

ALL IN

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

2nd Corinthians 5.11-21 | Sept. 10, 2017

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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we begin a three-week series we're calling All In, engaging our mission of "Inviting all people to grow into a Christ-centered life in God's family."

In this week's study of 2nd Corinthians 5, we will explore the biblical basis of "Inviting all people" inspired by our core value authentic evangelism and lived out by our missional marks welcoming warmly and sharing openly.

II. Connecting with One Another

Think of a time you were invited somewhere. How did it make you feel? How did you respond?

III. Study the Text

a. Let's begin in 2nd Corinthians 4, verse 13-15.

In verse 13, Paul quotes a Greek translation of Psalm 116.10, "I believed; therefore I have spoken." What does he believe (verses 14-15)? How is it connected to his preaching ministry?

b. Read 2nd Corinthians 5.11-13.

In chapter 5, Paul adds two further reasons for his preaching ministry. What is the first of these reasons (in verse 11)? What do you think Paul means by the word "fear"?

"Fearing the Lord" is required of Israel in Deuteronomy 10.12 and how we are to avoid evil in Proverbs 16.6. The Greek term Paul uses can range in meaning from panic and fright to awe and reverence.

Imagine these being depicted on a continuum. What do you think Paul means to communicate? Put an X on the line symbolizing what you think Paul meant. Then draw a picture of yourself where you usually live your life of faith with God.



Fear/panic

Awe/reverence

c. In Proverbs 1.7, we read, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Fear often results paralysis. What does it prompt Paul to do? Do you have the same reaction as Paul? Why or why not?

- d. In these verses, like many others in 2nd Corinthians, Paul references opponents to his message who have crept into the Corinthian church. They speak eloquently (10.10, 11.6), boast about their achievements and spiritual experiences (10.8-18, 11.16-30, 12.1-10), were eager for a paycheck (11.20, 2.17), and claimed a special authority (11.5, 11.22, 12.11).

How does Paul present himself instead (in verses 12-13)?

- e. Read 2nd Corinthians 5.14-15.

We've see how Paul's preaching was motivated by conviction (4.14), fear (5.11), and now, in verse 14, love. This could be read as "our love for Christ" or "Christ's love for us."

What does your translation say? What do you think Paul intended?

- f. While we might lean toward the former, most modern translations prefer the latter, since Paul goes on to speak of Christ's dying on our behalf: "The idea is that Christ's love so completely controls and dominates Paul so that he has no option but to preach." This love is seen in the lyrics of George Matheson's hymnody:

O love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be.

What songs (or other works of art) prompt you to exclaim the "love that wilt not let you go"?

- g. In verse 14, "we are convinced" is best translated "we have judged this." It has been written, "The basic meaning is to 'separate' or 'sift,' and it is commonly used of a conclusion drawn after thoroughly evaluating the facts. Here it emphasizes a carefully considered judgment as opposed to accepting on good faith. Paul has assessed the evidence and come to the carefully thought-out conclusion that one died for all, and therefore all died."

Have you come to a conclusion about Jesus "after thoroughly evaluating the facts"?

If so, how did you do so? If not, what questions do you still have? How could you seek out the answers for such questions?

- h. Read 2nd Corinthians 5.16-17.

The beginning of verse 16 reads "So from now on," implying a connection of what has previously written. What has he previously written that causes Paul to "regard no one from a worldly point of view"?

How are you tempted to judge people from a worldly point of view?

- i. Where do you see the new creation bursting forth in your own life? Where else do you think God would like to bring new out of old?
- j. Read 2nd Corinthians 5.18-21.

“In Paul’s writings, God is always the reconciler. Those in need of reconciliation are hostile human beings. This is the reverse of Hellenistic religion, where it is the human being that seeks restoration of the gods’ favor, and also of Judaism, where confession of sin and repentance are the means by which reconciliation with God is sought.”

According to Paul, how has this reconciliation been won?

- k. Reconciliation is – according to verses 18 and 19 – both an accomplished fact and a continuing process. How do these two realities work together? What is our role in the message of reconciliation?
- l. One author concludes, “It is not that we must reconcile ourselves to God – as would be the case with the Greeks or Romans vis-à-vis their gods. Rather, we are to be reconciled, that is, to accept what God has already achieved... The gospel minister’s job is not to bring about reconciliation but to announce what has already occurred. In a real sense, he or she is the town crier or herald proclaiming a news item of earth-shaking significance.”

Where could you be that town crier or herald proclaiming the good news?

- m. Which of Paul’s three motivations – conviction, fear, love – most inspire you to share your faith openly?

IV. Pray

- a. Ask God to open your eyes to the opportunities you have to be that “gospel minister,” declaring the reconciliation that has already been achieved,
- b. Pray that the Holy Spirit would give you the words to use and the boldness to engage in spiritual conversations that “invite all people,”
- c. Lift up the children and youth of Good Shepherd who are back in school, that they would be lights for God on their school campuses.