

“Just a Little Bit Crazy”

-Corinthians 5:12-21 -

by Pastor Tim Dodson
at JF Believers Church
in Menomonie, Wis
on Dec 19, 2021



2 Corinthians 5:12-21 *For we do not commend ourselves*

again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have [an answer] for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. 13 For if we are beside ourselves, [it is] for God; or if we are of sound mind, [it is] for you. 14 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. 16 Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know [Him thus] no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone [is] in Christ, [he is] a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things [are] of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore [you] on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin [to be] sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Sometimes my mind will slip back to those early days...the beginnings of this fellowship here. I think about some of the stuff we used to do and never have a second thought about it. Bible studies in old garages and around tables in Country Kitchen. Piling in cars and going to retreats and conferences, and camping in the snow along the way. Worship practice that was so loud the cops would come. Shooting a potato gun out across the lake on easter morning. Sponsoring a local demolition car with the church name on it. As the old adage goes "those were the days."

Perhaps it is nothing more than the pining's of an old man looking back to perceived good old days' but do we still live out our church and faith that way? I guess we indeed were "a little bit crazy." I remember one pastor warning someone about us in what he thought was disparaging language...warning that we should be avoided because we were "mavericks." I bristled and leaned in to defend, only to suddenly stop...*wait a minute...we ARE mavericks!*

I have been teaching the book of Acts on my radio devotions. Man was those some crazy ministry days! People chasing the apostles all the time. God doing miraculous things through the hands of the apostles. There were violent mobs, people being raised from the dead, profound new moves of the Spirit, manifested gifts and teachings that would last into the night. The birth of churches in such unlikely places and the last people one would expect would find God would walk away from everything they knew to serve Christ fully.

That doesn't happen too much anymore does it? Oh, we as a community certainly have its moments! But individuals who will chuck it all for Christ...well, that's too risky and people will think I'm crazy, Yes...they probably will. Just as they thought Paul was crazy. In Acts 26 while Paul aggressively shared the gospel, the governor Festus blurted out "Paul, you are insane. Too much study has made you crazy!"

Paul in this section of scripture has moved from explanation to application. What we believe and how we behave must always go together. In fact, they do whether we intend such or not. Paul nearly always connects *duty* and *doctrine*, because what God has done for us must motivate us to do something for God. Phillips Brooks said, "Christianity knows no truth which is not the child of love and the parent of duty."

When Dwight L. Moody was ministering at his large Sunday School and church in Chicago, people often called him "Crazy Moody." In the eyes of the unsaved world, Moody was "crazy" to have given up a successful business career to become a Sunday School worker and evangelist; but time has proved his decision *to* be a wise one. Today, we don't know the names of the people who laughed at him, but we do know—and honor—the name of D.L. Moody.

5:12-13

Paul had been writing for some time about ministry, particularly his own. He had spoken of the blessings, the hardships, all the craziness. Despite all of it...despite all of the instability and seeming madness, Paul was still undeterred and expressed the commitment that he had to labor diligently on their behalf. It would be easy to wonder why, like the energizer bunny, Paul kept on going through thick and thin, through good times and bad. Perhaps the answer lay in 1 Corinthians 9:16-17 where Paul claimed he was "compelled" to preach the gospel. He honestly felt that he could do nothing else. He didn't own himself anymore. Jesus did. He had "died" and was reborn as an "all-in" servant of Christ. In life, and "*to the death.*"

It seems Paul was concerned on some level, and *rightfully* so, that some in Corinth might take his gushing monologue as simply a bragging session. For that reason and innumerable others, some would never accept Paul's words. But how could it be otherwise? Could Paul simply acquiesce in hopes of winning some? Would he bend to the will and desires of others? So much so that even his ministry *styles* would be surrendered for the calm of mediocrity? Many would like it to be so. If they had their way, this fellowship...*yes all of them really*, would avoid the controversial, never challenge anyone, never disagree, never hurt anyone's feelings. Embrace the position of spiritual milquetoast. Just give people support, comfort, niceties and avoid the issues and subjects that might upset them. That's right...like Jesus!

Oh wait...we have a problem there. That's right...*let it roll over you.* There was flipping tables over in the temple and driving some folks out with a cat-o-nine-tails. There was "you broad of vipers"...the "sell everything you have and come and follow me." There was the "let the dead bury the dead, you come and follow me." The 'pick up your cross and die', the 'weeping and gnashing of teeth', the 'Satan wants to sift you like wheat', the 'get behind me satan' to one of his students, and a comment that some folks turned converts into "twice the son of Satan than they were," and many many more. Suddenly we grasp with clarity why Jesus was called the "*rock of offense!*" But we don't generally like that Jesus so we'll pretend He doesn't exist and continue to paint a picture of "Jesus meek and mild" with a lamb around His shoulders...

Clearly Paul also didn't look or act the part of a great minister-evangelist, nor was he willing to "tow the party line" in the message he delivered. His ministry, like hopefully ours today, was a straight from the hip, no nonsense Bible ministry. A "sold out, died to self and this world, bond-slave of Christ" truth with all the bumps, pains, persecutions, and religious kickback that goes with it.

Not everyone however was cut from that bolt of cloth. There were already many religious folks that were looking for calm and the status quo, and most often some power and clout to spend at will. That issue has only grown in popularity over the years. Even then Paul had to contend with "posers"... people who were all flash and no substance. Folks who say they are filled with the Spirit, but are blown over when a stiff breeze blows by.

We have had our share of them over the years, but thankfully they eventually move on when they are unable to get what they want positionally and materially. For these people, both then and now, it was all about appearance, and they were seemingly unwilling or unable to speak in any way of real and substantial faith. Like cotton candy, these people look good at first, but are sure to leave you still hungry, and eventually with a stomach ache.

The accusations against Paul were many and were continual. It is common practice that when you start to convict some people, their response...their *revenge*, is mud-slinging. He is lucky that there was no social media

in his day as there is today! At least no one is trying to stone me to death yet. Trust me, there is no limit to how far some folks will go!

It is heartbreaking to witness and painful at times to endure, but as Paul had already elaborated, one must have thick skin in order to stand in the pulpit of God's church. A pastor must have undying love for the flock while, *like Christ*, "entrusting himself to no man." (John 2:24-25)

Paul's foes apparently went so far as to say Paul was part of a cult (Acts 24:14 NLT) and that he was crazy. It seems that such was nothing new to Paul! And on some level, he didn't even *try* to deny it...nor *try* to defend himself. In fact, he claims that if indeed he *was* crazy, he was crazy for God's sake! And if there was any real stand of social sanity, it was for their benefit and blessing.

Today we can seemingly "get crazy" for just about anything except God. We can paint our faces in purple for football games or wear cheese on our heads. We will cut loose at rock concerts and get extreme at protests. We will stay up late late to play video games, dress up for Halloween parties, run 26 mile marathons, and sit in a tree in the freezing darkness for a chance to shoot a deer. But where is the "crazy for Jesus?"

5:14-15

Clearly for Paul it was the love of Jesus that made him keep going, to keep ministering. Again, one might stand in awe and wonder what kept that man going through all the hell and persecution. Herein we have his own testimony: Christ was his compelling force. He was in love. He was sold out. He was all in.

Now He has given *us* the "ministry of reconciliation." With "all things" now being clearly "of God," we are to be centrally focused upon God's "ministry of reconciliation." We are now to live to bring others to the cross, to repentance, to salvation, and a place where "all things have become new."

Please notice that Paul is not addressing a group of pastors, but rather a church of people just like you. He is not reserving this "ministry" he speaks of for a select few who call themselves pastors, evangelists and missionaries. No...he says God has given us this ministry. All of us!

5:19-20

(For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!")

God did the work; He did the "reconciling" of us unto himself. God sent His Son Jesus, embodying the very essence of the Father-Creator, to make things right between us and Himself. It is essentially like winning the lottery, but why are we not spending the money? Through Christ, our trespasses, our sins, are no longer counted against us. But along with our righteous standing comes both redemptive and family responsibilities. We so often want the *benefits* of salvation, but cling only the premise that salvation is free. And it is! You can't buy it or earn it! But if you think that *living* salvation is free, then you are gravely mistaken. How in God's name would you explain what Paul went through being a servant of Christ? Or for that matter, any of the early biblical emissaries of kingdom? Living out salvation will cost you everything...

God has chosen to make us His emissaries, His "ambassadors" for the kingdom. It's not that He *needs* us, but He inexplicably *chooses* to use us to spread the gospel, to further the kingdom of God. The careful use of the term "ambassadors" tells us a great deal. An ambassador is not a citizen of the country he serves in. He is there to represent and to do business for a second country. An ambassador will one day get called home and returns then to his true country, the one of which he *is* a citizen. The unredeemed call it death, but we call it "going home."

Now it is as if God is literally pleading, through us, for all to come to Him and to be made right with Him. The “king of kings,” ruler of nations, is pleading with us, loving us that much! He righteously could demand it, but He wants us to love Him enough to respond without a club. That’s what I feel like I am so often doing. I am pleading with whoever will listen; “*be reconciled to God.*”

5:21

Who crucified Jesus? Was it the Roman soldiers? Was it the Jewish zealots? Was it *us*? The truth be told, it was ultimately His Father. The Father *made* Jesus, who *knew no sin*, to *be sin*. Christ who “*knew no sin.*”

“One of the very reasons Jesus Christ came to earth was to live a sinless and perfect life. As Man He never broke the law of God; He never went contrary to the will of God. He never sinned, not even once. He lived a perfect life. Therefore, He stood before God as the Perfect, quintessential Man. He was the Ideal, the Pattern of what a man should be. He had secured the absolute, perfect righteousness; therefore, His righteousness could stand as the optimal righteousness for man. His righteousness could embrace and cover man. As the Ideal Pattern, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ could be counted as righteousness for man.” (loosely taken from Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible Commentary)

Christ not only shouldered our sin, but He literally *became* our sin! In doing so, He was put to death in our place, so we might have nothing between us and our Creator Father. He was judged guilty, though he was anything but guilty! We then were judged innocent, though we were anything but innocent. Yet it is so strange how easily we can forget such an awesome gift! After all, people do not sacrifice their lives every day for me.

If there still exists any wall between you and God today, it is because you have placed it there. God has cleared the path for you, and the way is clear from where He stands. He has removed any barrier that would stand between us and a loving Father. Now, the *choice is ours*. But let’s face it. We will have to get a little crazy.

Do you feel He is silent toward you? Perhaps it is because He will not intimately involve Himself, open His heart in relationship and communication, until we come to Him, until we answer that one constant repeating beacon: “be reconciled to God.” All of Him.

Even the crazy parts...