

## What is all the Excitement About?

2 Corinthians 5:12-17

Paul's definition of a Christian is one of the most dynamic and revealing to be found anywhere in the New Testament. "If any man (not a few believers, not some who would live on one standard and some on another; but – 'if any man') be in Christ (in whose life the great miracle of the new birth has taken place and who has been born from above), he is a new creation..." "New," is not used to convey the sense of something recent, as you would buy a new automobile to replace an old one; it is used in the sense of becoming a totally different kind of person. At the moment of his *new birth* there has come to live within him a new life; and because of this he is now *governed* by a new *principle*, *arrested* by a new *motive*, *moving* in new *company*, and *surrendered* to new *objectives*. This is not a question of a man having reformed his life, or of some new things that have been added to old things. He has not merely changed for a few practices or habits; Paul says that if any man be in Christ, he is a totally different kind of person, "old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." Notice the contrast: "...if any man...all things have become new."

Here then is the New Testament definition of a Christian. It prompts the question, "What kind of people are we?" In the light of some things that confront us, I believe it is the most significant question of the hour. We who, claim to be in direct succession of the church, in this line of inheritance in which we are also in Christ, and therefore have this same experience, *what is all the excitement about?*

You will notice verse 6 begins with the word "therefore," and which obviously implies the outcome of reasoning and argument. Paul has come to this inevitable conclusion and summation of his argument: if any man is in Christ, then he is a totally different kind of person; and because of it he has certain *evidences* and *characteristics* about him. Going back to the context, Paul says in verse

11, "...we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." **In other words, there are some things about us that are so self-evident that we do not have to argue for them; they are manifest to God, and we trust they are manifest to others.** But remember, as Paul goes on in his argument, that we are not commending ourselves to others; and we are not boasting, but we are giving others some evidences that Christ has made a difference in our lives.

**What are these evidences?** First, in Paul's life there is an excitement that was revealed constantly, "...the love of Christ constraineth us..." In the previous verse Paul said that some people thought he was *mad* (had lost his mind), and beside himself. In fact, *Festus* said he was made when he gave his testimony before the court on one occasion; but Paul no doubt reminded himself that Christ was terribly misunderstood, even by His own family. **And then Paul gives us the reason for the excitement in his life; "the love of Christ."** **Notice, it was *not* Paul's love for Christ, it was Christ's love for Paul.**

**What was it about the love of Christ that caused so much excitement in Paul's life?** Part of the answer is given for us in Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." You see, Paul understood that the love of Christ is love eternal, having no beginning or ending. The love of Christ was so saturated with grace that He willingly stepped from the heaven to the manger. **And the love of Christ took Him from the manger to the gutters of humanity that some might be saved.** The love of Christ Him through all the shame, all the lies, and all of the rejection of His own people. John 1:29 tells us that the love of Christ took Him to the cross where He offered His life as "the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world." Paul described Christ journey from the manger to the cross this way in Philippians 2:5-8, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in

the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” **And Paul understood that it was the love of Christ that caused the holy Son of God, who knew no sin to be made sin for him.** And it was the love of Christ that caused the excitement to be present in Paul’s life. And when we can catch a glimpse of such love, I promise you it will cause us to be excited about God’s call on our life.

**The reason for the excitement in Paul’s life was that the love of Christ was not just a theory to Paul; it was something that he had experienced in his daily living.** He had seen something of the glory of God’s love and he knew it was this love that *constrains* us. The word “constrains” is difficult to translate from the original into the English language as it has multiple meanings. **It could be used to mean, “the love of Christ restrains,” as the reins on a horse hold him back, holds him in check, keeps him on the right path, and guides him around the bend.** In that setting, Paul is saying, “God’s love is the guiding force in his life that keeps him from doing the things that would bring disgrace to the name of Christ.”

Another meaning of “constrains” in this verse could be translated, “The love of God coerces us.” Jamieson, Fawcett, and Brown’s commentary explains this verse like this: “There is an irresistible object which so controls the life of a Christian that he loves with one objective in view to the elimination of any other possible consideration.” Just as a river is dammed up and restrained in order to produce power, to carry ships of cargo, boatloads of supplies to meet the needs of others, in this setting, Paul is saying, “The love of God is the driving force in my life that causes me to strive to meet the spiritual needs of others.” Therefore, the Bible is simply teaching us that *something* has so gripped the Christian’s heart and so possessed his life until the world sees us as fanatics, someone who has lost our minds.

Hearing these words, someone might say, “That is not true, it is faith that saves us.” The Bible does say in Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by

grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God – not of works, so that no man can boast.” But I must also remind you that we have been told in 1 John 4:19, “We love him, because he first loved us.” **You see, faith moves our heart because of the love of God.** When a man can see the love of God in spite of his lostness, that realization will cause that measure of faith that God has planted deep in the innermost recesses of his heart to come alive and reach out in belief. Love always blooms on the plant where faith has taken root in the soil of redemption; and where faith takes root, love springs up and bursts out. That is the excitement that Paul was not able to contain.

**History has proven that any man who counts for anything in the world, whether good or bad, is a man controlled by one principle.** People, who are something for a little while, then something else for a little while longer, and nothing for very long, are just like the jet stream that follows a jet plane and disappears in a moment; it does not count for anything. But there are men who are gripped by one principle: your Caesars, your Alexanders, your Napoleons, your Stalins, your Mussolinis, your Hitlers, your Sadaams, and others like them. **Sure, they have been bad men, but they were men of passion, one principle, and one concern.** And you also have your Wesleys, your Whitfields, your Moodys, and your Grahams: men of one passion, but good men.

**Paul had looked with Spirit-enlightened eyes into the heart of God, and he saw a love that gripped him, propelled him, and impelled him along one line of life to the exclusion of any other attraction.** If any would say that this is madness, Paul would simply answer that he was “drawn with cords of love” (Hosea 11:4) to do the will of God. It is that kind of insight that caused Paul to agree with Peter in 1 Peter 1:8 when he described the Christian life as “joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

**Paul life was filled with *commitment* and *emotion*. Why? The answer is seen in verse 14, “...because we thus judge (with the Spirit-enlightened minds and eyes), that if one died for all, then were all dead.” Therefore, Paul *commitment* and *emotion* was based on two dynamic facts: *substitution* and *identification*.**

Paul says, “He died for all...” Paul mind must have gone back to Isaiah 53:5 that says, “...he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; and the chastisement of our peace was upon him...” The great fact of the *substitutionary death* of our Lord Jesus is basic; and that truth puts fire into the heart of the believer.

**The Christian’s excitement also springs from the fact of his *identification*.** Paul says, “...if one (Christ) died for all, then were are dead.” Paul is simply saying, “When I was born in the physical realm of life, I was involved in condemnation, guilt, sin, and judgment. And because of the fall of Adam I was one with him in my first birth. But because of the cross, when I gave my life to Christ, I became one with Him. By faith I died with Him, I was buried with Him, I arose with Him, and I ascended with Him into heaven. And although my feet are on the ground, I am seated with Him in the heavenlies. Therefore, His victory is my victory; His triumph over temptation is my triumph; His resources are my resources; His grace is my grace; His patience is my patience; His meekness is my meekness; His strength is adversity is my strength; His power to overcome is my power. I was one with Adam by my first birth, but I am one with Christ in my second birth.”

**To make his point, Paul talked about a slave who escaped from prison.** A search was organized to find him, but when the news is received that the slave is dead, immediately the search is called off. Because of the slave’s death, the law has no more hold on him. **The law has no more power to enforce its condemnation or its judgment on him.** The man died and therefore he is free. **When I was a slave to sin, I had no power, no ability to overcome.** **Once the things that I wanted to do I did not do them, and the things that I knew better than to do, I did anyway.** In other words, I was in bondage to sin! But one day,

*in* Jesus Christ I died, and from that moment the law of sin and death had no more power in my life – its power could not touch me. **Not only am I free, but** “greater is He that is (me) that he that is in the world”! **Therefore, there is an excitement in the life of the believer because we have been set free by the blood of Jesus.**

**Last of all, there is excitement in the Christian life because of our victorious living.** Paul says in verse 15-16, “...he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.” **Paul is simply saying that because of the love of God in our life, we can love one another.**

**In other words, the Bible teaches us that love begets love.** Listen to the words of Jesus in John 13:34, “A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” He continues in John 13:35, “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.” He says in John 15:12, “This is my commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you.” He says in John 15:17, “These things I command you, that you love one another.” Paul says in Galatians 5:13, “For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” He continues in 1 Thessalonians 4:9, “But as touching brotherly love you need not that I write unto you: for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another.” Peter puts it this way in 1 Peter 1:22, “Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently.” The Phillips translation reads like this in 1 Corinthians 13, “Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope. It can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen.”

**The Bible is teaching us that love has answered love, deep has called unto deep, and in a life that was so barren, cold, and dead, the Holy Spirit has come and kindled a flame of sacred love in the heart.**  
Is it any wonder that Jesus could say, “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another”?

**What is all the excitement about in the Christian life? The love of God! Love for you and love for me.**