

“What Fuels You?”

I'd like to show you a picture of someone and get you thinking about what “fueled” them in life, what motivated them to think, speak, and behave a certain way.

- Woody (From “Toy Story” Movies) – A struggle with change in life
- Buzz Lightyear (From “Toy Story” Movies) – Struggle with Self Image
- Homer Simpson (“Simpsons” TV Show) – Self-indulgent pleasure
- Bart Simpson (“Simpsons – TV Show) – Mischievous fun at others expense
- Cowardly Lion (“Wizard of Oz” Movie) – Fear
- Charlie Brown (“Peanuts” Cartoon) – Low self-esteem, Discouragement
- The Parr Family (“Incredibles” Movies) – Helping others, hiding identity
- Inigo Montoya (“Princess Bride” Movie) – Revenge, Sadness
- Ebenezer Scrooge (“A Christmas Carol” Movie) – Bitterness, Greed

Movies, television shows, and cartoons do a good job of reminding us of some of the emotions that “fuel” us, motivate us to think, speak, and behave a certain way. We could add to this list. Some of these motivations are healthy and many of them are unhealthy. Today, the Apostle Paul, asks each of us a question – “What Fuels You?” What motivates you to think, speak, and behave the way you do? Then he reminds us of a healthier way to fuel ourselves going forward. 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

**<sup>14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.**

**<sup>16</sup> So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

One of the main emotions that fuels each of us is fear. Our other Scripture lessons for today center on “Fear.” The **“nations are in uproar”** (Psalm 46:6) currently and that's scary. In our Gospel lesson the apostles were afraid they were going to die because of the scary storm. Threats to our life are scary. We are afraid that if life changes too much it won't be as enjoyable. We are afraid that others don't like who we really are so we have to hide it from them and pretend to be someone else. We are afraid that if I don't try to experience everything that earthly life has to offer then I will live with regret in my older years. We are afraid that if I don't focus on serving myself then no one else will. We are afraid that if I don't act bitter or try to get revenge then that other person will never be held accountable for their sins against me. Each of us truly does struggle with trying to fuel our lives with the unhealthy fuel of fear. And the unfortunate thing is that the unhealthy fuel source of “fear” actually works to a certain degree.

But Paul is here today to remind us that there is a healthier way to fuel your life. A fuel that will last longer and will make your life run smoother and be more satisfying. **“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again”** (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). The word translated “compel” is an interesting word. It can mean “urge or motivate,” but it can also mean “hold together.” In the face of fear Christ’s love does hold us together. It’s a good thing too, because out of all those fears that we have, there is one that should stand above them all. Listen to what the Apostle Paul says a few verses before our sermon lesson, **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad”** (2 Corinthians 5:10). Nothing should terrify sinners more than that. Each of us will have to stand in God’s courtroom to have our life compared to his perfect expectations to see if we measure up. And if we don’t, eternity being punished in Hell is the result. That knowledge could lead one to the unhealthy and ineffective motivation of trying to do good things to make up for the bad thinking that through hard work and perseverance they can earn their way to Heaven. That knowledge could also lead one to the unhealthy and ineffective motivation of despair which will lead a person to fuel their life with other unhealthy motivations like self-indulgent pleasure, bitterness, sadness, discouragement, and hopelessness. Or, as God would want, that fear of standing in judgment before God could lead someone to see their need for Jesus. **“God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him (Jesus) we might become the righteousness of God”** (2 Corinthians 5:21). God took every last one of your sins, and the world’s sins, and punished Jesus for them instead. And while Jesus gets the punishment for the trash of your sins, you get the gift of Jesus perfection or righteousness being credited to your spiritual bank account so that God looks at you differently. Through faith in Jesus Christ God views you as sinless, holy, perfect, deserving of Heaven.

Let that news fuel you each day! As it does you will notice two things will start to happen in your life. First, this: **“So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view”** (2 Corinthians 5:16). Through faith in Jesus Christ we start to see other people as souls we want to see in Heaven rather than souls we think should be punished in Hell because they wronged me in some way or souls that we don’t care where they spend eternity because I’m too busy living my own life. Secondly, this: **“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us”** (2 Corinthians 5:20). Through faith in Jesus we start to recognize how my thoughts, words, and actions can impact others wanting to know more about Jesus and we act accordingly.

There are lots of fuels out there that can fuel your life, many of them connected to fear in some way and many of them unhealthy. Jesus fuel offers you a better alternative. So **“be reconciled to God”** (2 Corinthians 5:20b). This verb form is a passive command in the Greek. What that means is that God is commanding us to do this and he is the agent acting to make it possible. When the Apostle Paul says “be reconciled to God” he is really saying, “see your need for Jesus daily, and remember daily what Jesus did to reconcile you to God so you enjoy a peaceful relationship with him now and forever in Heaven. Set aside those unhealthy fuels for your life and remember to fuel yourself in a healthier way. **“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again”** (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Amen.