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A New Creation

5: 11-17

A new creation DIG: What does the fear of the Lord mean to you? If you defend yourself against lies, does that mean you lack faith? Why? Why not? What does integrity look like? What story in your life might illustrate your integrity? What are you most grateful to the Lord for? What examples can you give that you are a new creation after you were saved?

REFLECT: How have you changed since being saved? How did your family, friends, and co-workers take the change? What has been the cost of your faith? If you were arrested and tried for being a believer would there be enough evidence to find you guilty? How so? Why not? When have you had to defend your integrity? How is your walk with the Lord going?

**If anyone is in Messiah, they are a new creation,
the old has passed; look, what has come is fresh and new!**

Although there is a variety of leadership styles, several common qualities are indispensable, especially for effective leaders (see the commentary on **Ezra-Nehemiah**, [to see link click Bt - The Third Return: Nehemiah - A Manual for Leaders](#)). But the basic common characteristic is integrity. Without it, all of the supposed leadership qualities add up to nothing more than hot air. Integrity solidifies and unites all the other qualities; it is the glue that holds all attitudes and actions together.

True spiritual leadership belongs to those whose lives are pure, blameless, and above reproach (**First Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6-7; Psalm 101:6**). But leaders must also protect their integrity against false accusations that could destroy it. This is what prompted **Paul** to write. **He** knew the importance of not only guarding **his** life against **sin**, but also guarding **his** reputation against **lies**. Actually, the central theme of **Second Corinthians** is **Paul's** defense of **his** integrity. **The apostle's** integrity was under attack from **the false apostles** who had infiltrated the church at **Corinth** (see [Af - The Problem of False Apostles](#)). Before **they** could get people to listen to **them**, **they** first had to tear down **Paul's** credibility. Although **their** accusations were false, **they** were nonetheless dangerous; if **the**

Corinthians believed **their lies**, confidence in **the Word of God** through **Paul** would be destroyed.

But **Paul** was on the horns of a dilemma. If **he** didn't defend **himself**, **the Corinthians** might abandon **him** in favor of **the false apostles**. Yet, if **he** did defend **himself**, **he** left **himself** open to the charge that **he** was pridefully puffing **himself** up. To refute the false accusation that **he** was guilty of being prideful and conceited, **Paul** was forced to defend **himself**.

The key to understanding this passage rests in the meaning of the word **persuade** (Greek: *peitho*). It does not refer to persuading people of **the truth** of **the gospel** as it does in **Acts 17:4, 18:4, 19:8, 26:28** and **28:23-24**. **The gospel** is not the issue in **Second Corinthians**, it is not an evangelistic letter. **Paul** was not trying to persuade **the Corinthian** believers of **the truth** of **the gospel**, but rather of **the truth** of **his** integrity. Therefore, *peitho* could better be interpreted to seek *the favor of*. **Paul** sought a favorable judgment from **the Corinthians** in the matter of **his** integrity. Therefore, as **he** defended **his** integrity against the vicious liars who were attacking **him**, **Paul gave six motives for his defense**.

Reverence for the Lord (5:11a): Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord (5:11a). To fear **ADONAI** is to have reverence, awe, and respect for **Him** resulting in worship, adoration, and service (**Job 28:28; Psalms 19:9, 22:23, 111:10; Proverbs 1:7, 8:13, 9:10**). **Acts 9:31** states that **the Messianic community throughout Judea and Galilee and Sumaria enjoyed peace and was built up. They lived in the fear of the Lord, with the comfort of the Ruach Ha'Kodesh, and their numbers kept multiplying**. Thus, **the fear of the Lord** does not refer to dread or terror, since that type of fear would not result in **peace** and **comfort**.

Paul was deeply disturbed that anyone would think that **he** misrepresented **the Lord** whom **he loved** and served with reverence. **He** was appalled to be viewed by some as dishonoring the name of **Yeshua Messiah**. It was unacceptable that people would think **he** was living a lie, opposite of **his** real reason for living – **to glorify God (First Corinthians 10:31; Romans 12:1)**. Nor could **Paul** remain silent while **he** was falsely accused of dishonoring **the Lord**, for such slander would result in **his** ministry being useless and unfruitful. As a result, **he** was obligated to defend **his** own integrity, though **he** did so with humble reluctance (**10:12-18**).

Concern for the Church (5:12): **Paul** not only defended **himself** for **God's** sake, but also for **his** concern for the Church. The assaults on **Paul's** integrity threatened not only to split

the church in **Corinth**, but also to stunt its spiritual growth. Thus **Paul** declared: **We are not recommending** (Greek: *kauchaomai*, meaning *to take pride in*) **ourselves**. **Paul** had stated previously how **he** and **his co-laborers** didn't need to **recommend themselves**, as the changed lives of **the Corinthians** was the evidence that **their** ministry was genuine (**3:1**). Actually, **Paul** was the last person to boast about **himself** (**First Corinthians 4:4**). The only **boasting he** did was about **his weakness** (see [Ca](#) - **Foolish Boasting**).

Further clarifying his motives, **Paul** said that the reason **he** wrote this defense of his integrity was **to give the Corinthians a reason for them to be proud of him** in the right sense. **Proud** can refer to **sinful boasting**, but here it refers to their confidence in his spiritual integrity (**Galatians 6:4; Hebrews 3:6**). Rather than respond to **their** accusations **himself**, **Paul** wisely chose to arm **his** friends to defend **him**. **He** knew that replying directly to **his** enemies was pointless because **they** would merely twist **his** words to fit **their** own evil purposes (**Proverbs 26:4, 29:9**). Therefore, it was more effective for **him** to equip **his** supporters in **Corinth** so that **they would be able to answer his** detractors (**Proverbs 27:2**).

Turning the tables on **his** accusers, **Paul** denounced **them** as **those who boast about a person's appearance rather than his inner qualities (5:12)**. Because their outward religious **appearance** didn't match the corruption that was in **their** hearts, **they**, and not **Paul**, were the hypocrites lacking integrity. **They** were like those **Yeshua** denounced as **whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness . . . who outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Mt 23:27-28)**. With **Paul**, however, there was no difference between what **he** appeared to be on the outside and what **he** really was on the inside. That **truth** was evident not only to **God**, but also to **the Corinthians'** consciences as **they** responded to what **they** knew to be true of **Paul**.¹⁴¹

Devotion to the truth (5:13): One of **the false apostles'** slanderous charges against **Paul** was that **he** was a **fool** who had **lost his mind** (Greek: *existemi*, meaning *to stand outside oneself*). *Existemi* is the root verb translated **lost his mind** is used in **Mark 3:21** to describe **Yeshua's** relatives' mistaken belief that **He** was **out of His mind**. **Paul** was so devoted to **the truth** that **his enemies** thought that **he** was fanatical to the point of being **crazy**. Incredibly, instead of being immediately rejected, those false and outrageous allegations generated a debate in **the Corinthian** church with those who insisted that **he** was merely **zealous**. **If I acted crazy, I did it for God; if I acted zealous, I did it for you (5:13 The Message)**.

The world often looks unfavorably on people who are dogmatic and zealous about **the truth**, like **John the Baptist**, who denounced the hypocritical Jewish religious leaders in no uncertain terms. **When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees**, who had been sent by

the Great Sanhedrin to observe **John**, he said to **them**, “**You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come**” (Mark 3:7 NASB)? As a result, in predictable fashion, **they** ridiculed **him**, claiming: **He has a demon (Matthew 11:18)!**

And as far as Paul was concerned, this wasn’t the only time that **his** commitment to **the truth** had caused someone to question **his sanity**. After **he** gave a dramatic testimony of **his** conversion and a powerful, straightforward presentation of **the Good News** before King Agrippa, that **the Roman governor Festus shouted at the top of his voice**, “**Paul, you’re out of your mind! So much learning is driving you crazy!** But **Paul** was not insane, as **his** calm, dignified reply demonstrated: **No, I am not crazy, Festus, your Excellency; on the contrary, I am speaking words of truth and sanity (Acts 26:24-25).**

If **Paul** acted zealous, he did it for the **Corinthians**. They were **his** sheep and **he** was **their shepherd** (see [Au](#) - **A Competent Shepherd**). If other people thought **he** was acting far too zealous, it was of no consequence to **him** (see [Ax](#) - **Light out of Darkness**). The issue for **Paul** was that **ADONAI** be honored by **him** proclaiming **the truth**. So that’s what **he** did. Faithfully. For the sake of **the Corinthians**, however, **he** was at the same time, **gentle, humble, and patient (Second Corinthians 10:1 and Second Timothy 4:2).**

Gratitude to the Savior (5:14): For the **Messiah’s love** controls us, because we are convinced that one man died on behalf of all mankind (see the commentary on [Romans Ae](#) - **My Position on T.U.L.I.P. or Calvinism: Limited Atonement**). While **Paul’s love** for **his Lord** certainly **compelled him**, the phrase **Messiah’s love** is best seen in this context as **Messiah’s love** for **Paul** – a **love** most certainly seen in **His** sacrificial death, which is the subsequent theme. **Paul** never lost **his** sense of the wonder of **Messiah’s love** (see the commentary on [Romans Cm](#) - **The Certainty of Redemption**). **Messiah’s** incomprehensible, unbreakable, unconditional **love** overwhelmed **him**. But more than that, **it controlled** (Greek: *sunecho*, meaning *a pressure that produces action*) **him**. The magnitude of **Messiah’s love** for believer’s like **Paul** **compelled him** to serve **the Lord** wholeheartedly, as an act of grateful worship. If **he** were discredited and **his** ministry lost, **he** would lose the opportunity to express **his** gratitude to **Messiah** through **his** ministry. That threat was a key factor that compelled **Paul** to defend **his** integrity.

Desire for righteousness (5:15): This point is inextricably linked to the previous one. The reason **that Messiah died on behalf of all mankind** was **so that those who live should not live any longer for themselves but for the One who on their behalf died and was raised (5:15)**. The marvelous miracle of salvation includes not only believers' union with **Messiah** in **His** death, but also in **His** resurrection (see the commentary on **Romans Bp - The Messianic Mikvah**). Therefore, in **Messiah**, believers experience not only death to **sin**, but also resurrection in righteousness. As a result, **we are no longer to live for ourselves, but for Him who died and rose again on our behalf (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:14; First Peter 2:24)**.

To be viewed as one who dishonored **Messiah** would have devastated **Paul**, for the most important thing in **his** life was to live for **Him**. **Paul** also defended **his** integrity so that **he** could continue to be a role model for what it meant to **live** for **Messiah**. In his previous letter, **Paul** urged the **Corinthians**, **"Be imitators of me, just as I am of Messiah"** (**First Corinthians 4:1** and **First Thessalonians 1:6**). If **he** allowed **his** integrity to be destroyed by **lies**, the **Corinthians** would not follow **him**, but **the false apostles** instead. Such a situation was intolerable to **Paul** and prompted **his** vigorous defense of his integrity.

Burden for the lost (5:16-17): The overarching reason **Paul** defended **his** integrity, the one that incorporated all the rest, was so that he could continue to reach the lost. **He** was passionate to see people come to saving faith in **Yeshua**. In fact, as **he** wrote in **his** first letter: **Woe is me if I don't proclaim the Good News (First Corinthians 9:16)**. But perhaps the most emotional glimpse of **Paul's** burden for the lost come in a shocking statement in **his** letter to the **Romans**: **I am speaking the truth - even as the apostle to the Gentiles, as one who belongs to the Messiah, I do not lie; and also bearing witness is my conscience, governed by the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**. Since **Paul's** ministry was to the **Gentiles**, perhaps some thought he would no longer be interested in the **Jews**. In this verse **he** affirms the sincerity of **his** grief over **Isra'el's** failure, as a people, to honor their **Messiah**. **My grief is so great, the pain in my heart so constant, always in the back of my mind, that I could wish myself, if it were possible, to actually be under God's curse (Greek: anathema) and separated from Messiah, if it would help my brothers who have rejected Him, my own flesh and blood (Romans 9:1-3), the people of Isra'el!** The Greek word *anathema* corresponds to the Hebrew word *cherem*, meaning, *set apart for destruction*. **Paul's** burden for the lost moved **him** to defend **his** integrity, lest **he** lose **his** credibility and with it **his** ability to effectively preach **the gospel**.

These next two verses define when **Paul's** burden for the lost began. The conjunction **therefore**, points back to **verses 14 and 15**. **Therefore, from now on, we do not look at**

anyone from a worldly viewpoint as the false apostles did. After **his** conversion, the way **Paul** viewed people changed radically. Not only did **Paul's** view of people change, but also **his** view of **Messiah**. The apostle stated: **I once regarded the Messiah from a worldly viewpoint (5:16a)**. He had made a human assessment of **Him**, concluding that **He** was merely a man. Worse, **he** had decided that **Yeshua** was a false messiah; a heretic and an enemy of Judaism, one worthy of death. As a result, **Paul** dedicated **his** life to persecuting **His** followers **(Acts 26:9-11)**.

Yet after **Paul's** conversion **he no longer** viewed **Yeshua** as an itinerant Galilean rabbi and self-appointed messianic imposter who was the enemy of Judaism **(5:16b)**. Instead, **he** saw **Him** for who **He** really is, **God** incarnate, **the Savior, the Lord of heaven, the true Messiah** who alone fulfills all the promises of the TaNaKh, and provides forgiveness for **sin**. The transformation in **Paul's** view took place in one blinding moment when **he** met **the risen Lord on the road to Damascus** (see the commentary on [Acts Bc - Sha'ul Turns from Murder to Messiah](#)). And when **his** assessment of **Yeshua** changed, so did **his** assessment of everyone else. **He** knew that the same profound change that took place in **his** life also took place in the lives of all those who put their trust in **Messiah**.



Therefore, in a conclusion also deriving from **verse 15**. Like the radical transformation of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly, **Paul** wrote about this metamorphosis, saying: **If anyone is united with the Messiah, he is a new creation (5:17a)**. **God's** grace and mercy are wide enough to encompass anyone, even the most vile, wicked **sinner** – even **the foremost of sinners**, as **Paul** described **himself (First Timothy 1:15-16)**. But **ADONAI is the One who makes people righteous on the basis of Yeshua's faithfulness (Rom 3:26; Galatians 3:26)**. **His** substitutionary death becomes their death, and **His** resurrection life

their life.

Paul's familiar expression **united with the Messiah (CJB)**, or **in Messiah (NIV)** succinctly and profoundly summarizes all the rich blessings of salvation (**Romans 8:1, 16:3, 7:1; First Corinthians 1:30; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1, 4:21; Colossians 1:2 and 28; Philemon 23**). The word **new** (Greek: *kainos*) means **new in quality**, not just in sequence. **The believers' old self was crucified with Him (Romans 6:6 NIV)**, and thus have laid **aside the old self and put on the new self (Eph 4:22 and 24; Colossians 3:9-10 NASB)**.

The transformation brought about by this **new birth** is not only an instantaneous miracle (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw - What God Does For Us at the Moment of Faith**), but is also a lifelong process of sanctification. For those so transformed, everything changes . . . **the old has passed away**. **Old** values, ideas, plans, loves, desires, and beliefs will vanish. **Fresh and new** values, ideas, plans, loves, desires and beliefs **have come (5:17)**! The perfect tense of the verb **have come** (Greek: *ginomai*) indicates a past act with continuing results in the present. **ADONAI** plants new desires, loves and truths in us so that we can live in the midst of the old creation with **a new creation** perspective (**Galatians 6:14**). It is true, of course, that for the time being our old **sin** nature still persists and the **new** has not fully come (**Romans 8:18-25; Galatians 5:15-26**). That perspective takes a lifetime, but as it is nourished and developed, it helps us gain victory in the battle against **sin** and **conforms us into the likeness of Messiah (Romans 8:29a)**.

So **Paul** defended his integrity in order to preach with boldness, knowing that **he** was **a new creation**. In addition, **his** reverence and gratitude to **the Savior** who had done so much for him, his deep concern for the church, passionate devotion to the truth, desire for righteousness, and longing to see the lost come to **the Savior** compelled **him** to maintain **his** integrity. Because **he** did so, **he** could confidently challenge **the Corinthians**, "**So don't pronounce judgment prematurely, before the Lord comes; for he will bring to light what is now hidden in darkness; He will expose the motives of people's hearts; and then each will receive from God whatever praise he deserves**" (First Corinthians 4:5).¹⁴²

Let's be very practical about this. You may ask, "I know that this is a wonderful verse, but how do I know absolutely that I am **a new creation in Messiah**? Listen to what **the Lord Yeshua** says about this: **Yes, indeed! I tell you that whoever hears what I am saying and trusts the One who sent me has eternal life** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**); **that is, he or she will not come up**

for judgment but has already crossed over from death to life (John 5:24)! Have you believed in **the Lord Yeshua Messiah**? Do you believe that **He died for your sins and He was buried**; and **He was raised on the third day, in accordance with what the TaNaKh says (First Corinthians 15:3-4)?** If you do, **He** assures you that you have **eternal life** and will not come into judgment; you have **passed from death to life**.

This makes you **a new creation**.