. Early the next morning his uncle was nowhere to be found. The nephew went out to look for him and found him running and jumping around the lake shore shouting "He loves me! He really loves me!" He had a revelation of the love of God that morning during his Bible reading. He was a little beside himself, out of his senses, acting a little crazy or however you would like to express it. A revelation of the love of God can do that to you. Those experiences are between you and God. If we were always in that mode, we would be of little earthly good in helping to build up the body of believers. Both are controlled by the love of God.

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 2 Corinthians 5:14 We saw at the beginning of the passage that fear was a motivating factor for Paul, fear of standing before a holy God and giving an account. Here is the other factor, love! It is the love of Christ that motivates us to be beside ourselves in worship and adoration but also to be in our right mind for others. Christ's love is the influencing factor. He decides when to overwhelm us with His love and when we need guidance and the right words to feed the flock of God. He opens our awareness to the spiritual battle and to His mighty power.

The reason the love of God compels us is that we agree with God that Jesus, the sinless One, died for all of us sinners. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23^{xxi}). We deserve death. But the sinless One took the penalty we deserve upon Himself. In Him we all have died. He died for the sins of the whole world (John 3:16^{xxii}). That means the only ones who will be in hell are those who refuse to accept the forgiveness He purchased for them. They burn their pardon and insist on paying themselves. That is a whole different kind of crazy! I hope you would rather be crazy about the love of God!

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. 2 Corinthians 5:15 Christ died to save sinners from the wrath of God, but here in this verse Paul tells us the rest of the purpose of Jesus' sacrifice, the outworking of that forgiveness. This part of salvation is what repels the convicted soul who will not repent. Everyone wants to go to heaven. No one who really understands the justice of God wants to go to hell. But it is the outworking of receiving forgiveness that the unrepentant are unwilling to face. That is that we might no longer live for ourselves but for Him who for our sake died and was raised.

We who embrace the forgiveness of Christ find our hearts are changed. We find the love of Christ causes our hearts to be filled with love for Him and a desire to serve Him. We serve Him by serving others. That is what Jesus demonstrated to the disciples when he washed their feet just before He was betrayed (John 13:3-5^{xxiii}). Our selfishness is transformed into selfless service, for it is Christ in us expressing Himself through us. He said, I came not to be served but to serve and to give my life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28^{xxiv}). As the Father has sent me, so send I you (John 20:21^{xxv}). We must ask ourselves if we are living for ourselves or for the One who gave us life and laid down His

life for us. It is one or the other. This is one of those black and white statements that divide the sheep from the goats. We cannot have it both ways. Is it a struggle? Of course it is! The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh (Galatians 5:17^{xxvi}). We are wrestling against cosmic powers (Ephesians 6:12^{xxvii})! But we have a secret weapon, the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. And when we are in the Word, our thought life is renewed to see what is really going on.

It is not a burden, as we might imagine it to be in our old nature, for we reap what we sow. It is the upside-down world of God's kingdom. Give and it shall be given unto you (Luke 6:38^{xxviii}). It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35^{xxix}). The carnal mind cannot imagine anything worse. The renewed mind sees a glorious opportunity. Be honest about which mindset you have.

I must add that when we try to deny ourselves and continually serve others in our own strength, we will burn out and give up. But **when we learn to let the Holy Spirit direct us and rely on His power, we experience the abundant life (John 10:10^{xxx})**. Some people feel compelled to witness to everyone they meet, but they find little results that remain because they do it out of duty. But when we are led by the Spirit, rarely do we find ourselves drained, quite the opposite. Walking by faith is very different from being duty bound by law. Some believers set aside the Old Testament demands but create new ones that are just as binding. But walking in the Spirit is real freedom.

I will never forget when the Lord showed me that He enjoys it when we enjoy Him. He has given us everything to richly enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17^{xxxi}). When we need some down time, He provides it. By down time I mean appreciating Him and beholding His glory in all that He created for us to enjoy. Remember, God delivered Israel from the taskmasters in Egypt so that they could serve Him. He takes us out of the demands of the Law to liberate us into the freedom of doing what He created us to do. As the Westminster Confession states: **The purpose of man is to "love God and enjoy Him forever."** It is a much richer and fulfilling joy than anything our old nature craves. As Francis of Assisi said, "It is in giving that we receive." Jesus said, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30^{xxxii}). Jesus is not a taskmaster like those in Egypt. He delivers us from the taskmaster of the rules of the Law. But we must always be aware that our old nature desires to reign in us again and would have us return to living for self.

Jesus died and rose for our sakes! He died to pay the penalty for our sins. He rose that we might have resurrection life. See His victory over death and hell and have hope for your own resurrection. He did it for our sakes. That is love! And when we start seeing how great that love is, we love Him more (1 John 4:19^{xxxiii}). And when we love Him, we love those He loves and died for. So let us live not for ourselves but for Him. Let us live in the fear of the Lord controlled by love and with a heart fully devoted to our Savior. Then our words will have power that the Holy Spirit will use to rescue souls.

Questions:

1 Review the additional points from the previous paragraph. 2 What is a healthy fear of the Lord? 3 Why was Paul so passionately obedient to God? 4 How was Paul's boast different from the false teachers'? 5 Where do we see this today? 6 What is the source of successful ministry? 7 Review the Dods' quote. 8 What are two expressions of the Holy Spirit in verse 13? 9 What should control us and why? 10 What should be the result of realizing Jesus died for us? (verse 15)

ⁱ **1 Peter 2:5 (ESV)**

⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

ⁱⁱ **2 Corinthians 5:5 (ESV)**

⁵ He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Revelation 19:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

^{iv} **2 Corinthians 5:4 (ESV)**

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.

^v **Hebrews 12:6 (ESV)**

⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

^{vi} **Proverbs 16:6 (ESV)**

⁶ By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil.

^{vii} **Deuteronomy 10:12 (ESV)**

¹² “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

^{viii} **Acts 9:31 (ESV)**

³¹ So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

^{ix} **Acts 17:6 (ESV)**

⁶ And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also,

^x **Acts 18:4 (ESV)**

⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

^{xi} **Acts 28:23 (ESV)**

²³ When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.

^{xii} **2 Corinthians 4:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

^{xiii} **1 Samuel 16:7 (ESV)**

⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

^{xiv} **2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

^{xv} **Luke 10:42 (ESV)**

⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”

^{xvi} **Jeremiah 31:33 (ESV)**

³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

^{xvii} **Ezekiel 36:26-27 (ESV)**

²⁶ 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.

^{xviii} R. Kent Hughes, [*2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 113–114.

^{xix} **2 Corinthians 12:4 (ESV)**

⁴ and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

^{xx} **1 Corinthians 14:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you.

^{xxi} **Romans 6:23 (ESV)**

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

^{xxii} **John 3:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

^{xxiii} **John 13:3-5 (ESV)**

³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ⁴ rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

^{xxiv} **Matthew 20:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

^{xxv} **John 20:21 (ESV)**

²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

^{xxvi} **Galatians 5:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

^{xxvii} **Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)**

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

^{xxviii} **Luke 6:38 (ESV)**

³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

^{xxix} **Acts 20:35 (ESV)**

³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

^{xxx} **John 10:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

^{xxxi} **1 Timothy 6:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

^{xxxii} **Matthew 11:30 (ESV)**

³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

^{xxxiii} **1 John 4:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.