

The Love of Christ Constraineth Us

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. ”

II Corinthians 5:14-15

Introduction:

1. These beautiful verses are often debased by an excessive emphasis on our service rather than His death.
2. There is not even a hint in the text or the context that a single person should become a missionary because of these verses or that a single soul of those for whom He died might not attain unto eternal life.
3. Last Sunday, we studied the faithful saying of salvation (I Tim 1:15). What affect did it have on Paul?
4. It is a given assumption of Scripture that no one labored more passionately and diligently than did Paul; and no one endured greater persecution, pain, and trouble with more joyful confidence than did Paul.
5. What is love? What is it to be loved by another? What affect does the love of another have on a person’s outlook, motivation, and actions? What is it to be loved by Another, Who is Jehovah God?
6. How does love magnify itself? By gifts? By promotion? By deliverance? By forgiveness? By perfecting its object? By duration? Let me tell you today about the love of Jesus Christ for His elect.
7. It is said that power is the greatest aphrodisiac. If this is true, then God’s love should arouse us to spiritual fanaticism of death to this world and sold-out service to Jesus Christ, as it did the apostle Paul.

I. THE TEXT (5:14)

- A. “The love of Christ” is grammatically incomplete by itself to prove His love or our love.
 1. Subjective-genitive is when the object of the preposition creating the genitive case is the subject of the possession i.e. the love of God in I John 3:16, where the context clearly shows we are to understand the phrase as God’s love for us.
 2. Objective-genitive is when the object of the preposition creating the genitive case is the object of the possession i.e. the love of God in Luke 11:42, where the context clearly shows we are to understand the phrase as our love of God.
 3. The context is Jesus dying for His condemned people, which would be His love; and it is God’s love for His elect that is Scripture’s great theme (I John 4:9).
 4. It was Christ’s loving death that motivated Paul’s life (Gal 6:14), for which he prayed that all saints would by Holy Spirit power come to know (Eph 3:14-19).
 5. God loved the world of His elect, so He sent His Son to die for them (Jn 3:16).
 6. God’s love is special due to sending Christ when we were sinners (Rom 5:6-10).
 7. The greatest love the world has seen is God’s love in sending Christ (I Jn 4:10).
 8. How do we measure love? The difference between lovers? The need? The blessings? The forgiveness? The deliverance? The improvement? The power?
 9. The love Jesus Christ had for His brethren exceeds all measures by full infinity.
- B. “Constraineth us” describes the affect of Christ’s love upon Paul and his son Timotheus.
 1. **Constrain.** To force, compel, oblige. To cause by compulsion or of necessity.
 2. For further help with “constrain,” see Acts 28:19; Gal 6:12; Job 32:18; I Pet 5:2.
 3. Being loved in such a way by the glorious God of heaven should motivate us.
 4. Paul’s extreme life of self-denial, cheerful submission to horrible sufferings, and constant sacrificial zeal, as seemingly beside himself, was a constrained life.
 5. We cannot justify ourselves being “constrained” for any of these reasons: praise of men, envy, emulation, friends, knowledge, rewards, church, or doctrine: it must be the love of Jesus Christ and His death for us, or our faith is perverted.
- C. “Because we thus judge” reflects spiritual reasoning on the death of the Lord Jesus.
 1. It was Paul’s manner to reason from Scripture (Acts 17:2), and he reasons here.
 2. Jesus Christ’s love for Paul compelled him to action by considering His death.

3. Paul is about to analyze our Lord's death in its value and implications for us.
4. Romans and Ephesians switch from what God has done for us (with an Amen) to what we should properly do for Him in response (Romans 12:1-2; Eph 4:1).
5. If meditation on the Lord is sweet, how much more His love for us (Ps 104:34)?
- D. "That if one died for all" is the absolute doctrinal fact of Christ's substitutionary death.
 1. Jesus Christ died in the room and stead of the elect (Is 53:4-6; I Pet 2:24; 3:18).
 2. Caiaphas ignorantly prophesied by the power of God of Christ (John 11:47-52).
 3. We can glory in His death as our Substitute, Representative, and Mediator (Ex 12:12-13; Romans 4:25; 5:6-10,15-19; II Cor 5:21; I Tim 2:5-6; Heb 2:9-17).
 4. The "all" here is clearly all of His elect, chosen in Him (I Cor 15:22; John 6:39).
- E. "Then were all dead" is the doctrinal fact and conclusion to be drawn from His death.
 1. If the price the Substitute paid was death, then those substituted for were dead.
 2. We all had the sentence of eternal death over us because of sin (Romans 6:23).
 3. But the Substitute secured eternal life by His vicarious death (Romans 5:17).
 4. We were all doomed to an eternal death, but we have been pardoned and given eternal life (Titus 1:2; II Timothy 1:9-10; Hebrews 2:14)!
 5. The Lamb's Book of Life will deliver us from the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:15)!

II. THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT (5:12-17)

- A. Verse 12: Paul was forced to defend himself against internal opposition at Corinth.
 1. He was not merely commending himself again as pompous men would do (3:1).
 2. Having just stated his pure motives before God and them (5:11), he explains that talking about himself is rather to give them glorious answers for his detractors.
 3. He is taking the time to explain his ministry to provide answers for the faithful.
 4. There are many ministers who glory more in their office, public appearance, ministerial gifts, conduct, knowledge, and presentation, rather than the heart.
 5. True ministers of Jesus Christ have pure hearts (I Samuel 13:14; I Chron 28:9).
- B. Verse 13: Paul defends his actions from charges of some at Corinth trying to slight him.
 1. Some said Paul was beside himself (crazy, fanatical). If so, it was for the Lord.
 2. Some knew Paul was sober (calm, balanced). If so, it was for the Corinthians.
 3. This defense of his fervent, sold-out zeal leads into his review of Christ's death.
 4. It is common for carnal, formal, and correct men to accuse the fervent and zealous of being crazy, as Jesus and Paul were charged (Mark 3:21; Acts 26:24).
 5. Would to God there were more whose extreme zeal would earn such charges!
 6. If we properly saw the death of Christ, we would be living strange (I Pet 4:1-5).
- C. Verse 15: Paul furthers his argument from our text by explaining the proper response.
 1. His glorious death for all the elect should lead the elect to want to live for Him.
 2. Their lives should no longer be important, for Another died to save their lives.
 3. And Jesus Christ not only died, He also rose again and is living for our service.
 4. If a debtor of 500 pence loves more than a debtor of 50 pence (Luke 7:41), how much more should we love, who have been frankly forgiven an eternal death?
 5. Our debt is to live for Him, and nothing else – doctrine or church – will suffice.
 6. We are not our own, and it should show (Rom 6:11-12; 14:7-8; I Cor 6:19-20).
 7. The first of three "henceforth's" occurs here, which means our lives ought to change from the time we come to know Jesus Christ in truth by blessed wisdom.
 8. This verse, rather than teaching that some for whom He died will not live due to unbelief, is teaching the specific and definite purpose of His death (Titus 2:14).

- D. Verse 16: Paul teaches that our fleshly ideas, ambitions, and relationships are worthless.
1. This verse cannot teach that Paul and Timothy no longer knew any other men in a physical way, for they had many fellowlabourers yet in physical bodies.
 2. This verse cannot teach Timothy knew Jesus in a physical way, but knows Him no more in such a way, for Timothy was but a youth and lived 1000 miles away.
 3. We understand “know” here to mean affectionate approval, esteem, and unity.
 4. We understand “flesh” in the sense of that sinful principle that governs sinners and causes them to have an earthly, temporal, and carnal perspective of things.
 5. “Wherefore” opening this verse draws a practical conclusion from verses 12-15.
 6. The knowledge of Christ’s love, leading to a life dedicated to Him alone, caused Paul to lose all desire and esteem for fleshly relationships, which had been built on a carnal foundation of earthly values and affection, which would only hinder.
 7. Compare Luke 14:26; Matt 12:47-50; Galatians 2:5-6; Col 3:11; James 2:1-4.
 8. His thoughts and desires of the Messiah were once fleshly, based on Jewish fables of an earthly kingdom with national glory, and consistent with Moses’ law and justification by it; but now they were only spiritual of His saving death.
 9. Compare Philippians 3:4-11; Matthew 13:57; Acts 22:3-5; 26:4-5,9; Rom 7:9; 9:32-33; 10:2-5; I Cor 1:22; II Cor 11:22; Gal 1:13-14; I Tim 1:13; I Pet 2:8.
 10. The two “henceforth’s” here are from the same word in verse 15, which shows the forward change in perspective and conduct from knowing Christ in truth.
 11. The greatest measure of our faith and religion is a spiritual perspective of Christ, which ought to be of great admiration, thankfulness, appreciation, and devotion.
- E. Verse 17: Learning of Christ aright and pursuing Him should result in great changes.
1. We do not find in this verse a fatalistic jump by Paul to our vital salvation, as many hiding behind the sovereignty of God will do to excuse their carnal living.
 2. “Therefore” opening this verse draws a practical conclusion from verses 12-16.
 3. Paul is explaining his godly fanaticism as a proper response to being in Christ.
 4. We get into Christ this practical way by faith and baptism (Galatians 3:26-29), as we identify with Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth and become His disciples.
 5. “A new creature” does not have to mean regeneration, as “creature” usually does not; but it means a radical change to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4-6; 7:6).
 6. “A new creature” means rejecting the old man and living the new (Col 3:10).
 7. Paul’s old ambitions, affections, plans, efforts, and so forth were gone – as dung.
 8. He had new ambitions, affections, plans, efforts, and lifestyle matching Christ.
 9. We are called to put off and put on different men to be renewed (Eph 4:22-24).
 10. Which follows our regeneration, when we have it created within us (Eph 2:10).
 11. The salvation of Christ should move us to be transformed entirely (Rom 12:1-2).
 12. The old things that pass away are most specifically the old thinking of verse 16.

III. THE BROADER CONTEXT (4:1 – 6:13)

- A. Paul uses this lengthy section, and some sections later, to defend his ministry at Corinth.
- B. He explains the integrity of His preaching, role as servants to them for Christ’s sake, and the great gift of knowledge from God, though in powerless earthen vessels (4:1-7).
- C. He then describes his ministerial sufferings and difficulties at length (4:8-16; 6:3-10).
- D. And He also describes the helpful perspective of eternity versus this life (4:17 – 5:8).
- E. He introduces the immediate context by a consideration of coming judgment (5:9-11).
 1. We can label this Paul’s negative motive - the Lord’s terrible judgment, which was another reason for his diligent labour to be accepted of Him.
 2. Which he then follows with the positive motive – Christ’s loving death for him.

- F. He describes his ministry as only bringing the word of God's reconciliation (5:18-21).
- G. He exhorts them to not receive the grace of God in vain, which many sadly do (6:1-2).
- H. He then beseeches the Corinthians to show some affection in return for his (6:11-13).

IV. THE APPLICATION

- A. How can we live to ourselves? Our lives are not our own. We lost them. He saved them.
- B. Furthermore, if we try to save them for ourselves, we will lose them (Matthew 16:25).
- C. Any man truly in Christ Jesus will be a new creature with a very different way of living.
- D. When was the last time you were accused of being beside yourself in religious matters?
- E. What is so difficult? Reading, praying, loving your spouse, loving the brethren, turning off the television, guarding your speech, purifying your hearts? What? Be constrained!
- F. Every aspect of our duty toward God should be easier with 5:14 in our heart and soul.
- G. And John wrote also of this purifying affect of the love of God toward us (I John 3:1-3).
- H. Pray God by the power of the Holy Ghost to show Christ's love to you (Eph 3:14-19).
 - 1. The church at Ephesus was a good church, yet Paul prayed this for those saints.
 - 2. And he prayed it not for them only, but also for all saints, which includes us.
 - 3. This full comprehension of Christ's love only occurs by the might of the Spirit.
 - 4. From a foundation, rooted and grounded, he prays we see the full dimensions.
 - 5. And that we might know it experimentally, though it passes natural knowledge.
 - 6. That the result might be the filling of our inner man with all the fulness of God.
 - 7. Our God's exceeding great ability to do marvelous things is best seen here.
- I. Some noble Greeks came to Philip and said, "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:20-22).
 - 1. We must be as Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet to hear every word (Luke 10:38-42).
 - 2. We must read, pray, sing, fast, reject carnal activities, and add spiritual activities, all with the one purpose of learning Jesus Christ and His love for us.
 - 3. We must make this theme a priority, as did Paul in all His preaching (I Cor 2:2).

Conclusion:

- 1. Can there be any good work or commandment we would not love to do as a result of His love for us?
- 2. If any are not in Christ Jesus today, it is simple to cast yourself on Him, believe in Him, and put Him on.

Alas! And Did My Saviour Bleed

Alas! and did my Savior bleed
 And did my Sovereign die?
 Would He devote that sacred head
 For such a worm as I?

Thy body slain, sweet Jesus, Thine—
 And bathed in its own blood—
 While the firm mark of wrath divine,
 His Soul in anguish stood.

Was it for crimes that I had done
 He groaned upon the tree?
 Amazing pity! grace unknown!
 And love beyond degree!

Well might the sun in darkness hide
 And shut his glories in,
 When Christ, the mighty Maker died,
 For man the creature's sin.

Thus might I hide my blushing face
 While His dear cross appears,
 Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
 And melt my eyes to tears.

But drops of grief can ne'er repay
 The debt of love I owe:
 Here, Lord, I give my self away
 'Tis all that I can do.