

Lives Changed by the Gospel
The Vision of Imago Dei Church
2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Roller Coaster... Sort of like church planting... 11 people from MS!
"Praying for you guys as you launch this Sunday. Welcome to the roller coaster of planting - enjoy every minute - you only launch once!"

Our story: me & Kimberly – Neh Project, 2005, taught church planting, supported church planters ... **game with Kimberly... name the church: Imago Dei.** Considered every major city in America... Met Tyler; offered a job teaching; met Nate; met Matt; had already talked with Donnie... We have taken the plunge...

I'm encouraged by the fact that even Paul encountered fears (the greatest church planter ever), especially in Corinth... **Acts 18:9-10**.... He fought his fears with the promises of God: (1) "I am with you" (like Moses, Joshua, Gideon, etc) in us, for us... (2) "I will protect you," (3) "I have many people in this city."

"Go on speaking!" - Not because you are clever or good at it but **"because I have many people in this city who are not my people, but they will be, if you go on speaking. Some of them will say 'yes to Jesus.'**

We believe God has people in this city, who will be changed by Jesus as we share the good news with them....

Raleigh has lots of people

- Fastest **growing metro area in the nation**, according to Forbes; and 2nd in WSJ. **41.8% increase in pop. 2000-2010**; now has over **1.1 million residents**
- Forbes.com ranks **Raleigh # 2 in "Next Big Boom Towns."** With Austin: "have it all demographically: high rates of immigration and migration of educated workers & healthy increases in population & number of children. They are also economic superstars, with job-creation records among the best in the nation."
- According to a report from the Brookings Institute, Raleigh is considered a "pre-emerging gateway" for immigrants. **RDU area has increased over 709% over the last two decades.**
- **At best, it's 16% evangelical**
- **If everyone decided to go to church, we wouldn't couldn't hold them all! And in ten years with the projected growth, we really won't. Or as JD said, if The Summit grew to 50,000 it wouldn't make a dent...**

2 Corinthians 5:11-21 – A great passage for describing our vision.

Paul penned two *inspired* letters to the Corinthians addressing various problems and issues in the church. 2 Corinthians is also a very **vulnerable letter**.

- **Paul opens up his heart.**
- He talks about his **weaknesses** and God's all-sufficient strength (1:8, 3:5, 12:9)
- He talks about the **trustworthiness** of his ministry (2:17, 4:2).
- He talks about his **motives** (1:24)
- He talks **about his message: Gospel** (4:5).

In this context, and in this spirit, we see *three things of great significance* for us today out of 2 Corinthians 5:11-21. We share with Paul, his motives, his message, and his mission. What is IDC about? Here you go...

#1: Our Motives: (2 Cor. 5:11-16)

What Drove Paul on a Daily Basis?

A. He desired to please God above all things (5:9-13)

11: “Knowing the Fear of God” To what does this refer?

10: “Judgment seat.” Our sin has been dealt with, but we will be rewarded based on our faithfulness to Jesus. We will appear before the Judge. Paul was aware of his accountability before God. There is a sense of Urgency and purpose now.

- **Picture:** “Bema” – tribunal bench – Gallio.
- The Judgment seat “is meant for us professing Christians, real and imperfect Christians; and it tells us that there are degrees in that future blessedness proportioned to present faithfulness.” Alexander Maclaren, 1826-1910.

V. 9: “We make it our aim to please him” (cf., 2 Tim. 2:4)

- **Because life is short we need to make it count! Gospel-centered people have different priorities than the world.** Jesus will not ask on that day:
 - “Did you get a tan?” What level did you make it to on world of Warcraft?
 - “Only one life will soon be passed, only what’s done for Christ will last”
- Everything we do in life matters! If you give a cup of **cold water**... **Luke 14:** invite *the poor, lame*, etc. “you will be rewarded at the resurrection of the just.” -Newton

11b-13: He continues explaining his motives for pleasing God when he says: “What we are is known to God... conscious... outer appearance”

Paul had critics, esp. in Cor., and he is defending himself saying, God knows my heart and motives.

12: His critics boasted in “outer appearances” ... perhaps saying that he was beaten because he was unfaithful, or his weaknesses was a sign of his inefficiency. Paul says 'God knows me and I don't want you to look on outward appearances.'

13: His desire to please God is also reflected in this phrase: “If we are beside ourselves it is for God.” If I'm a bit crazy, like Festus accused him of being in Acts 26, he says “it is for God.”

- How many of you know missionaries are a bit crazy? I love the story of John G. Paton...the Cannibals! (He wasn't joking – it happened). Paton is living with a sense of compulsion at the accountability before God!
- Paul, was a bit crazy! - 2 Corinthians 10:10. George Castanza!
- Aren't you crazy for planting? Adopting 5 kids?

B. He was compelled by the love of Christ. (14-16)

Loved "by" Christ not his love "for Christ." Christ's love constrains us when we work it into our hearts! The love of Christ: the love that compels us to love our enemies.

- Not like Jonah – “they like Nascar, Earnhart is a member of Trinity” or to Moslems... Jesus loved those who were putting him to death! Be careful that your patriotism doesn't turn into racism. Jesus loved us when we were strangers. It's not race, its grace.
- Penn Gillettee – how much do you have to hate someone not to tell them?

“I don't love people like this.” How do I grow in love for people? Its not by outer appearance. Paul did by working the Gospel deeply into his heart. That's what he's doing... meditating on the cross. He did it elsewhere (see Gal 2:20). John: "We love because he first loved us."

V. 14-15: This is Theological shorthand... He is speaking how Christ died on behalf of people, and they can be united to him. “One” who did this – Jesus.

**“Why is it that some Christians cross land and sea, continents and cultures, as missionaries? What on earth impels them? It is not in order to commend a civilization, an institution or an ideology, but rather a person, Jesus Christ, whom they believe to be unique.”
(Stott)**

Here is the inclusive and exclusive nature of the gospel: "all" and "one"

– not universalism. Notice only some “live” (15a)

The effect of working this into our hearts – ‘**not living for ourselves.**’ Christ’s died to save you from a self-centered life.

- Why is it important for **believers** to mediate on the cross?
Because the cross frees us from being addicted to ourselves ... Of thinking life is all about ourselves.
- "I need to stop thinking of myself. No, you need to work the cross into your heart."

Fill your affections with the cross and there will be no room for self."

V. 16: He possessed a proper view of People because he saw all of life through the cross. Paul was "cross-eyed"... he saw everything in view of the cross.

We don't look at people from a mere outer appearance; like Paul who used to view *Jesus* from a worldly perspective – “This couldn't be the Savior. Look at his pathetic death on a cross” (which was for the Jews was a curse).

We don't see people as ***machines, purely sexual beings, pawns, plant food, minds***... But people who are **fearfully and wonderfully made**... people for whom Christ died. People who need Jesus.

Imago Dei. They may be prostitutes, they may be successful business men. Both need Jesus.

#2: Our Message: The Gospel (2 Cor. 5:17-21)

Three theological terms explaining the glory of the Gospel. (All end in “ation” – **play station is not one of them!**).

A. Regeneration: New Life in Christ (17-18a)

- Aren't you glad this is true? I'm alive!

Christianity isn't about being a nice person, trying harder, or just being religious. It's about becoming a new person.

1. Not always the same journey but the same result: **new affections**.
 - Augustine and CS Lewis
2. Some times it takes a long time...
 - My Dad, new Christian class! Read the Bible in 6 months. Not Billy Graham yet, but he's new
3. **V. 18a**: "All of this (work of salvation) is from God"
 - Eustace Clarence Scrubb - voyage of the dawning - his inward character causes him to turn in to a dragon... ("I couldn't do it myself")

B. **Reconciliation: Peace with God through Christ (18-19)**

1. **18-19a** "to himself." (twice:). Before coming to Christ we were enemies of God but through Jesus we can be in relationship to God and know his peace.

- Sartre – "that God does not exist, I cannot doubt, but that my whole being cries out for him, I cannot deny."
- "Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God"

2. **19b**: "God does not count our sins against us" (cf, Ps 40). Love keeps no record of wrongs.

3. **19c-20**: "Gave us this ministry" "be reconciled to God"

C. **Justification: Being Counted Righteous in Christ (21)**

- Here are 15 words of hope! The Gospel in a nutshell: The doctrine of substitutionary atonement. What Luther called "**The great exchange**"

1. **The Heart of the Gospel**: "The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God; the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man" (Stott) "for us" "for our sake" – on behalf of us, instead of us

2. **The Problem**: ONLY RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE ARE GOING TO HEAVEN... None are righteous! We need someone else's

righteousness! We need an alien righteousness. Jesus lived for us (active obedience) then died for us (passive obedience)

3. **The Solution:** “Imputation” Our sin imputed to Jesus; his righteousness imputed to us.

I know you don't use that word everyday. **No one says, “I imputed crème cheese on my bagel today.”** But that's what it means. It means to apply something. Jesus righteousness is applied to us. His righteousness was transferred to us.

He Made Him to Be Sin

- This does not mean that Christ became a sinner. He was the unblemished lamb of God. Nor was he punished for any of his own sins.
- Rather, all of our sins were placed on Christ as if he committed them.
- *He was personally pure; but officially culpable; personally holy yet forensically guilty.*
- Before God credited us Jesus' righteousness; he poured out his punishment on his son.
- “he was wounded for our transgressions”

“SO THAT we might become the righteousness of God in Christ.”

- We are counted righteous. We just don't have a neutral, where we had a negative; we have a positive!
- We are not practically righteous... but we are positionally in Christ... In Him. We are forensically righteous. It's judicial.
- Here's the benefit – oh, feel it. Oh believe it! Oh speak it.

The Solution: Only Righteous people are going to heaven; we aren't righteous.

*The very righteousness that God requires
is the very righteousness he provides!!*

What this means is that when Christ sees us, he sees us through his Son. We are clothed in his righteousness. We are hidden with Christ.

So that as the father said:

*This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased”
HE says it to us... we are in Him.*

- This separates Christianity – it is not about what you do, but is about what Christ has done.
- How do I receive this righteousness? Believe. Embrace Christ and receive his righteousness? Yes.
- **This is why we must do global missions.** The nations need to hear of the One. **Many people don't get excited about missions because they don't have a gospel worth preaching.**

#3: Our Ministry: "a ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:11, 18-20)

As ambassadors of Jesus we want to represent Jesus with our deeds and we want to make the good news known with our words. The world needs good news. We want people to be reconciled to God.

- Speak **Persuasively**, “we *persuade* others” (11)
 - “persuade” - Acts 17:4; 18:4; - patient reasoning... takes time with some. Paul endured by believing God had many people in the city...he told him to go on speaking.
 - **Let me encourage you to go on speaking!**
- Speak **Powerfully**, “God making his appeal *through us*” (20b; Eph. 6:18-20; Prov. 28:1)
 - **Bold as a Lion – Lion King**
- Speak **Passionately**, “we implore you... be reconciled to God” (20c)

Be intentional. How?

- “If you want to do great things, begin with small ones” – Augustine
 - Watch for needs you can meet
 - Do some volunteer work in the community
 - Go for walks in the neighborhood, meeting people – ask questions
- “Unleash the power of inviting” – Rainer

- Neighbors over for desert
- International students to your house
- People to lunch

- Think networks – Keller
 - 1930's-1960's: Crusade Evangelism
 - 1960's-1990's: Visitation Evangelism
 - 1990-Present: Network Evangelism
- Be a player, not a fan
- Remember evangelism is work (2 Timothy 4:5)
- Pray for *boldness* and *opportunities*
- **Meditate on the Gospel daily**

Let's live to please God. Let's work the cross deeply into our hearts until his love is controlling us. Let's present the good news of regeneration, reconciliation and justification to a world that needs it – persuasively, powerfully, and passionately.