

I. Read II Corinthians 5:13-15

- A. In verse 13, the Apostle Paul alludes to the fact that he has had ecstatic experiences (II Corinthians 12:2; Acts 22:17-18). Though these experiences were significant to him, he did not use them as the basis of any claim to special or super-spiritual status. In fact, he is calling the Corinthians' attention to the need for personal service and ministry rather than being concerned with status or position. Professor Simon Kistemaker writes:

“With these lines Paul is launching an attack against his opponents by taking the sting out of their boast. He had a divine revelation when he was caught up to the third heaven, but this vision did nothing for his ministry to God’s people...Paul was not interested in promoting himself but in advancing the church that he served without allowing any distraction. Thus, by serving Jesus, he followed in the footsteps of the Lord.”

Read John 13:15-16 and discuss whether the message of Scripture supports Kistemaker’s explanation for Paul’s service and ministry.

Undeniably.

- B. In verse 14, Paul writes of “the love of Christ” controlling him and his associates. What do you think he meant by “the love of Christ?” (Read I John 4:16, 19, 20, 21; 1 John 3:1, 10-11.)

There are differences of opinion regarding the correct interpretation. It could mean that because Christ loves us, He controls us (guides, directs, protects). It could also mean that, if we truly love Christ, the motivation to please Him will affect our behavior (control us). It seems that both interpretations are correct, since they do not contradict one another, but rather complement each other.

If we say that *we love Jesus* on the one hand, but live in a manner that is at odds with our profession, what is the problem?

While no believer will absolutely and consistently reflect his professed love for Christ in every aspect of life, all true believers demonstrate a *pattern of faith and faithfulness*. Someone who does not reflect Christ and Christ’s concerns over an extended period of time is probably not a Christian.

If we believe that Christ loves us, what should we expect from Him? (Read Philippians 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 12:5-11; Romans 8:28-30.)

He will continue to sanctify and keep us close to Him, even when it requires discipline or what some might call *tough love*. He does not save us and allow us to simply go our own way. Redemption according to Scripture is all encompassing, affecting the whole man, and it continues until its object is perfected in truth (glorification).

- C. Read Galatians 2:20 and relate it to 2 Corinthians 5:14b-15.

There is an absolute sense in which those who are *in Christ* (see Col. 3:3) have their sin hidden or covered. The old nature cannot come between God and the believer in so far as their *relationship* is concerned. There is also a relative or practical sense in which our death *into Christ* is applied daily. You might think of our relationship with God as being closely related to our once and for all time justification and adoption, while our fellowship with Christ is related more closely to our sanctification. The Scripture speaks of both aspects of God the Holy Spirit’s work.

D. Below is the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation). See if you can match the scripture reference with the appropriate point. A few have more than one scripture verse that can be applied.

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| _____ a. | universal call | _____ f. | adoption |
| _____ b. | effectual call | _____ g. | sanctification |
| _____ c. | regeneration | _____ h. | perseverance |
| _____ d. | faith and repentance | _____ i. | glorification |
| _____ e. | justification | | |

1. Colossians 3:4
2. Romans 8:30
3. Mark 1:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:13
4. Philippians 1:6
5. Romans 5:9
6. Matthew 22:14
7. Romans 8:15-16
8. John 10:27
9. John 1:12-13
10. John 3:3
11. John 10:28
12. John 6:44

E. Read 2 Corinthians 5:15 and talk about some positive implications of what it might mean to “no longer live for” yourself as a believer. (Think in particular as a husband or wife, parent, employer, employee, member of a church, etc.)

In answering this question, the specifics will change in the examples cited, but three things will remain constant:

1. **Recognizing that there is something more important than your own comfort, personal peace, and affluence.**
2. **Being willing to subordinate your desires for the best interests of another or the church.**
3. **Following through with a practical demonstration of what we say we believe, that is, walking the walk or practicing what we preach.**

Note to teachers: Be sure you help the students make some personal application. For example, if you are not *happily* married – is it foolish to stay in the marriage? Or, suppose you are a gifted and intelligent young woman – would it be foolish to sacrifice lucrative career opportunities for the sake of being at home to raise your children? Or suppose you have a conflict with someone in church. Are your feelings more important than the peace and unity of the church? These are the sorts of applications we need to suggest.