

6So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord— 7for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil. 11Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences.

12We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart. 13For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. 14For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. 15And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

16From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. 17So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

I remember the night I took Sue to Lafite's Restaurant. The year was 1969, a year before we were married. Sue was dressed in a red orange dress, I in a gray-green suit, we weren't exactly color coordinated. But we were heading for the most elegant place I knew in Denver, Colorado, of that I was sure.

I remember the meal, Sue ordered lobster - I ordered prime rib. I remember the waiter who was attentive to our every need. Never a wasted motion, never any doubt that we were being served by the very best. I remember the waiter even more than I remember the food. And I remember what it all cost: \$14.62 , an outrageous sum for a meal, but worth every penny.

One more thing I remember: how I was feeling. I felt honored to be in such a place. I tried very hard to do what was right; I did not want to offend those who waited on me there, nor those who shared that dining room with us. Looking back I know that I was very naive, the staff at that restaurant was there to impress me, to serve me, to please me, yet I wanted to do all that I could to please them.

I remembered that night and my feelings then as I read Paul's words: *so we make it our aim to please him*, the Lord.

You come to this place as an honored guest. Jesus Christ serves you, washes you in the waters of baptism, feeds you with his word - gives you his own life in the bread and the wine of the meal. God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, waits upon you, listens to your every need and request in prayer, provides for your daily needs, even promises to forgive your every failing, your every rebellion. So with Paul we make it our aim to please the Lord.

Yes, I thought of that evening in Denver because then I was deeply conscious that I was where I did not belong. I had no right to demand to be served in that fine place. No more right than I have to demand what God gives freely in this place of our gathering.

But sometimes I forget.

Sometimes I am like a child that starts to take his father for granted. You have all seen that: gifts bring no gratitude, only more demands. The harder the father tries, the more he gives, the more he is dishonored. The son becomes like the patron in a restaurant that treats the waiter like dirt. A father's love is abused.

How easy to think that God exists to make me happy. If I am not happy then something is wrong with God. How easy to get everything wrong, to be like the younger son in the parable Jesus told - the one who took all his inheritance and thought nothing of the father. He gave no thought to pleasing his father, only to his own happiness.

Or for us who are here, how easy it is to be like the older brother in that story, doing all the right things, buying a good gift on father's day, saying all the right words, thinking we really belong. But in the end with the older brother it is the same as it was with the younger, for the older brother thinks everything he receives is deserved also.

Neither brother deserves anything from the father; all that the father gives is a gift.

Jesus gave his life for you as a gift, not because he needs something from you. He serves you here, the master waiting on the slaves, as a gift, the gift of his love.

And so Paul writes: *The love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who died and was raised for them.*

Those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who died and was raised for them.

Gratitude. That is the reason. Gratitude is all we have to offer God: gratitude - your whole life gratitude.

He died for all so that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who died and was raised for them.

So if anyone is in Christ there is a new creation; everything old as passed away, see, everything has become new!

A long time ago I was grateful to be where I knew I did not belong.

Today all of you are honored even more. Christ serves you, honors you even as he alone is deserving of honor.

Thanks be to God.