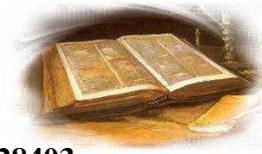


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The Love of Christ Constrains Us - By Mike Willis, Danville,

IN

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead (**2 Cor. 5:14**).

There are several things which motivate men to obedience to Christ, several of which are mentioned in **2 Corinthians 5**. Paul mentioned these things: (a) The expected inheritance of the house not made with hands which is eternal in the heavens (**5:1-9**); (b) The fear of judgment (**5:10**); (c) The terror of the Lord (**5:11**); and (d) The love of Christ (**5:14**). None of these motivators should be eliminated in our preaching, although in this article, I shall only discuss the motivating power of Christ's love for us.

The Power of Love

Each of us has seen the motivating power of love on purely human terms. When a young man falls in love with a young lady, his life begins to change. That young man who did not care whether or not he tucked in his shirt or washed his face all

of a sudden begins to take baths every time he goes out, pays careful attention to combing his hair, and borrows his dad's best after shave lotion before leaving home. Although he has no interest in flowers, he will spend the money he made mowing yards to buy a bouquet. He is anxious to go to a movie that you would have had to drag him to just a few months before. He will sometimes act foolishly just to win and keep the attention of his girlfriend.

This same love will cause the young man to marry his lady, get a job, buy a family car (instead of a sports car), and do the duties expected of a husband. Their love for each other will bind their hearts together throughout life and into old age. Then when one becomes ill and unable to care for himself, his mate will dutifully minister to his needs until they are separated by death. This is the motivating power of love. It is stronger than threats of physical violence and inducements based

on selfish desires. "For love is strong as death . . . Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned" (**Song of Sol. 8:6-7**).

God induces men to obedience based on his love for us. He could have used only the threat of eternal damnation to motivate us. He could have appealed only to the bliss of heaven to move us. However, God has sought to win our hearts by his own self-sacrificing love. The love God has for us causes us to understand that all of his commandments are imposed for our own good; hence, they are not grievous and his yoke is not galling (**1 Jn. 5:3; Matt. 11:28-30**).

Christ's Love For Us

We are told of God's great love in **John 3:16** "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ's love for us is demonstrated by his willingness to leave heaven and to take upon himself the form of a servant (**Phil. 2:5-8**). Paul said, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (**2 Cor.**

8:9). Christ's love for us is shown in the incarnation.

Christ's love for mankind is also shown in his life. Luke tells us that Jesus "went about doing good" (**Acts 10:38**). When we read of Jesus' kindnesses to mankind, we are impressed with his love for man.

His death on the cross displays his love for us. He willingly sacrificed his own life in order that we might be saved from sin. Paul marveled about Jesus' love as he wrote, ". . . because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (**Rom. 5:58**).

Dottie Rambo wrote this beautiful tribute to Christ's love for us. - If That Isn't Love

He left the splendor of heaven,
Knowing his destiny
Was the lonely hill of Golgotha,
There to lay down his life for
me.

Even in death he remembered,
The thief hanging by his side;
He spoke with love and
compassion, Then he took him to

Paradise.

If that isn't love the ocean is dry,
There's no star in the sky, And
the sparrow can't fly!

If that isn't love then heaven's a
myth, There's no feeling like
this. If that isn't love.

Christ's love for us kindles in
our hearts the flame of love for
God. "We love him, because he
first loved us" (1 Jn. 4:19).

The Constraining Power of Christ's Love

The love of Christ "constrains"
us. The word sunecho means "to
urge, impel." In what ways does
Christ's love motivate us to
action?

1. It restrains us from sin. The
young man who falls in love with
the young lady soon learns that
some of his actions cause his
girlfriend pain. If he truly loves
her, he will quit doing those things
which hurt her. Similarly, the
Christian recognizes that his sins
"grieve" the Holy Spirit (Eph.
4:30). Because of his concern for
his relationship with God ' his
godly sorrow will move him to
repentance (2 Cor. 7: 10).

2. It impels him to action. The
young man's love will cause him
to do those things which please
his girlfriend, whether it be
buying her flowers or holding her
hand in public. In the same way,
Christ's love for us, which causes

our love for Christ, will move us
to do those things which please
Christ. Even Christ himself did
those things which pleased God
(Jn. 8:29). The Christian will
learn the will of God and do those
things which please him, such as
worshiping God, teaching the
gospel, praying, etc.

3. It causes him to live a life of
service to God. Christians are
determined to present their bodies
as a living sacrifice to God (Rom.
12:1-2). Paul said, "I am crucified
with Christ: nevertheless I live;
yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:
and the life which I now live in
the flesh I live by the faith of the
Son of God, who loved me, and
gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).
He also said that "they which live
should not henceforth live unto
themselves, but unto him which
died for them, and rose again" (2
Cor. 5:15).

Because of his life being
devoted to Christ's service, the
Christian is willing to go out on
Monday nights to visit the new
move-ins, to gather to paint a
member's house, to use his
Saturdays to visit sick and shut in
folks, to meet together for a work
day at the church building, and to
use his money to assist someone
who is needy. His life is devoted
to the service of God.

4. It causes him to sacrifice for
the Lord. Christians are willing to

make sacrifices for the Lord's work to prosper. They are willing to suffer
the persecution of social ostracism and ridicule (2 Tim. 3:12). They are
willing to give up some legitimate pleasures for the greater good of
Christ's kingdom. These sacrifices they gladly make because of their love
for Christ.

The World Does Not Understand

Those who have never experienced the constraining power of Christ's
love do not understand why Christians are willing to forego the new car
or larger house which they could afford if they did not contribute so much
to the church or why they go to worship four services every week and
every night during a gospel meeting. They cannot understand why we
would believe and teach that there is only one reason for divorce that
allows the person the right to remarriage. They cannot conceive that we
would be opposed to the lotteries and other forms of gambling. Indeed,
they may think that we are crazy. The world did not judge Paul much
better. Paul said, "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or
whether we be sober, it is for your cause" (2 Cor. 5:13).

Conclusion

Christ's love is a powerful, driving force in the lives of God's children.
The world is amazed that we would willingly accept the demands of this
love. We Christians stand amazed, not at what some of us are willing to
give in love to Christ, but that the world can read of Christ's love for us
and then walk away unaffected by his love. Something is truly wrong in
the lives of men who witness such wondrous love for us and never
reciprocate. ---- Via Guardian of Truth XXXVI: 6, pp. 162, 182 March
19, 1992

GOSPEL OBEDIENCE A NECESSITY

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT, UNTAUGHT, UNKNOWN, IGNORED & NEGLECTED TRUTHS. 2 THESS. 1:7-9

THERE IS SOMETHING TO DO!
THERE IS SOMETHING TO OBEY!

THE BIBLE TEACHES

DO GOD'S WILL - MT. 7:21-27
BELIEVE & BE BAPTIZED - MK. 16:15,16
FAITH WITH WORKS - JS. 2:24
"IF YE LOVE ME..." - JO. 14:15, 21, 23, 24
SPIRIT TO TEACH & GUIDE - JO. 14:26; 16:13
SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE - ACTS 2:1-4, 36-38
OBEYED - FREED - ROM. 6:17, 18, 1-5
SOULS PURIFIED - 1 PET. 1:22
CHRIST AUTHOR OF SALVATION
TO OBEY - HEB. 5:8, 9
WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO
DON'T OBEY? - 1 PET. 4:17, 18
INDIGNATION & WRATH - ROM. 2:8, 9
VENGEANCE - DESTRUCTION - 2 THESS. 1:7-9

HOW OBEY?

GOSPEL PREACHED - MK. 16:15
ROM. 1:16; 1 COR. 15:1-4; ROM. 10:13-17
BELIEVE & OBEY - MK. 16:15, 16; ROM. 6:17, 18

MEN TEACH

"WHEREFORE, THAT WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH ONLY IS A MOST WHOLESOME DOCTRINE, & VERY FULL OF COMFORT." M.D. P. 42

"...JUSTIFICATION... SOLELY THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST..." H.B.M. P.62 "BAPTISM IS NOT ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION... CHRIST HAS COMMANDED IT." H.B.M. P. 20, 21

"FAITH... IS THE ALONE INSTRUMENT OF JUSTIFICATION..." P. C. OF F. P. 71 ROM. 3:4

...JESUS... IN FLAMING FIRE TAKING VENGEANCE ON THEM THAT KNOW NOT GOD, AND OBEY THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST... PUNISHED...

BLOOD SHED IN BAPTIZED INTO DEATH JO. 19:32-34 ROM. 6:3-5