



Living More Like Jesus – Part 1

Purifying Our Motives

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Well, I think you would agree that there are two basic kinds of car washes that you could go to. The one I usually go to is actually right over here at the town center, the kind you usually go to after you fill your tank up with gas and you drive through it. And I feel that it's fancy because there's a guy who actually dries your car off when you drive through it. The problem with that one is that your dashboard is still dusty and still has weird film on the inside of your windshield. And the remnants of Del Taco are still partially on your passenger seat, and the floor mats still need to be vacuumed. Your car looks okay when you're driving to the parking lot at church, but after church you get in your car and it's still kind of gross inside. And then there's the other kind of car wash, the real kind that gets the inside and the outside.

There are two kinds of encounters with Christianity as well. You see where I'm going with this. There's the kind that does get people to conform to kind of what's going on to make people think when you pull into church that you're doing okay, you're conforming to what everyone would expect you to do at church and you look pretty much like everyone else, but nothing really changes on the inside. You're pretty much the same person you were before you started going to church, and you still act the way you normally act, at least on the inside of your life, and you can shape up and act like everyone else when you're at church. But you realize that there's a different kind of Christianity, a kind of Christianity that starts on the inside that is very different from the kind of Christianity that just simply conforms on the outside.

And we know that the Bible really concerns itself, ultimately, starting with what is on the inside. We often quote that passage from Hebrews Chapter 4 verse 12 that talks about the Bible being "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword." And it gets down to in the last phrase of that verse talking about how it judges "the thoughts," and here it is, "the intentions of the heart," which is really talking about what we usually summarize with the word the "motives" of the heart, the things that go on in the interior of our hearts that decides why we're doing what we're doing, not just what we're doing, but why do we do it. Which really deals with the most intimate part of the interior of our lives, the things that determine the "why" of our lives. And that's the part that God ultimately wants to deal with in your life. And that's what we need to think about every time we encounter God's Word, every time you read God's Word and certainly when you come to church and you encounter Christianity, and when we meet together, God wants to deal with the interior of your life. And I'm very grateful for the passage that we're getting into and as Nathan said, this section of Scripture is just so rich starting in the middle here of Second Corinthians Chapter 5.

We're starting today in verse 11 and we're going to go slowly through this section. I just want to take three verses today that are going to deal with the interior of our lives. And right in the middle of it in verse 12, Paul talks about people who just care about the outside. They care about mere appearances. And if you go back to the Old Testament, God did something very interesting in picking the first king of Israel, which basically was the People's Choice Award. He picked someone that everyone wanted and he said, I'm going to pick someone for you that



you would really choose and that's King Saul. He's what you guys want. And I know you want a king. You're clamoring for a king so here you get the guy you want. But he said the second one is going to be a man after my own heart, a man whom I want. And then he gives that great line through the prophet, he says, because "man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart." And so, of course, the outside is always going to be affected by the heart, the interior life. But the interior life is what really matters. And Paul is going to talk about this in Second Corinthians Chapter 5 people who only care about the outside. And, you know, if you only care about the outside and the interior is a mess, you're never going to get where you need to be with Christ.

So we're going to start this great section of Scripture, and I hope the whole seven-part series is going to help you leave this portion of the Bible study being more like Christ. But we've got to start with your motive. So let's do that today by turning to a great three-verse section of the Bible, Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verses 11, 12 and 13. Take your Bibles and turn there and let's dive into these three verses and I think it'll be a profitable study for us. It's what we're dealing with here, our motives. We're going to examine our motives and hopefully do some good work here before we're done this morning. Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verses 11 through 13. Now it starts with the word "therefore" and as people have often said, we should always ask what the "therefore" is there for. And if you look back at verse 10, you'll remember when we were together last studying this section of Scripture, we talked about standing before God. We talked about the Bema Seat because the Greek word "Bema" was there, this elevated platform. And you thought that when you became a Christian you were not going to have to deal with answering to God. But of course we said no. All of us are going to have to answer to God. And we talked about Christians answering to God and we spent our time talking about that day.

And we know that non-Christians are going to have to stand before God. And we even mentioned that Jesus has been entrusted with all judgment. In part because the second person of the Triune Godhead has been given this special experience here of taking on all of the attributes of humanity. Right? He's, of course, "the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form." But he has had, you know, hang nails and he's had, you know, a headache and he's had a toothache and he's "been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin." He's been fatigued, he's had stomach aches, he's had all the issues of humanity and he can identify with humanity. And he's going to judge not only us as Christians and servants of the King, but he is going to judge the lost. And he's going to be able to do that with complete identification with the people who God has made, who he has made, he's the agency of all creation. So as we think about Jesus being our judge we know he's going to be the world's judge, the lost's judge.

And I say that because we can think about verse 10 about Jesus being the judge of us, his servants. Of course, that's a different kind of judgment. It's a judgment for a reward based on evaluation. But then there's a judgment of penalty. And we know he's going there because if you look down in this passage, we're going to have these very famous verses like in verse 20, look at verse 20, when we talk about us being "ambassadors for Christ." Why? Because "God is making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."



Now who would we say that to? People who aren't reconciled to God as though God were making his appeal through us. That's an amazing thing that we are there saying you need to be right with God. And then this great summation of the gospel and the last verse of this chapter, "For our sake God made him," Christ, "to be sin," as though he were the target of God's justice, "who knew no sin." He was innocent, the innocent Lamb of God, "so that in him," if we are now associated with him by faith, "we might become the righteousness of God," so that we're not guilty at all. We become innocent in this imputation of his righteousness. This is a great verse here talking about what we need. So we want people to be associated with Christ. And we know that the concern of the Apostle Paul by the end of this chapter is lost people getting associated with Christ. And so we know that the "therefore" is not just thinking about us having an evaluation as ambassadors, but the ultimate concern of lost people being made right with Christ.

So I think there's a dual concern here. And ultimately, I want to have the ultimate concern where we're going in mind, even though I know we're in view as well. So let's read finally, I know we're just dealing with one word here, but let's read the rest of the words in this verse. "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others." So I just want to use the word "others" there, the end of that verse, I should say that sentence in the middle of verse 11, that others... who are we going to persuade? Of course, we need to persuade Christians to be better Christians, but we're persuading non-Christians to become Christians, right? Do you follow me on this? Because we know the fear of the Lord. What happens if they don't become Christians? Well, they're going to stand before the judge to be punished. We're going to stand before the judge to be evaluated and rewarded. But either way, the fear of the Lord, we either fear him as a father to be evaluated or we fear him, and that, as the Puritans said, with the "servile fear of being cast into judgment."

And then he says this, "But what we are is known to God." And this begins his defense again. We saw already in Chapter 2 that he's going to ramp up at the end of this book with a lot of defense of his apostleship. "What we are is known to God." We're legitimate apostles and representatives of Christ here, "and I hope it is known also to your conscience." I hope you know deep down we are legitimate apostles, that I'm an apostle of Christ to your conscience. And "we're not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us." To whom? "So that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart." So this is an interesting way he's putting it, and he'll unpack this a lot by the time we get to the latter part of this letter. But he's saying this, there are people out there who are criticizing us, and all they care about is outward appearance. They don't care about the integrity of the heart.

We'll deal with integrity in the middle of this message and then this short verse that's often misunderstood, we'll look at this in verse 13, two parts to it. "For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right minds, it is for you." Now that's tough if we don't slow down and catch it. So we'll get that by the end of this sermon. Let's get the easy part of this, which I think is the easiest part, verse 11, the first sentence. "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others." Okay, I want to deal with that as it relates to the lost because that's where the rest of this chapter is going and let's just put it this way. Number one, "Be Troubled



About the Lost." Jot that down if you're taking notes and I wish that you would. Number one, be troubled about the lost. Right? Because as I think about my accountability before the Lord, I want to persuade others, as the rest of this chapter is going to lay it out, I want to persuade others to become Christians, to be reconciled to God, because if they don't, they're in big trouble. They're in big trouble. Because what's at stake? Well, think about Hebrews. Hebrews Chapter 10 verse 31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." As he says two chapters later, the writer of Hebrews, "Our God is a consuming fire."

As Nathan said, yeah, I went out and preached in Pennsylvania five times at a camp, but then I got a chance to vacation, to literally vacation. And I took a cruise out of Miami, which is an interesting place. I spent a day there in Miami. But then I went out on this cruise ship. And when I was out on the cruise ship, I walked around on the deck of this cruise ship, and I was on the lookout for five-year-olds crawling up on the ledge of the cruise ship. I was just policing to see if there were any climbers. Did anybody read the news this summer? Did you read about this? Right out of Florida. They went out to the Bahamas. It was a Disney cruise line just a couple of months ago. A five-year-old girl. Which, by the way, if you heard that the parents put the kid up for a photo that was wrong, that's been discredited. I read all about it. This kid actually was a climber. The five-year-old girl climbed up and over the railing and through some porthole in a Disney cruise line in the Atlantic Ocean, and she fell five or four, I don't know if she was on the fourth or fifth level of this cruise ship, and fell into the Atlantic Ocean. Mom and Dad were standing right by. They were playing shuffleboard and the five-year-old daughter fell into the Atlantic Ocean.

Mom screams. Dad runs over to the edge and do you know what happens? He says, oh well, lost one. (audience laughing) He quotes Scripture. Well, every day of the life of a person is measured, you know. God knows before there was ever one of them they're all numbered. That's what he said. And we'll just apply it to what I'm talking about, you know, not elect, you know, I guess not elect. So just no need. That's what Dad said because he could tell obviously, perishing. There's no hope for her. That's what Dad said, right? What did Dad do? He jumped in, he jumped in. He rescued the perishing. He cared for the dying. Do you remember Fanny Crosby's old hymn? I'm only quoting this hymn because I spent five days with these people in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and they sing a lot of hymns out there. They sing every verse of these hymns. And, I mean, it's a great old hymn. We didn't sing it, but it's a good one, 150 years ago, the blind hymn writer. "Rescue the perishing, care for the dying, snatch them in pity from sin and the grave; weep over erring ones, lift up the fallen, tell them of Jesus the mighty to save." What a great set of words!

Dad jumps over, immediately bounds over the edge of this, jumps into the sea and bobs there keeping that five-year-old daughter up. It took 20 minutes for them to get that little dinghy around, you know, with the Disney ears or whatever to come pick up that dad and daughter and there they were rescued. Go look at that. If you didn't read the story, go look this up. Amazing story. I walk those decks. I walk the fourth deck. I walked the fifth deck. I kept going up and asking Carlynn, would I do it from this deck? And would I do it from this deck? (audience laughing) And I was looking for people. I got to the ninth deck. Well, I wouldn't, I don't know, it would have to be my own kid from this deck. (audience laughing) I was like, it



was amazing. I just wanted someone to fall in so I could just jump in and get him. (audience laughing) It was an inspiring story because you think that is what it's about, right? You should care if someone is in need, right? There's just something noble about that. You don't sit back and go, well, you know, you make your choices, right? That's not what Dad said. You made your choice. I guess that's it for you. You don't do that.

Turn to this text with me, Mark Chapter 6. Dad didn't want to finish his shuffleboard game. He didn't say I don't feel like it. He didn't say after I go to the buffet, he jumped in. He didn't care about his own comfort. He didn't go and get his swim trunks on. He jumped in to save his daughter. An inspiring story, man. And as you're turning there, I just want to remind you. This is how we ought to care about the lost people in your life. You don't look the other way. Mark Chapter 6. Are you there? Drop down to verse 28. You should be able to answer the context of this verse just by me reading this, "and brought his head on a platter." Who's "his"? John the Baptist. Famous story. Here comes his decapitated head with a pool of blood on this little "platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother." Right? Gross. And "when the disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb. The apostles returned," verse 30, "to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.'"

Now think about this. Jesus had said, this is the greatest prophet born of women. This is his cousin, the forerunner of the Messiah. Jesus loved John. He had been imprisoned in Transjordan, and now he'd had his head chopped off by the enemies of Christ. How much did Jesus hurt at this moment? The apostles come to Jesus and they tell him what had happened, and he said, we've got to get away. We have to go to a desolate place. We got to rest. Why do they need to rest? Well, he's grieving for one. But look at the middle of verse 31. "For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat." Are you going to give Jesus a break from his preaching schedule at this point? Do you need a vacation Christ? You're going to have it. What do you need? Do you need two weeks, three weeks? What do you need? Four weeks? "And they went away in a boat to a desolate place by themselves." Praise God, you got a break, man. We'd love you to preach more, but you get a break. Verse 33, "Now many saw them going and recognized them." Oh, no. "And they ran there on foot from all the towns." Oh, no. And they "got there ahead of them." Oh, no! And "when he went ashore he saw a great crowd." Oh, no. "And he had compassion on them." No, no, oh, no.

It's a good thing Jesus wasn't married. Can you imagine at this point, his wife going, oh, no, no, Jesus, no, don't feel anything for them at this point. Why? "Because they're like sheep without a shepherd." I know they are, but this is not the right time. Please don't feel anything for them. "And he began to teach them many things." Well, he didn't have a wife, but he did have disciples. Verse 35. "And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, 'This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late.' Send them away. 'Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy something to eat.'" Please send them away. "But he answered them, 'You give them something to eat.' And they said to him, 'Shall we go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?' And Jesus said to them, 'How many loaves do you have?'" You know the rest of the story. He feeds them. Why does he feed them? Because he's going to keep teaching them. Why? He's grieving. He's on vacation.



He's trying to take a break. He's grieving the death of John the Baptist. He's tired. He hasn't even had a break. He hadn't even had time to get a meal.

But what's the problem? "He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd." He sees the bobbing heads of people in the ocean who don't have a savior. Do you see the issue here? It's a lot like Matthew Chapter 9, where the same word is used, "compassion." Jesus has compassion on the crowd. He sees the people like a harvest field. And he says in the last three verses of Matthew Chapter 9, he says, you know guys, you should be praying to the Lord of the harvest. He says, and you ought to pray that God would, it's a great word, "Ekballō," that God would "thrust forth." I know the word is translated in the English Standard Version "send," but it's a much stronger word than that. "Ek" is the Greek preposition "out." Epsilon, Kappa. Ek, and then "Ballō." And we get the word "ball" from that, it means "to cast" or "to throw." Ekballō is "to throw." And I picture it like a cannon. It's to like blast out, throw out workers into the harvest field. I picture it like a cruise ship, right? All the people playing shuffleboard on the deck of the ship that you'd shoot out because I see the sea of people and they're out there bobbing in the ocean and they're lost. They're like bobbing people without any saviors. They don't have anybody getting them out of their situation. And I just pray that God would throw some, just cast them, shoot them out of the barrels of their comfortable church situation and shoot them out there into the harvest, because "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." You ought to be troubled about the lost. If you're not troubled about the lost, you're never going to be prompted to action. If you don't feel it, you're never going to rescue the perishing. You're never going to care for the dying. You're never going to "snatch them in pity from sin and the grave." You've got to start by, "weep over the erring ones and lift up the fallen, tell them of Jesus the mighty to save."

One more quotation for you. If you can turn there quickly, you might want to. Proverbs 24. Surely Fanny Crosby, 150 years ago, had this verse in view when she wrote those words. Proverbs 24:11 says, "Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling toward the slaughter." Well, that's good. You've already kind of got that concept across to us, Pastor Mike. Well, yeah. Look at the next verse here, if you turned there. Verse 12, "If you say, 'Behold, we didn't know this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?" Doesn't the one who sees into the motives of your heart, doesn't he know the truth?" Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?" Doesn't God really know if you know or not? I sit here and talk about your coworkers or your neighbors, your family members, your extended family members. Doesn't God really know? It's a terrible, terrifying "thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The motive is what matters. You can clean the exterior of your life. Walk into church, shake hands, pump fists, high-five, but never have the interior of your life motivated to say a word during the week about Christ. It should start with being troubled about the lost. "Knowing the fear of God, we persuade others." If you're not persuading people, I would doubt there's much fear of God in your life.

It starts then in this middle section, which we'll definitely talk about more throughout this book. "What we are is known to God." Paul is going to have to establish this, and you need to know it's not because he's concerned so much about his reputation. He only cares about his



reputation because of the message that he's bringing to the Corinthians. But he says in Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 11, "what we are is known to God." God knows who we are. He knows that we're true messengers of the truth to you, "and I hope it's known also to your conscience," I hope you know inside of your life, in the depths of your own heart who we are.

Now "we're not trying to commend ourselves to you again." We're not just trying to say hey, hey, look, we're good guys, but we're "giving you cause to boast about us." We want you to go to our critics and say something "so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearances," and this is a slam, "and not about what's in the heart." We want you to talk to the critics who are criticizing us and defend us to them, because all they're worried about is exteriors. We want you to know the truth about who we are. Okay. Why is he saying that? Because he cares about what people think of him. He only cares because he's trying to make sure the Corinthians don't dismiss his message.

Now, with that in mind, if you can pin that in your mind, then let's talk about integrity because integrity matters and your integrity matters because you are supposed to be an ambassador of Christ. That's why integrity matters. And put it down this way in your outline. Then we're going to go to First Corinthians and make sense of this. Number two, "Be Concerned About Your Integrity." Number two on your outline, be concerned about your integrity. You should be concerned about your integrity, just like you're concerned about the lost. Right? You should worry about that. You should be troubled about the lost. Be concerned about your integrity. I want to tell you why that matters. It matters because you have a message. And then we're going to get to that in this chapter, and we'll get to it in the rest of the book. But turn with me now to First Corinthians Chapter 4. First Corinthians Chapter 4 doesn't have the weight of the criticism that he's trying to deal with in Chapter 5 of Second Corinthians, but turn to First Corinthians Chapter 4, and maybe we can get enough of the context here of the issue that will help you kind of figure this all out.

First Corinthians Chapter 4. First of all, let me just put this in some logical order for you, which is not the contextual order, but the logical order is this. I want you to sit here today and to say what Paul says in verse 4 of First Corinthians 4. First Corinthians 4:4, "For I'm not aware of anything against myself." That'd be a good place to start. I want you to say, I don't think there's anything I'm doing wrong. That'd be a good place to start. "I'm not aware of anything against myself." Do you see that verse there? The first half of verse 4? That would be a good place to start. I don't think there is anything against me. I don't think I'm doing that. Integrity starts there. Okay, that's good. But then there's the rest of the verse. "But I'm not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me." I can't "pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God."

Now, the good news is, unlike what Paul is saying here, is that we do have certain things that we have that Paul doesn't have at this particular point in time. We have the rest of the New Testament laid out for us, which is helpful because God's mind on paper is giving me the Lord's judgment on many, many things that we have now. The 27 books in the New



Testament are allowing me to say, okay, there are certain things that the intricacies of my heart may not be able to be sorted out until the judgment. I get that. There is some truth to verse 5, but the reality of the Lord having an opinion about certain things I can say I can look at what the Lord's mind is on paper and be able to say, okay, I in my conscience can say my conscience is clear. But I can take the Word of God and add that layer and say, okay, I can have a much clearer sense of integrity by saying no conscience problem, God's Word now on top of that, I can now have even a greater sense of integrity by having my conscience clear and God's Word now an informed conscience, I can say I have an even more integrity. Do you see that? So, okay. I have integrity by saying, like Paul can now say in Second Corinthians 5, hey, "what I am is known to God," right? God knows. Okay, so he's saying something stronger in Second Corinthians 5. Okay.

And now in Second Corinthians 5, you might remember, he also says, "and I hope," he says, "it is known also to your conscience." Now go up to verse 3 in First Corinthians 4, First Corinthians 4. "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you." Now does it sound that way in Second Corinthians 5? The answer is no. It seems like a bigger thing in Second Corinthians 5. And it is. It's a bigger thing in Second Corinthians 5. "It is a very small thing that I should be judged by you." Now, ultimately, is it an ultimate thing? No, it's not an ultimate thing. But, he says, I do hope, I hope that you see that I'm right. I hope that you see that. And we should always hope that. We should hope that.

And just to strengthen that, let me just have you jot down First Peter Chapter 2 verse 12. First Peter Chapter 2 verse 12, which says, "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may," and I might want to add the word eventually, "they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation." Eventually, I hope you're vindicated. Just like Joseph was thrown in prison and was eventually vindicated. Daniel was thrown in the lion's den and was eventually vindicated. There are a lot of examples in Scripture of people being eventually vindicated because they kept doing the right thing. They had integrity. Right? And they were thought of as being bad but eventually vindicated. So I want people to see my integrity even though they might be against me at some point. And Paul realizes that they, the audience that Paul is trying to win over, win back over, the critics have pulled away the Corinthians, he's trying to win them back. But why? Go up to verse 1 of First Corinthians Chapter 4, "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it's required of stewards that they be found faithful." Now, was Paul faithful? Well, he's making the case in Second Corinthians 5. It's known to God what we are. It's known to my conscience. He made that case in Chapter 2 of Second Corinthians. Hey, I know I'm doing the right thing, and I hope your conscience can see I'm doing the right thing and I'm saying the right things. Do you see what's happening here? He's saying I am being faithful, and I would hope that you would see that I'm being faithful.

Now, he says it's a small thing in verse 3 because it's not an ultimate thing. But by the time he writes Second Corinthians Chapter 5 and he's really making a much stronger case because he's got his enemies mounting a very strong attack upon the Apostle Paul, he's saying I hope you can see this now. It is my hope that you will agree that I'm not doing anything wrong here,



and I'm telling you the truth, and I'm doing the right thing, and my conscience and your conscience, I hope you'll see that these people who are all about external appearances, I hope you can see that my conscience is clear and I'm telling you the truth. That I, as a steward of the truth, am faithful. Okay. So I want your integrity to be intact. I want your integrity to be what it should be. Now, this goes in a lot of directions and this sermon in many ways can be a potpourri of things, but it always is about what's under the surface. Okay? I always want you to do the right thing in your behavior, but I want the inside of your life to be cleaned out. And when it comes to the inside of your life, the integrity of your heart needs to be that you are rightly motivated and you are not duplicitous. So your interior needs to be the right thing and that right thing, just like Joseph, just like Daniel, there are so many examples in Scripture, like the Apostle Paul, like Peter, so many examples of people who were said to be bad guys.

Look at Jesus. I'll give you an example of Jesus in the small group questions. His family, his mother, his half-brothers thought he was crazy in the gospel of Mark and they said he was crazy. We've got to pull him out of there. He's making a mess of his life. Or how about this one? First Kings Chapter 18 verse 18. That's a good one, we should turn to that. First Kings Chapter 18 verse 18. "Ahab," let's start in verse 17, "saw Elijah." Ahab, by the way, what was his wife's name? Jezebel. Bad. No Jezebels in our nursery today. No one wants to name their daughter Jezebel. There are some Elijahs in our nursery this morning. That's a hero. "Ahab said to him, 'It is you, you troubler of Israel.' And Elijah answered, 'I have not troubled Israel but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the Lord and follow the Baals.'" Okay? So integrity is going to be vindicated by God, ultimately. But Paul wants that vindication to come now because he doesn't want those people to be led astray. Don't follow the Baals, don't follow the critics of me. And that's why you want people to see your integrity if you're continually faithful to represent the truth. And that's enough said on the second point.

Let's get to verse 13, which I think is really going to make the second point clear. You should be concerned about your integrity. Why? For two reasons. And we're already getting into it here in verse 13. Go back to Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 13. "If we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right minds, it is for you." What did Ahab think of Elijah? He's the troubler of Israel. That's not a compliment. You're a troubler of Israel. And Elijah turns around and says, no, you're the troubler of Israel, and your parents were the troublemakers of Israel. You keep getting us in trouble. You've messed up the culture, right? Why? "Because you've abandoned the commandments of God." So you're messing it up. I'm not messing it up. I'm trying to tell you the commandments. I'm the one with integrity here because I keep calling you back to God and God's commandments. You think I'm crazy. I'm not the crazy one here. And I will say that's what it means to be faithful to God's Word. Integrity will keep you online with God, but it will also open you up to being called crazy.

I put it this way, number three, "Be Willing to Offend for the Sake of Faithfulness." Number three, that's a long point but it's worth it. Be willing to offend for the sake of faithfulness. And they may say you're crazy, but offend is a better word because it encapsulates all the kinds of ways you might be written off. You are going to be written off as whatever. Here's the thing, I



could say today... Well, let's just start with this. Here's something that if I go on whatever popular secular program and say there are two genders, let's just say that. Right? Which at one time was common sense, but let's just say I say that today. If I go on NPR and say that today, I'm going to be thought of as crazy. Right? I'm the troubler of the Western society now. And what I should say is, no, I'm not the troubler of Western society, you are, you and you're crazy people are because you've abandoned the commandments of the Lord. That's what I should say in response with gentleness and respect. Right? I should say that because I'm not the one who is wrong.

But ultimately, if I didn't care I would say I don't care. You can be a furry, a fuzzy, or you could be a shoe, a fire hydrant. I don't care what you are. There can be a multiplicity of genders. You could be a parking cone. Be whatever you want to be. It doesn't bother me a bit. Be a trash can. Be a potted plant. Be a jungle gym. Be whatever you want to be. Right? Why do I care? And that's what they are saying to us. Why don't you say that? Because I'm going to be faithful to God and what God has said. And ultimately, that's the right thing to do. And all of us are going to answer to God because I care about people, I care about you meeting God. And out of fear of God I persuade people. And so I'm going to care about God and what God has said, because I care about you. I'm going to tell you there are only two genders, and I don't want you to store up more wrath for yourself for the day of God's judgment. So I'm going to tell you the truth. But I'm going to be willing to risk my reputation for the truth, being faithful to the truth. Do you follow me? But here's the thing. If I didn't care, if I wasn't going to be faithful then believe whatever you want, I don't care. But I do care. I care ultimately about God and fidelity to God.

One more passage on this might be helpful. How about Second Timothy Chapter 1? This might be worth it. You have to stand on the truth of God's Word. You have to. I know this is an old saw, but it's helpful and I think this little verse that's often misunderstood is helpful. Being beside yourself means crazy, right? That's an idiom for, it's like nuts. It may not make sense 2,000 years from now. You're nuts. Well, we know what it means. It means you're crazy. Beside yourself means crazy, right? If you're beside yourself, it's for God. The only reason I would be thought of as crazy is for God's sake, right? I don't want to be thought of as crazy, but I have to if I want to be faithful to God, "it's required of stewards that he be found faithful."

Second Timothy Chapter 1, look at verse 11. "I was appointed," Paul says, "a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do." Why? Because you're faithful as a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher. That's why you suffer. If you weren't appointed as those things, to be faithful as a preacher and apostle and a teacher, you wouldn't suffer as you do. "But," he says, "I'm not ashamed," to be thought of as crazy, "for I know whom I have believed, and I'm convinced that he's able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. Follow the pattern," Timothy, "of the sound words that you've heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus, by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you." Paul was aging. Timothy was young. He says, "by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, me and you, guard the good deposit entrusted to you."



Let me say to all you young people who are listening to me right now, when I'm dead and buried, if Christ doesn't come back first, when I'm dead and buried and gone and lying in my walnut casket. Okay? When I'm done, "by the Holy Spirit who dwells within you and me," would you please, "by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to us?" They're going to call you crazy for different reasons than they call me crazy, right? But you have to be faithful. When Martin Luther had to go before the Diet of Worms, right? When he had to stand there and be called into court, and he says, "here I stand, I can do no other." Right? You're going to have to say that and be thought of as a troubler of America or a troubler of society. You're going to have to do that, and you're going to have to do that in the next generation. And it may be you have to do that more often than I have to do it, but you're going to have to do it. You're going to have to guard what has been entrusted to you. And you can't be faithful if you don't. Because the message of the cross and all that goes with it is going to be foolishness to the world. So you have to do it. You just have to do it because the world in its wisdom hasn't come to know God. And we have a message and we can't, we can't in any way take this deposit and tweak it.

All you have to do is go on social media and look at how people have taken Christianity and twisted it into something it's not. And all they're doing in trying to conform to the culture is turning Christianity into smoke that will evaporate. Trust me! All you have to do is try and conform Christianity to the culture and it evaporates. It will not be here in 20 years. Whatever you do to conform to it, it's gone. Because why do you want it? It has no relevance. Once you try to conform Christianity to the culture, it disappears, it evaporates. Who's going to go there? For what reason? But if you want the truth you're going to have to take this deposit and guard it and preach it and teach it and evangelize it. That's what you're going to have to do. So "by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you." Be willing to be called crazy.

Here's a great one. Apostle Paul who wrote this, Acts Chapter 26:24 and 25. As he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said, as he was giving his defense to King Agrippa, "Paul, you're out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind." But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words." And that's how we respond with gentleness and respect but we are absolutely saying no, what I'm saying is true and rational whatever the issue is, if we're basing our statements on the truth of God's Word.

All right, one more statement. "If we're in our right mind, it is for you." What does that mean? "If we're in our right mind, it is for you." All right. One passage that may help, Proverbs 26 verses 4 and 5. Proverbs 26:4 and 5 says, "Answer not a fool according to his folly." The next verse says, "Answer a fool according to his folly." Now I've skipped a line but listen to what it says. "Answer not a fool according to his folly," and "answer a fool according to his folly." Now that sounds like a contradiction, because it is. But these are proverbs, proverbs are principles and principles need to be applied in different contexts, in different ways. Okay? Here's the context. The first context is "answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself." So there's a kind of answering a fool, engaging a fool that you become sucked into, like the vortex of folly, and you become like him. Well, that's when you don't answer him.



You're going to be like him. Okay? And then "answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes." There's an answering of a fool, and you can actually correct him and he walks away, going, wow, I hadn't thought of that.

Now you've got to make a decision in answering someone whether or not you can fix his thinking and he will accept it. That's a discretionary decision. You have to make a decision with wisdom and discernment, can I make a difference here in the thinking of this person? If we're talking about evangelism, we're talking about an engagement in a discussion, you have to make a decision. I make those decisions every week in conversation. Is this going to be a profitable conversation? And then I engage or I choose not to engage. You have to make those decisions. Why would I make the decision to engage? Why not just say, well, they don't get it and walk away? Jot this down. Second Corinthians Chapter 2 verse 4. Paul says, "I wrote you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears," that sounds like a hassle, "not to cause you pain," no, not to cause you pain, "but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you."

Why does Paul write letters? Why did he write these letters to the Corinthians? Because he loved them. Why? Because he loved them. In John 15:15, Jesus says you're not servants. Why? Because a "servant doesn't know what his master is doing." It's a friend. "I have called you friends," because I'm telling you this stuff, right? Because I like you, more than that I love you, right? The whole point of this is I'm willing to let you know, to let you follow my logic, to let you understand what I'm thinking. Hey, Paul says, let me explain all this to you. And he even apologizes sometimes for defending his apostleship by saying this sounds crazy I know, but follow me here. And he goes to all the trouble of explaining all this. Why? Because he loves them. I want you to understand this.

So here's the thing. Number four, you need to be ready to explain when it's profitable to explain for the sake of love. Number four, "Be Ready to Explain for the Sake of Love." Why would I ever want to engage in Partners here at church? Because someone is teachable and I'm willing to go to the hassle of it all because I love someone and I'm willing to love for the sake of what God told me to do, to love his people, and I'm willing to teach, right? And why would I engage in a conversation about whether there is a God, or whether the Bible is reliable, or whether it makes sense to believe in biblical morality? Why would I have that conversation? It's a lot of work. I might have to brush up on stuff I haven't thought about for a long time. Because I love people. Because there are people bobbing in the waters of the Atlantic. And there are sharks out there, because I care about people. If you love people, then it's going to prompt you to action. But that's on the interior of your life. You can pull into the parking lot of church and not have any of that going on inside of you, and you're going to go all week long and never engage in the hard work.

I'm going to show you the example in the small group questions this week of Philip. Right? Philip would have had to have. Right? It's going to be work to hop up into the chariot and have the conversation with the Ethiopian eunuch and describe all the ins and outs of Isaiah Chapter 53. That's work. And it's work because he cares about people. The motive is love. Love for people. Paul's letters were explanations out of love. I want you to love people by



being willing to explain, being willing to teach, being willing to mentor, being willing to serve people by telling them and explaining to them what you know. Then they'll go, oh, I get it now. Do you see what that means? Oh, I get it. You do make sense. That is rational. You're in your right mind. If you're out of your mind to some people it's because you're being faithful to the truth. If you explain yourself and they go, oh, I get it now, you are in your right mind. It's because you care about them. It is for you. Do you follow that now in verse 13?

You know, these realtors stage those houses really nicely, don't they? They get those photographers. Everything looks plastic. Everything looks great. You know, they get small furniture in there. Those rooms look so big. The lawns are green as they can ever be. And, you know, the curb appeal is beautiful. But what really matters is when your inspector goes in to check the house out. Now, I'm a little concerned when my widow goes to sell our house because I just hope I am dead by the time they sell my house, because there are a lot of DIY projects that I'm just concerned about, wiring and stuff I've done, I don't know. The inspectors are going to find stuff. Well, let's talk about your house instead of mine. Right? There's stuff that you've put off that you know is a problem, right? Slab issues or whatever. The attic or the roof was leaking and you thought, well, whatever. The bucket's doing the job in the attic or, you know, whatever it is, right? You've thought of termites. It's too much to tent houses. I'll just put that off for another few years, and then all of a sudden you're trying to sell, and then the buyer is bringing their inspector in and the curb appeal is great. The pictures look touched up and beautiful. The lawn has never looked better. And the coat of paint and the small beds you moved in to stage the house, the bedrooms never looked better. You're wondering why you're selling because your house has never looked better. But the inspectors found 100 different problems that are, you know, setting you back about \$300,000.

So what really matters is all the things that need to happen that no one can really see, right? This is the problem. God wants us to deal with those things first. That has to happen, and it needs to happen now. Then I pray that God would get us to work on those things today. Those are the motives. Those are the things that God's Word is always cutting toward. Always moving toward them. Not the cosmetic things, not the exterior, not the performative things. Those will come, those will follow. It's the motives. It's the internal things. It's the interior life that God is concerned with first and foremost. And I pray that maybe this sermon will help us get there.

Let's pray. God help us today, please to worry about things that matter. To get down deeper in our hearts that we might care for the lost. We might pursue integrity. We might be willing to be thought crazy. We might love enough to explain, to teach, to disciple, to evangelize with a kind of teaching heart. If our integrity is leaking, if our concern for the lost is waning, if our desire for reputation outweighs our love for the truth, if our concern for people is running low, I just pray you might come in and convict us and then get us discussing these things. Put us in a small group if we haven't been lately, just get us there discussing these things with chairs face to face with open and honest discussion, accountability, progress. Let us purify our motives this week as we move into the next section and we kind of continue that talk about the love of Christ controlling us. I just pray we could have that real discussion if we get to the heart of the matter. Thank you for this opening section of this great text of Scripture. Thanks



God for all that you've done in our lives, and we know you've done a lot already, but I pray you'd do even more starting this week.

In Jesus' name. Amen.