

# ***“Compelled By Love”***

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

October 29, 2017

**INTRO:** Welcome... to week #44 of Miraculous Metamorphosis...

Let me ask you a few probing & thought-provoking, if not provocative questions to begin this morning...

- **What drives you?**                      **What defines you?**
- **What connects you?**                **What completes you?**
- **What controls you?**                  **What compels you?**

**Do you know?**

**Do you care?**

**Does it matter?**

These are very important, eternal questions...*that really do matter!*

**T/S:** Today... **God & His Word will take us into those questions**

**TITLE:**            ***“The Love of Christ Compels Us”***

**BIG IDEA:** The love of Christ **COMPELS** us to make disciples

## **PREVIEW:**

- A. The Love of Christ **CONNECTS** the Church
- B. The Love of Christ **COMPLETES** the Church
- C. The Love of Christ **COMPELS** the Church

## CONTEXT:

- Apostle Paul writing to 3 churches... 1 Church
- Apostle Paul... greatest proof of the love of Christ
- Apostle Paul... the person & pen of God (2 Tim 3:16)

### A. **Love defined** (generically)

Unselfish, loyal, charitable & compassionate concern for the well-being of another.

In 1 Corinthians 13... “love” = a “more excellent way”

### B. **“Agape” defined** specifically... = **Christ-like love**...

Agape love is a spiritual gift... fruit of the Spirit

Mark 10:21 (compassionate confrontation)

*Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."*

Ephesians 5:2 (self-less & sacrificial)

and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God...

### C. **“the love of Christ”** biblically: 3X

# I. CONNECTS **Romans 8:35 – 9:3**

(Vertically, Horizontally, Missionally)

## ➤ Love of Christ **Connects us VERTICALLY**

**Revelation 1:5** (redeems & restores sinners by His blood)

*Him who loves us & released us from our sins by His blood—*

### **Romans 8**

<sup>35</sup> **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** *Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

## ➤ Love of Christ **Connects us HORIZONTALLY**

<sup>38</sup> *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**1 John 3:16** (defined/deployed in sacrifice/surrender)

**We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**

\* See **John 17** for the culmination of this truth\*

## **VIDEO:** *Piper on the Love of Christ*

**T/S:**     **1 John 4:8...** *Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

**John 13:1** (love doesn't just start... love finishes strong!)  
*Jesus knowing that His hour had come, that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.*

### ➤ Love of Christ **Connects us MISSIONALLY**

**1** *I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—* **2** *I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.* **3** *For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people...*

## **II. COMPLETES** **Ephesians 3:14 - 19**

(Our Calling, Our Commissioning, Our Capacity)

➤ Completes our family CALLING

*<sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,  
<sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is  
named,*

➤ Completes our family COMMISSIONING

**Acts 1:8 exemplified...**

*<sup>16</sup> that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,*

➤ Completes our family CAPACITY

*<sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,  
<sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,  
<sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

The Christian walk is to be characterized by love (Rom. 14:15).

The Christian is to increase & abound in love (1 Thess. 3:12).

**Jesus commanded “love as I have loved you.”**

### III. COMPELS

**2 Corinthians 5:11-21** (cf. v.14-15)

(Die to self... Live for Him... Go to others)

➤ **CONTEXT:**

*11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.*

**VIDEO:** *Error of Unconditional Love...*

*12 We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. 13 For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.*

**QUOTE:**

“We need to understand that the kind of life Paul advocated isn’t extraordinary or out beyond our reach. **It’s normal!** We often think of Paul as this radical figure in history, so completely sold out for Jesus that everyone around him thought he was crazy. From a biblical perspective; however, what Paul (preached, taught, &) described is a normal passion for Jesus. We have sadly lowered our expectations (and changed the biblical standards) of faithfulness and passion for Jesus to such depths that anything close to Paul’s descriptions (and the Bible’s mandates) seem totally unattainable.

In truth, a life that is radically compelled by the love of Christ should be our minimum goal, not the maximum.

We also need to understand that this type of living is in direct opposition to the way of the world. We exist in a me-centric, ego-driven culture – and we find it hard to think about living in any other way. The same was true for the Corinthian (church). That's why Paul told them again and again that living in response to the love of Christ will always be a counter-cultural experience...

The love of Christ reframes our perspective on everything and everyone.”

- Disciples Path

**2 Timothy 1:13** (tenaciously truthful in faith & love)  
**Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.**

➤ **Love of Christ compels us to DIE to SELF**  
<sup>14</sup> **For the love of Christ compels / controls us,**  
*having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; <sup>15</sup> and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves,*

***At conversion we do not merely turn over a new leaf; we begin a new life under a new Master.*** – Life Application Bible

***“Just as in the days of the Apostles, so at this day (October 1517), we are forced to hear from certain groups that we, by***

*our obstinacy to adhere to the truth, do offend against love & unity in the churches, because we reject their doctrine.*

*It would be better, they say, that we should let it pass, especially since the doctrine in dispute is what they call non-essential. And, therefore, they say, to stir up so great a discord & contention in the church... is unfruitful & unnecessary.*

*To this I reply: Cursed be that love & unity which cannot be preserved except at the peril of God's Word." - Martin Luther*

➤ **Love of Christ compels us to LIVE for HIM**

<sup>14</sup> **For the love of Christ compels / controls us,**  
*having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; <sup>15</sup> and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.*

**Grammatically this could be the love we have for Christ or the love Christ has for us.**

***compels.*** pressure that causes action... Restricted guardrails that force a straight/specific direction

***God's love experienced will become God's love expressed.***

➤ **Love of Christ compels us to GO to OTHERS**



*Are you as zealous for the Lord today as you were zealous for things of sin & Satan in your past?*

## **VIDEO:** *Chan... on the Love of Christ*

ILLUSTRATION:

**Peter Cameron Scott, (1890)...** a **gifted vocalist**, was on the **steps of an opera house** ready to pursue a career as a singer, when God challenged him, **“Will you seek a life of self-glory?”**

He obeyed God’s call, received some missionary training, and at age 23 he sailed for Africa. Within a few months, his brother joined him, but the **harsh African climate** and environment that became known as **“the white man’s graveyard”** took its toll. **His brother died.**

Peter built a **crude coffin**, **dug the grave himself**, and buried his brother. **Alone at the grave, he recommitted himself** to preach the gospel in Africa.

**His own health broke**, and he went first to England and then back to the U.S. to **recruit others** for the cause. **In 1895, at age 28, he established the Africa Inland Mission.**

But just **14 months after he and his party had landed** on African soil, **Scott fell ill and died.**

**After Scott’s death, the mission nearly failed as one after another of the workers died.**

**By the summer of 1899, only one missionary remained on the field.**

**But they persisted...**

**and ten years after the mission's founding, there were 31 missionaries on the field.**

**In the early years, more missionaries died from the harsh conditions than people came to Christ.**

**But still more missionaries came, arriving with their goods packed in coffins.**

The Africans were amazed at such determination. They said, "Surely only a message of great importance would inspire such actions."

**Today this mission's fruit is measured in the millions!**

**CLOSE:**

**Remember...**

➤ **The Love of Christ CONNECTS us...**

- Vertically
- Horizontally
- Missionally

➤ **The Love of Christ COMPLETES our...**

- Calling
- Commissioning

- Capacity

➤ **The Love of Christ COMPELS us to:**

- DIE to self...
- LIVE for Him...
- GO make disciples of others!

### **2 Corinthians 5:17-21**

**17**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **18**All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; **19**that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. **20**Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. **21**For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**John 14:15 *If you love Me...obey My commandments***

**John 15:12 *"As I have loved you, love one another"***

# Let's Pray

STUDY Notes:

*“Just as in the days of the Apostles, so at this day (October 1517), we are forced to hear from certain groups that we, by our obstinacy to adhere to the truth, do offend against love & unity in the churches, because we reject their doctrine. It would be better, they say, that we should let it pass, especially since the doctrine in dispute is what they call non-essential. And, therefore, they say, to stir up so great a discord & contention in the church... is unfruitful & unnecessary. To this I reply: Cursed be that love & unity which cannot be preserved except at the peril of God’s Word.”*

- Martin Luther

**5:11 Having a "fearful responsibility to the Lord" does not mean that believers become paralyzed.** On the contrary, knowing God's perfection and that he will judge everyone's actions (5:10) should spur Christians to good deeds, to what pleases our God. **The fear of the Lord also frees believers from all of life's anxieties and worries.** Knowing that God is "for us" (Romans 8:31) can keep believers unafraid of earthly

powers—people, governments, or the forces of nature ([Proverbs 3:25, 26](#)).

*God takes care of his own. The fear of God gives us uncommon courage in the face of life's troubles.*

**5:12** Those who "brag about having a spectacular ministry rather than having a sincere heart" are the false preachers (see [2:17](#)), who were concerned only about getting ahead in this world. They were preaching the Good News for money and popularity, while Paul and his companions were preaching out of concern for eternity. **You can identify false preachers by finding out what really motivates them.** If they are more concerned about themselves than about Christ, avoid them and their message.

**5:13-15** **Everything that Paul and his companions did was to honor God. Not only did fear of God motivate them (5:11), but Christ's love controlled their actions.**

*The word for "controls" means "to hold fast."  
In other words, the love of Christ was constraining them to certain courses of action.*

They knew that Jesus, out of his great love, had given up his life for their sakes. He had not acted out of his own self-interest,

selfishly holding on to the glory of heaven that he already possessed ([Philippians 2:6](#)). Instead, Jesus had willingly "died for everyone." **Because Christ died for us, we also are dead to our old life. Like Paul, we should no longer live to please ourselves; we should spend our life pleasing Christ.**

**5:17** *Christians are brand-new people on the inside. The Holy Spirit gives them new life, and they are not the same anymore. We are not reformed, rehabilitated, or reeducated—we are re-created (new creations), living in vital union with Christ* ([Colossians 2:6, 7](#)).

*At conversion we do not merely turn over a new leaf; we begin a new life under a new Master.*

**While this newness is true individually, Paul is saying much more. Not only are believers changed from within, but a whole new order of creative energy began with Christ. There is a new covenant, a new perspective, a new body, a new church. All of creation is being renewed. So take notice. This is not a**

**superficial change that will be quickly superseded by another novelty. This is an entirely new order of all creation under Christ's authority. It requires a new way of looking at all people and all of creation.**

Does your life reflect this new perspective?

**5:18, 19** God brings us back to himself (reconciles us) by blotting out our sins (see also [Ephesians 2:13-18](#)) and making us right with him.

When we trust in Christ, we are no longer God's enemies, or strangers or foreigners to him. Because we have been reconciled to God, we have the privilege of encouraging others to do the same, and thus we are those who have the "task of reconciling people to him."

**5:20** An ambassador is an official representative of one country to another. **As believers, we are Christ's ambassadors, sent with his message of reconciliation to the world.** An ambassador of reconciliation has an important responsibility. We dare not take this responsibility lightly.

How well are you fulfilling your commission as Christ's ambassador?

**5:21 When we trust in Christ, we make an exchange: He takes our sin and makes us right with God. Our sin was laid on Christ at his crucifixion. His righteousness is given to us at our conversion.** This is what Christians mean by Christ's atonement for sin.

In the world, bartering works only when two people exchange goods of relatively equal value. But God offers to trade his righteousness for our sin—something of immeasurable worth for something completely worthless. How grateful we should be for his kindness to us.

- Life Application Study Bible.

**5:11 the fear of the Lord.** Not a terror of eternal condemnation, but a healthy, reverent fear of Christ's displeasure at the choices we have made, the things "done in the body" ([v. 10](#)). **Such a fear would have been a healthy corrective for those Corinthians who were making trouble for Paul, and it could also have corrected the lives of many careless Christians throughout history.**

**known.** Again, a spiritual viewpoint, not always evident to those in this world.



**5:12** who boast about outward appearance. **This is the world's method of evaluation, contrary to that of a true apostle, who endures troubles by focusing on the unseen and eternal (4:18).**

The false apostles at Corinth (**11:13**) were also typical representatives of the world, taking pride in their outward appearance, relying on the self, and loving money, power, and prestige. **If the Corinthians understood Paul's self-defense in a spiritual way, they would have an answer for the false apostles and their superficial standards of judgment (1 Sam. 16:7).**

**5:13** beside ourselves. This probably refers to times of worship and prayer when Paul was caught up in intense awareness of the presence of God. Paul's language does not imply complete loss of awareness of one's surroundings, for **the same Greek word is used of people who were "amazed" at Christ's miracles (Mark 5:42; cf. 6:51).**

*The apostle's point is that whether engaged in private worship or in public ministry, he lives for God and for others, not for himself (**v. 15**).*  
**His opponents cannot make this claim.**

**5:14** *the love of Christ.*

**Grammatically this could be the love we have for Christ or the love Christ has for us.**

Since Paul is speaking of what Christ has done for him, he probably means the love that comes from Christ.

*one has died for all.*

**The ones He died for are the same as the "all" who "died" with Him as a result of His death,** who are mentioned at the end of the verse.

**5:16** Paul emphasizes spiritual judgment and spiritual insight into people's lives and situations. **Our experience of Christ's love moves us to stop viewing others according to worldly standards and to learn how to view them from the standpoint of God's great act of salvation in Jesus Christ.**

*according to the flesh.* **When Christ was regarded from a worldly point of view, men rejected and crucified Him as a blasphemer and troublemaker.**

**But from the divine viewpoint, Christ is the Messiah and Son of God, in whom the new creation and reconciliation with God is given.**

**5:17** **in Christ.** Union with Christ summarizes our experience of redemption.

***Believers are elected (Eph. 1:4, 11), justified (Rom. 8:1), sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2), and glorified (3:18) "in Christ."***

Here Paul focuses on the momentous significance of the believer's union with the Savior. Because Christ is the "last Adam," the One in whom humanity is recreated (1 Cor. 15:45; Eph. 2:10) and who inaugurates the new age of messianic blessing (Gal. 1:4; cf. Matt. 11:2-6), **the believer's spiritual union with Christ is nothing less than participation in the "new creation."**

Translating "there is a new creation" instead of "he is a new creation" draws this conclusion more clearly, but the thought is there either way.

**5:18 All this is from God. The whole plan of salvation and history of redemption is God-centered. **Paul realizes that it is from Him, through Him, and for His glory** (Rom. 11:36).**

**5:20 Paul may be appealing directly to the Corinthians to "be reconciled to God." But he is also summing up the appeal he gives to all the world. **Reconciliation is the establishment or restoration of loving fellowship after estrangement. For Christians, reconciliation to God is renewed each day, in one sense** (Matt. 6:12; 1 John 1:9).**

**5:21     An important summary of the gospel message.**

The verse explains how God imputed our sin to Christ. **God as judge assigned the responsibility of our sin to Christ, making it possible for Him to be punished justly for that sin** ([Isa. 53:6](#); [1 Pet. 2:24](#)). The verse shows that Christ was our substitute, accepting the penalty of sin in our place. See "The Sinlessness of Jesus" at [Heb. 4:15](#).

*we might become the righteousness of God.*     **Not only did God impute our sin to Christ, He also imputed Christ's perfect righteousness to us** (that is, He counted it as belonging to us). This imputation is the basis for the progressive realization of God's righteousness in our moral character. Our thoughts and deeds are sanctified in increasing measure until we receive perfect righteousness in heaven.

The Reformation Study Bible.

*Motives for Ministry*

[2 Corinthians 5:9-21](#)

*What we believe and how we behave must always go together. Paul usually connected 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."***

"You would have preached a marvelous sermon," a woman said to her pastor, "except for all those 'therefores' at the end!"

Paul would have agreed with the pastor, for he usually used "therefores" and "wherefores" liberally in his letters. In fact, you find them in this section of [2 Corinthians 5](#) in [verses 9, 11, 16-17](#). **Paul has moved from explanation to application, and his theme is *motivation for ministry*. His enemies had accused him of using the ministry of the Gospel for his own selfish purposes, when in reality *they* were the ones who were "merchandising" the Gospel** (see [2 Cor. 2:17](#); [4:2](#)).

## What is the ministry of the Christian?

**To persuade sinners to be reconciled to God**  
**(2 Cor. 5:11, 20)**.

We must never force people to trust Christ, or coerce them by some devious approach. "Our message to you is true, our motives are pure, our conduct is absolutely aboveboard" ([1 Thes. 2:3](#), ph). **The Christian worker must have the right motive for ministry as well as the right message.**

In this section, **Paul stated 3 acceptable motives for ministry.**

## The Fear of the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9-13)

"Knowing, therefore, the terror [fear] of the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:11). **This kind of attitude is often lacking in ministry.** The famous Bible scholar, B.F. Westcott, once wrote, "Every year makes me tremble at the daring with which people speak of spiritual things." Phillips Brooks used to warn about "clerical jesters" whose jesting about the Bible robbed that inspired Book of some of its glory and power. **Too often there is a sad absence of reverence in the public meetings of the church, so that it is no surprise that the younger generation is not taking the things of God seriously.**

**Paul explained this motive by sharing his own testimony in three powerful statements.**

- A. We labor (v. 9). This means **"we are ambitious."** There is an ambition that is selfish and worldly, but there is also **a holy ambition** that honors the Lord. **Paul's great ambition was to be well-pleasing to Jesus Christ.** The Judaizers ministered to please men and enlisted them in their cause; but...

***Paul ministered to please Jesus Christ alone (Gal. 1:10). A man-pleasing ministry is a carnal, compromising ministry; and God cannot bless it.***

**The word translated "accepted"** ("well-pleasing") is used in several other places in the New Testament, and each of these references helps us better understand what it is that pleases the Lord. **It is well-pleasing to Him when we present our bodies to Him as living sacrifices ([Rom. 12:1](#)), and when we live so as to help others and avoid causing them to stumble ([Rom. 14:18](#)).** God is well-pleased **when His children separate themselves from the evil around them ([Eph. 5:10](#)), as well as when they bring their offerings to Him ([Phil. 4:18](#)).** He is pleased with children who submit to their parents ([Col. 3:20](#)), as well as with saints who permit Jesus Christ to work out His perfect will in their lives ([Heb. 13:20-21](#)).

There is nothing wrong with godly ambition. "Yea, so have I strived [been ambitious] to preach the Gospel," was Paul's testimony in [Romans 15:20](#); it was this godly ambition that compelled him to take the message where it had never been heard. **Paul commanded the Thessalonian believers to "study [be ambitious] to be quiet" ([1 Thes. 4:11](#)).** **If, led by the Spirit, believers would put as much drive into Christian living and service as they do athletics or business, the Gospel would make a greater impact on the lost world.**

**"I want to be as zealous for God as I was for the devil!"** a new Christian told me, and his life was greatly used of God.

**We must all appear ([v. 10](#)).** **Not every believer is ambitious for the Lord, but every believer is going to appear before the Lord; and now is the time to prepare. The Judgment Seat of Christ is**

that future event when God's people will stand before the Saviour as their works are judged and rewarded (see [Rom. 14:8-10](#)). Paul was ambitious for the Lord because he wanted to meet Him with confidence and not shame ([1 John 2:28](#)).

The term "judgment seat" comes from the Greek word *bema*, which was the platform in Greek towns where orations were made or decisions handed down by rulers (see [Matt. 27:19](#); [Acts 12:21](#); [18:12](#)). It was also the place where the awards were given out to the winners in the annual Olympic Games. **This "judgment seat" must not be confused with the Great White Throne from which Christ will judge the wicked** ([Rev. 20:11-15](#)).

**Because of the gracious work of Christ on the cross, believers will not face their sins ([John 5:24](#); [Rom. 8:1](#)); but we will have to give an account of our works and service for the Lord.**

The Judgment Seat of Christ will be a place of *revelation*; for the word **appear means "be revealed."**

***As we live and work here on earth, it is relatively easy for us to hide things and pretend; but the true character of our works will be exposed before the searching eyes of the Saviour.***



He will reveal whether our works have been good or bad ("worthless"). The character of our service will be revealed (1 Cor. 3:13) as well as the motives that impelled us (1 Cor. 4:5).

**It will also be a place of *reckoning*** as we give an account of our ministries ([Rom. 14:10-12](#)). If we have been faithful it will be a place of ***reward and recognition*** ([1 Cor. 3:10-15](#); [4:1-6](#)).

**For those of us who have been faithful, it will be a time of *rejoicing*** as we glorify the Lord by giving our rewards back to Him in worship and in praise.

Is the desire for reward a proper motive for service? The fact that God does promise rewards is proof that the motive is not a sinful one, even though it may not be the highest motive. Just as parents are happy when their children achieve recognition, so our Lord is pleased when His people are *worthy* of recognition and reward. **The important thing is not the reward itself, but the joy of pleasing Christ and honoring Him.**

**We persuade men ([vv. 11-13](#)).** If God judges His own people, then what will happen to the lost? "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" ([1 Peter 4:18](#)) The word *terror* does not mean fright, dread, or horror. After all, we are going to see our Saviour—and He loves us. But Paul did not minimize the awesomeness of the occasion. We shall stand before Christ, "and there is no respect of persons" ([Col. 3:23-25](#)). **Christ has commanded us to spread the Gospel to all nations, and we must be obedient.** Someone asked the Duke of Wellington what he thought of foreign missions, and his reply was, "What are your marching orders?"

## How can the Christian prepare for the Judgment Seat of Christ?

To begin with, he must maintain a clear conscience ([2 Cor. 5:11](#)). No doubt some of the enemies at Corinth were saying, "Just wait until Paul stands before the Lord!" But Paul was not afraid, because he knew that his conscience was clear (see [2 Cor. 1:12](#)). **The truth about each one of us shall be revealed** and Jesus Christ will commend us for those things that have pleased Him.

Second, we must **take care not to depend on the praise of men** ([2 Cor. 5:12](#)). This verse relates to [2 Cor. 3:1](#), where Paul referred to the "letters of commendation" that the Judaizers prized so highly. If we live only for the praise of men, we will not win the praise of God at the Judgment Seat of Christ. **To live for man's praise is to exalt reputation over character, and it is character that will count when we see Christ.** Actually, **the Corinthians should have commended Paul! Instead, they were "promoting" the Judaizers who gloried in appearance** (see [2 Cor. 11:18](#)), **but were unspiritual in heart.**

**Finally, we must ignore the criticisms of men** ([2 Cor. 5:13](#)).

Paul's enemies said that he was crazy. Paul said that he was "mad" when he was persecuting the church ([Acts 26:11](#)), but his enemies said he was "mad" since he had become a believer himself ([Acts 26:24](#)). But people said that our Lord was mad, so Paul was in good company (see [Mark 3:21](#)).

**"If I am mad," Paul was saying, "it is for your good and the glory of God—so that makes it worthwhile!"**

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.

**It behooves every Christian to examine his own life regularly to see if he is ready for the Judgment Seat of Christ.** Wanting to give a good account before Christ is a worthy motive for Christian service.

## The Love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14-17)

How can such opposite emotions as fear and love dwell in the same heart? Certainly they are found in the hearts of children who love their parents and yet respect them and their authority. **"Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling"** ([Ps. 2:11](#)).

***"The love of Christ" means His love for us as seen in His sacrificial death.***

*"We love Him, because He first loved us" ([1 John 4:19](#)). He loved us when we were unlovely; in fact, He loved us when we were ungodly, sinners, and enemies (see [Rom.](#)*

*5:6-10). When He died on the cross, Christ proved His love for the world (John 3:16), the church (Eph. 5:25), and individual sinners (Gal. 2:20). When you consider the reasons why Christ died, you cannot help but love Him.*

*He died that we might die (v. 14). The tense of the verb gives the meaning "then all died." **This truth is explained in detail in Romans 6, the believer's identification with Christ.***

**When Christ died, we died in Him & w/ Him.**

Therefore, the old life should have no hold on us today. "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20).

*He died that we might live (vv. 15-17). **This is the positive aspect of our identification with Christ: we not only died with Him, but we also were raised with Him that we might "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).***

**Because we have died with Christ, we can overcome sin; and because we live with Christ, we can bear fruit for God's glory (Rom. 7:4).**

**He died that we might live through Him: "God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9).**

This is our experience of salvation, eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. But **He also died that we might live for Him, and not live unto ourselves** (2 Cor. 5:15). **This is our experience of service.** It has well been said, *"Christ died our death for us that we might live His life for Him."* If a lost sinner has been to the cross and been saved, how can he spend the rest of his life in selfishness?

In 1858, Frances Ridley Havergal visited Germany with her father who was getting treatment for his afflicted eyes. While in a pastor's home, she saw a picture of the Crucifixion on the wall, with the words under it: "I did this for thee. What hast thou done for Me?" Quickly she took a piece of paper and wrote a poem based on that motto; but she was not satisfied with it, so she threw the paper into the fireplace. The paper came out unharmed! Later, her father encouraged her to publish it; and we sing it today to a tune composed by Philip P. Bliss.

*I gave My life for thee,  
My precious blood I shed,  
That thou might'st ransomed be,  
And quickened from the dead;  
I gave, I gave My life for thee,  
What hast thou given for Me?*

**Christ died that we might live through Him and for Him, and that we might live with Him. "Who died for us, that,**

**whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him"** ([1 Thes. 5:10](#)).

Because of Calvary, believers are going to heaven to live with Christ forever!

He died that we might die, and He died that we might live. But **He also died that we might share in the new creation** ([2 Cor. 5:16-17](#)).

**Our new relationship to Christ has brought about a new relationship to the world and the people around us. *We no longer look at life the way we used to.***

**To know Christ "after the flesh" means to evaluate Him from a human point of view.** But "the days of His flesh" are ended ([Heb. 5:7](#)) because He has ascended to heaven and is now glorified at the Father's right hand.

Adam was the head of the old creation, and Christ (the Last Adam, [1 Cor. 15:45](#)) is the Head of the new creation. The old creation was plunged into sin and condemnation because of the disobedience of Adam. The new creation means righteousness and salvation because of the obedience of Jesus Christ. (See [Rom. 5:12-21](#) for the explanation of the "two Adams.") Because we are a part of the new creation, everything has become new.

For one thing, we have a new view of Christ. It is unfortunate that too great an emphasis is given in music and art on Christ "after the flesh."

*The facts about the earthly life of Jesus are important, because the Christian message is grounded in history. But we must interpret the manger by the throne.*

**We do not worship a Babe in a manger; we worship a glorified Saviour on the throne.**

Because "all things are become new," **we also have a new view of people** around us. **We see them as sinners for whom Christ died.** We no longer see them as friends or enemies, customers or coworkers; **we see them the way Christ sees them, as lost sheep who need a shepherd.**

**When you are constrained by the love of Christ, you want to share His love with others.**

During an especially controversial presidential election, a church officer came into a Sunday School class wearing a large pin that promoted one of the candidates. The pastor stopped him and advised him to take it off until he was out of church.

"Why take it off?" he argued. "He's a perfectly good candidate!"

"But suppose the pin is seen by an unsaved man of the other party?" the pastor replied. "Will it upset him and maybe keep him from hearing the Word and getting saved?"

Sullenly, the man removed the pin; and then he smiled and said, "I guess I should remember that people aren't Republicans or Democrats. They're sinners who need a Saviour—and that's more important than winning an election."

**But we should also look at other Christians as a part of the new creation, and not evaluate them on the bases of education, race, finances, or position in society.** "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" ([Gal. 3:28](#)).

The Commission of Christ (2 Cor. 5:18-21)

**The key idea in this paragraph is *reconciliation*.**

**Because of his rebellion, man was the enemy of God and out of fellowship with Him. Through the work of the Cross, Jesus Christ has brought man and God together again.**

God has been reconciled and has turned His face in love toward the lost world. The basic meaning of the word *reconcile* is "to change thoroughly." It refers to a changed relationship between God and the lost world.

God does not have to be reconciled to man, because that was accomplished by Christ on the cross. It is sinful man who must be reconciled to God. **"Religion" is man's feeble effort to be reconciled to God, efforts that are bound to fail. The Person who reconciles us to God is Jesus Christ, and the place where He reconciles us is His cross.**



## **Another key idea in this section is *imputation*.**

This is a word borrowed from banking; **it simply means "to put to one's account."** When you deposit money in the bank, the computer (or the clerk) puts that amount to your account, or to your credit. **When Jesus died on the cross, all of our sins were imputed to Him—put to His account.** He was treated by God as though He had actually committed those sins.

**The result? All of those sins have been paid for and God no longer holds them against us, because we have trusted Christ as our Savior. But even more: God has put to our account the very righteousness of Christ! "For He hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" ([2 Cor. 5:21](#)).**

**Reconciliation is based on imputation:** because the demands of God's holy Law have been fully met on the cross, God can be reconciled to sinners. **Those who believe on Jesus Christ as their Saviour will never have their sins imputed against them again ([Ps. 32:1-2](#); [Rom. 4:1-8](#)).** As far as their records are concerned, they, share the righteousness of Jesus Christ!

There is a lovely illustration of this truth in the little letter Paul wrote to his friend Philemon. Philemon's slave, Onesimus, stole from his master and then fled to Rome. Because of his crimes, he could have been crucified. But in the providence of God,

Onesimus met Paul and was converted. Paul wrote the Letter to Philemon to encourage his friend to forgive Onesimus and receive him home. "Receive him as myself," wrote Paul ([Phile. 17](#)); "if he... oweth thee aught, put that on mine account" ([Phile. 18](#)). **Paul was willing to pay the bill (imputation) so that Onesimus and Philemon could be reconciled.**

How does this wonderful doctrine of reconciliation motivate us to serve Christ? We are ambassadors with a message. God has committed to us the ministry and the word of reconciliation ([2 Cor. 5:18-19](#)).

In the Roman Empire, there were two kinds of provinces: senatorial provinces and imperial provinces. The senatorial provinces were made up of people who were peaceful and not at war with Rome. They had surrendered and submitted. But the imperial provinces were not peaceful; they were dangerous because they would rebel against Rome if they could. It was necessary for Rome to send ambassadors to the imperial provinces to make sure that rebellion did not break out. -Since Christians in this world are the ambassadors of Christ, this means that the world is in rebellion against God. This world is an "imperial province" as far as God is concerned. He has sent His ambassadors into the world to declare peace, not war. "Be ye reconciled to God!" We represent Jesus Christ ([John 20:21](#); [2 Cor. 4:5](#)).

*If sinners reject us and our message, it is Jesus Christ who is actually rejected. What a great*

*privilege it is to be heaven's ambassadors to the rebellious sinners of this world!*

*When I was a young pastor, it used to embarrass me somewhat to make visits and confront people with the claims of Christ. Then it came to me that I was a privileged person, an ambassador of the King of kings! There was nothing to be embarrassed about. In fact, the people I visited should have been grateful that one of Christ's ambassadors came to see them.*

God has not declared war on the world; at the cross He declared peace. But one day, He *will* declare war; and then it will be too late for those who have rejected the Saviour ([2 Thes. 1:3-10](#)).

*Satan is seeking to tear everything apart in this world, but Christ and His church are involved in the ministry of reconciliation, bringing things back together again, and back to God.*

**Ministry is not easy.**

**If we are to succeed, we must be motivated by the fear of the Lord, the love of Christ, and the commission that He has given to us.**

**What a privilege it is to serve Him!**

- Bible Exposition Commentary

**5:11-6:2** *The New Covenant Ministry of Reconciliation.* Paul offers one of his most extensive descriptions of the motivation (5:11-15), content (5:16-19), and call of the new covenant ministry.

**5:11** the fear of the Lord. Cf. 7:1; see note on Acts 9:31.

**5:12** On Paul's commending himself, see note on 4:2. **Paul writes so that the Corinthians will be able to respond to false teachers who do not operate on the basis of a new covenant ministry.**

**5:13** if we are beside ourselves... if we are in our right mind. **This possibly responds to Corinthian mockery of Paul as crazy**; certainly it draws a contrast between Paul's own, private

experiences in worship and prayer (see [12:1-4](#)) and his being sober (Gk. *sōphroneō*, “being in a right mind”) while also being passionate in his ministry. **Since Paul’s motivation is to please Christ (5:9), his priority in public is to persuade others (v. 11b), not to seek or urge others to seek exotic religious experiences.**

**5:14-15** one has died for all, therefore all have died. **By Christ’s death, the death penalty for sin (see [Gen. 2:17](#)) has been paid for all those who trust in him (see [Rom. 3:21-26](#); [5:6-8](#); [1 Cor. 15:3](#); [Gal. 3:13](#)), and God counts their old life as ended, thus freeing them from any future penal claims. *he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him.* **As a consequence of Christ’s death, the power of sin in one’s life (see [Gen. 3:1-7](#)) has also been broken for all those who trust in Christ (cf. [Rom. 6:1-14](#)).****

**Christ’s cross therefore frees the believer for a new way of life, exemplified by Paul himself as one that *the love of Christ controls* (see [Titus 2:11-14](#)).**

**5:16** Regard no one according to the flesh, **that is, according to worldly standards and values that derive from living as if one’s present physical life is all that matters.**

(Before Paul’s conversion, he once regarded Christ according to the flesh, i.e., **Paul considered Christ to be a false messiah**

(according to Jewish standards), **viewing his suffering and death as the curse of God** (see [Deut. 21:23](#); [Gal. 3:13](#)).

**[5:17](#) new creation.** **The redemption of a people who now live for Christ by living for others, effected by the power of the Spirit ([3:3](#), [6](#), [18](#)) and the death of Christ ([5:14-15](#)), is the beginning of the new creation** that was destined to come **amid this evil age** (see [Isa. 43:18-19](#); [65:17-23](#); [66:22-23](#)). This new creation is also the beginning of Israel's final restoration from God's judgment in the exile (see the context of [Isa. 43:1-21](#); [65:17-25](#)).

**[5:18-20](#) reconciliation.** **An expression of the significance of God's saving activity in Christ that is unique to Paul** (see [Rom. 5:10-11](#); [11:15](#); [Eph. 2:16](#); [Col. 1:20](#), [22](#)). These verses outline (1) the *basis* of Paul's apostolic ministry of the new covenant (Paul's own reconciliation to God through Christ); (2) its *consequence* (his ministry and message of reconciliation to the world for Christ); (3) its essential *content* (the forgiveness of sins by virtue of Christ's death); and (4) its *call* (**on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God**). **ambassadors for Christ. Paul is sent as God's prophetic minister of the new covenant ([2 Cor. 3:4-6](#)) to announce God's "peace treaty"** (cf. [Isa. 53:5](#)) with those who will trust in Christ to free them from the penalty and power of sin ([2 Cor. 5:14-15](#); see [Isa. 52:6-10](#); [Rom. 10:15](#)). **"Be reconciled to God" is a summary of the gospel message Paul proclaims to unbelievers; it is a call to receive the reconciliation that God has wrought ([Rom. 5:11](#)).**

**5:21 This verse is one of the most important in all of Scripture for understanding the meaning of the atonement and justification.**

Here we see that the one **who knew no sin** is Jesus Christ ([v. 20](#)) and that **he** (God) **made him** (Christ) **to be sin** (Gk. *hamartia*, “sin”). **This means that God the Father made Christ to be regarded and treated as “sin”** even though Christ himself never sinned ([Heb. 4:15](#); cf. [Gal. 3:13](#)). **Further, we see that God did this for our sake**—that is, God regarded and treated “our” sin (the sin of all who would believe in Christ) as if our sin belonged not to us but to Christ himself. **Thus Christ “died for all”** ([2 Cor. 5:14](#)) and, **as Peter wrote, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree”** ([1 Pet. 2:24](#)). **In becoming sin “for our sake,” Christ became our substitute**—that is, **Christ took our sin upon himself and, as our substitute, thereby bore the wrath of God** (the punishment that we deserve) **in our place (“for our sake”)**. Thus the technical term for this foundational doctrine of the Christian faith is the *substitutionary atonement*—that **Christ has provided the atoning sacrifice as “our” substitute, for the sins of all who believe** (cf. [Rom. 3:23-25](#)). **The background for this is Isaiah 53** from the Greek (Septuagint) translation of the Hebrew OT, which includes the most lengthy and detailed OT prophecy of Christ’s death and which contains numerous parallels to [2 Cor. 5:21](#). Isaiah’s prophecy specifically uses the Greek word for “sin” (Gk. *hamartia*) five times (as indicated below in italics) with reference to the coming Savior (the suffering servant) in just a few verses—e.g., “surely he has born

our *griefs*” ([Isa. 53:4](#)); “He was crushed for our *iniquities*” ([Isa. 53:5](#)); “the LORD has laid on him the *iniquity* of us all” ([Isa. 53:6](#)); “he shall bear their *iniquities*” ([Isa. 53:11](#)); “he bore the *sin* of many” ([Isa. 53:12](#)). In a precise fulfillment of this prophecy, **Christ became “sin” for those who believe in him, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** This means that just as God imputed our sin and guilt to Christ (“he made him to be sin”) so God also imputes the righteousness of Christ—a righteousness that is not our own—to all who believe in Christ. Because Christ bore the sins of those who believe, God *regards and treats* believers as having the legal status of “righteousness” (Gk. *dikaiosynē*). **This righteousness belongs to believers because they are “in him,” that is, “in Christ”** (e.g., [Rom. 3:22](#); [5:18](#); [1 Cor. 1:30](#); [2 Cor. 5:17, 19](#); [Phil. 3:9](#)). Therefore “the righteousness of God” (which is imputed to believers) is also the righteousness of Christ—that is, the righteousness and the legal status that belongs to Christ as a result of Christ having lived as one who “knew no sin.” **This then is the heart of the doctrine of justification: God regards (or counts) believers as forgiven and God declares and treats them as forgiven, because God the Father has imputed the believer’s sin to Christ and because God the Father likewise imputes Christ’s righteousness to the believer.** (See further notes on [Rom. 4:6-8](#); [5:18](#); [10:3](#); [10:6-8](#); see also [Isa. 53:11](#): “the righteous one, my servant, [shall] make many to be accounted righteous”).

- ESV Study Bible



## The Message of the Ministry ([5:11-21](#))

[5:11](#) *the terror of the Lord.* This is more clearly rendered, “the fear of the Lord.” It is not referring to being afraid, but to Paul’s worshipful reverence for God as his essential motivation to live in such a way as to honor his Lord and maximize his reward for his Lord’s glory (cf. [7:1](#); [Prov. 9:10](#); [Acts 9:31](#)).

*we persuade men.* The Greek word for “persuade” means to seek someone’s favor, as in getting the other person to see you in a certain favorable or desired way (cf. [Gal. 1:10](#)). This term can mean gospel preaching ([Acts 18:4](#); [28:23](#)), but here Paul was persuading others not about salvation, but about his own integrity. The Corinthians’ eternal reward would be affected if they defected to the false teachers and left the divine teaching of Paul. *well known.* Paul’s true spiritual condition of sincerity and integrity was manifest to God (*see notes on* [1:12](#); cf. [Acts 23:1](#); [24:16](#)), and he also wanted the Corinthians to believe the truth about him.

[5:12](#) *boast in appearance.* Those who have no integrity, such as Paul’s opponents at Corinth, have to take pride in externals, which can be any false doctrine accompanied by showy hypocrisy (cf. [Matt. 5:20](#); [6:1](#); [Mark 7:6, 7](#)).

[5:13](#) *beside ourselves.* This Greek phrase usually means to be insane, or out of one’s mind, but here Paul used the expression to describe himself as a person dogmatically devoted to truth. In

this way, he answered those critics who claimed he was nothing more than an insane fanatic (cf. [John 8:48](#); [Acts 26:22-24](#)). *of sound mind*. The original word meant to be moderate, sober minded, and in complete control. Paul also behaved this way among the Corinthians as he defended his integrity and communicated truth to them.

**5:14** *the love of Christ*. Christ's love for Paul and all believers at the Cross (cf. [Rom. 5:6-8](#)). Christ's loving, substitutionary death motivated Paul's service for Him (cf. [Gal. 2:20](#); [Eph. 3:19](#)). *compels*. This refers to pressure that causes action. Paul emphasized the strength of his desire to offer his life to the Lord. *One died for all*. This expresses the truth of Christ's substitutionary death. The preposition "for" indicates He died "in behalf of," or "in the place of" all (cf. [Isa. 53:4-12](#); [Gal. 3:13](#); [Heb. 9:11-14](#)). This truth is at the heart of the doctrine of salvation. God's wrath against sin required death; Jesus took that wrath and died in the sinner's place. Thus, He took away God's wrath and satisfied God's justice as a perfect sacrifice (*see notes on v. 21*; [Rom. 5:6-11, 18, 19](#); [1 Tim. 2:5, 6](#); cf. [Eph. 5:2](#); [1 Thess. 5:10](#); [Titus 2:14](#); [1 Pet. 2:24](#)). *then all died*. Everyone who died in Christ receives the benefits of His substitutionary death (*see notes on Rom. 3:24-26*; [6:8](#)). With this short phrase, Paul defined the extent of the atonement and limited its application. This statement logically completes the meaning of the preceding phrase, in effect saying, "Christ died for all who died in Him," or "One died for all, therefore all died" (*see notes on vv. 19-21*; cf. [John 10:11-16](#); [Acts 20:28](#)). Paul was overwhelmed with gratitude that Christ loved him and was so gracious as to make him a part of the "all" who died in Him.

**5:15** As he defended his integrity to the Corinthians, Paul wanted them to know that his old, self-centered life was finished and that he had an all-out desire to live righteously. For all genuine believers, their death in Christ is not only a death to sin, but a resurrection to a new life of righteousness (*see notes on [Rom. 6:3, 4, 8, 10](#); cf. [Gal. 2:19, 20](#); [Col. 3:3](#)*).

**5:16** Since Paul's conversion, his priority was to meet people's spiritual needs (cf. [Acts 17:16](#); [Rom. 1:13-16](#); [9:1-3](#); [10:1](#)). *according to the flesh*. Paul no longer evaluated people according to external, human, worldly standards (cf. [10:3](#)). *we know Him thus no longer*. Paul, as a Christian, also no longer had merely a fallible, human assessment of Jesus Christ (cf. [Acts 9:1-6](#); [26:9-23](#)).

**5:17 in Christ**. These two words comprise a brief, but most profound, statement of the inexhaustible significance of the believer's redemption, which includes the following: (1) the believer's security in Christ, who bore in His body God's judgment against sin; (2) the believer's acceptance in Him with whom God alone is well pleased; (3) the believer's future assurance in Him who is the resurrection to eternal life and the sole guarantor of the believer's inheritance in heaven; and (4) the believer's participation in the divine nature of Christ, the everlasting Word (cf. [2 Pet. 1:4](#)). *new creation*. This describes something that is created at a qualitatively new level of excellence. It refers to regeneration or the new birth (cf. [John 3:3](#); [Eph. 2:1-3](#); [Titus 3:5](#); [1 Pet. 1:23](#); [1 John 2:29](#); [3:9](#); [5:4](#)). This expression encompasses the Christian's forgiveness of sins paid for in Christ's substitutionary death (cf. [Gal. 6:15](#); [Eph. 4:24](#)). *old things have passed away*. After a person is

regenerate, old value systems, priorities, beliefs, loves, and plans are gone. Evil and sin are still present, but the believer sees them in a new perspective (*see note on v. 16*), and they no longer control him. ***all things... new.*** The Greek grammar indicates that this newness is a continuing condition of fact. The believer's new spiritual perception of everything is a constant reality for him, and he now lives for eternity, not temporal things. James identifies this transformation as the faith that produces works (*see notes on [Eph. 2:10](#); [James 2:14-25](#)*).

**5:18 *all things are of God.*** Many modern translations add the article “these” before “things,” which connects the word *things* to all that Paul has just asserted in [verses 14-17](#). All the aspects related to someone's conversion and newly transformed life in Christ are accomplished sovereignly by God. Sinners on their own cannot decide to participate in these new realities (*see note on [Rom. 5:10](#); cf. [1 Cor. 8:6](#); [11:12](#); [Eph. 2:1](#)*). ***ministry of reconciliation.*** This speaks to the reality that God wills sinful men to be reconciled to Himself (cf. [Rom. 5:10](#); [Eph. 4:17-24](#)). God has called believers to proclaim the gospel of reconciliation to others (cf. [1 Cor. 1:17](#)). The concept of service, such as waiting on tables, derives from the Greek word for “ministry.” God wants Christians to accept the privilege of serving unbelievers by proclaiming a desire to be reconciled.

**5:19 *God was in Christ.*** God by His own will and design used His Son, the only acceptable and perfect sacrifice, as the means to reconcile sinners to Himself (*see notes on [v. 18](#); [Acts 2:23](#); [Col. 1:19, 20](#); cf. [John 14:6](#); [Acts 4:12](#); [1 Tim. 2:5, 6](#)*). ***reconciling the world.*** God initiates the change in the sinner's status in that He brings him from a position of alienation to a

state of forgiveness and right relationship with Himself. This is the essence of the gospel. The word *world* should not be interpreted in any universalistic sense, which would say that everyone will be saved, or even potentially reconciled. “World” refers rather to the entire sphere of mankind or humanity (cf. [Titus 2:11](#); [3:4](#)), the category of beings to whom God offers reconciliation—people from every ethnic group, without distinction. The intrinsic merit of Christ’s reconciling death is infinite and the offer is unlimited. However, actual atonement was made only for those who believe (cf. [John 10:11, 15](#); [17:9](#); [Acts 13:48](#); [20:28](#); [Rom. 8:32, 33](#); [Eph. 5:25](#)). The rest of humanity will pay the price personally for their own sin in eternal hell. **imputing**. This may also be translated “reckoning,” or “counting.” This is the heart of the doctrine of justification, whereby God declares the repentant sinner righteous and does not count his sins against him because He covers him with the righteousness of Christ the moment he places wholehearted faith in Christ and His sacrificial death (*see notes on [Rom. 3:24-4:5](#)*; cf. [Ps. 32:2](#); [Rom. 4:8](#)). **word of reconciliation**. *See note on [verse 18](#)*. Here, Paul gives another aspect to the meaning of the gospel. He used the Greek word for *word* (cf. [Acts 13:26](#)), which indicated a true and trustworthy message, as opposed to a false or unsure one. In a world filled with false messages, believers have the solid, truthful message of the gospel.

**[5:20](#) ambassadors**. A term that is related to the more familiar Greek word often translated “elder.” It described an older, more experienced man who served as a representative of a king from one country to another. Paul thus described his role—and the role of all believers—as a messenger representing the King of heaven with the gospel, who pleads with the people of the world

to be reconciled to God, who is their rightful King (cf. [Rom. 10:13-18](#)). *as though God were pleading*. As believers present the gospel, God speaks (lit. “calls” or “begs”) through them and urges unbelieving sinners to come in an attitude of faith and accept the gospel, which means to repent of their sins and believe on Jesus (cf. [Acts 16:31](#); [James 4:8](#)).

**5:21** Here Paul summarized the heart of the gospel, resolving the mystery and paradox of [verses 18-20](#), and explaining how sinners can be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. These fifteen Greek words express the doctrines of imputation and substitution like no other single verse. *who knew no sin*. Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God (see notes on [Gal. 4:4, 5](#); cf. [Luke 23:4, 14, 22, 47](#); [John 8:46](#); [Heb. 4:15](#); [7:26](#); [1 Pet. 1:19](#); [2:22-24](#); [3:18](#); [Rev. 5:2-10](#)). *sin for us*. God the Father, using the principle of imputation (see note on [v. 19](#)), treated Christ as if He were a sinner though He was not, and had Him die as a substitute to pay the penalty for the sins of those who believe in Him (cf. [Isa. 53:4-6](#); [Gal. 3:10-13](#); [1 Pet. 2:24](#)). On the Cross, He did not become a sinner (as some suggest), but remained as holy as ever. He was treated as if He were guilty of all the sins ever committed by all who would ever believe, though He committed none. The wrath of God was exhausted on Him and the just requirement of God’s Law met on behalf of those for whom He died. *the righteousness of God*. Another reference to justification and imputation. The righteousness that is credited to the believer’s account is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, God’s Son (see notes on [Rom. 1:17](#); [3:21-24](#); [Phil. 3:9](#)). As Christ was not a sinner, but was treated as if He were, so believers who have not yet been made righteous (until glorification) are treated as if they were righteous. He bore their sins so they could bear

His righteousness. God treated Him as if He committed believers' sins, and treats believers as if they did only the righteous deeds of the sinless Son of God.

## **8. The Conduct of the Ministry ([6:1-10](#))**

**[6:1](#)** *to receive the grace of God in vain.* Most of the Corinthians were saved but hindered by legalistic teaching regarding sanctification (*see notes on [11:3](#); [Gal. 6:1](#)*). Some were not truly saved but deceived by a gospel of works (cf. [13:5](#); [Gal. 5:4](#)), which was being taught by the false teachers. In either case, Paul's proclamation of the gospel of grace would not have been having its desired effect, and he would have had cause for serious concern that his many months of ministry at Corinth were for nothing. Both cases also prevented the people from effectively assuming any "ministry of reconciliation."

**[6:2](#)** Paul emphasized his point by quoting [Isaiah 49:8](#). He was passionately concerned that the Corinthians adhere to the truth because it was God's time to save and they were messengers for helping to spread that message. *now is the day of salvation.* Paul applied Isaiah's words to the present situation. There is a time in God's economy when He listens to sinners and responds to those who are repentant—and it was and is that time (cf. [Prov. 1:20-23](#); [Isa. 55:6](#); [Heb. 3:7, 8](#); [4:7](#)). However, there will also be an end to that time (cf. [Gen. 6:3](#); [Prov. 1:24-33](#); [John 9:4](#)), which is why Paul's exhortation was so passionate.

The MacArthur Bible Commentary.

**Question: "What is the love of Christ?"**

**Answer: The phrase "love of Christ,"** as opposed to "love *for* Christ," **refers to the love that He has toward mankind.** His love can be briefly stated as His willingness to act in our best interest, especially in meeting our greatest need, even though it cost Him everything and even though we were the least worthy of such love.

***Though Christ Jesus, being God in nature, existed from the beginning of time with God the Father (John 1:1) and the Holy Spirit, He willingly left His throne (John 1:1-14) to become a man, that He might pay the penalty for our sin so that we would not have to pay for it for all eternity in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15).***

Because mankind's sin has been paid for by our sinless Savior Jesus Christ, God who is just and holy can now forgive our sins when we accept Christ Jesus' payment as our own (Romans 3:21-26).

**Thus, Christ's love is shown in His leaving His home in heaven, where He was worshipped and honored as He deserved, to come to earth as a man where He**



would be mocked, betrayed, beaten, and crucified on a cross to pay the penalty for our sin, rising again from the dead on the third day. He considered our need of a Savior from our sin and its penalty as more important than His own comfort and life ([Philippians 2:3-8](#)).

Sometimes people may give their lives willingly for ones they deem as worthy—a friend, a relative, other “good” people—but Christ’s love goes beyond that.

***Christ’s love extends to those most unworthy of it.***

He willingly took the punishment of those who tortured Him, hated Him, rebelled against Him, and cared nothing about Him, those who were most undeserving of His love ([Romans 5:6-8](#)).

***He gave the most He could give for those who deserved it the least!***

***Sacrifice, then, is the essence of godly (agape) love.***

This is God-like love, not man-like love ([Matthew 5:43-48](#)).

**This love which He demonstrated toward us on the cross is just the beginning.**

**When we place our trust in Him as our Savior, He makes us God's children, co-heirs with Him! He comes to dwell within us through His Holy Spirit, promising that He will never leave us or forsake us ([Hebrews 13:5-6](#)). Thus, we have a loving companion for life. And no matter what we go through, He is there, and His love is ever available to us ([Rom. 8:35](#)).**

But as He rightfully reigns as a benevolent King in heaven, we need to give Him the position He deserves in our lives as well, that of Master and not merely companion. It is only then that **we will experience life as He intended and live in the fullness of His love ([John 10:10b](#)).**

**Recommended Resource:** [The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God by D.A. Carson](#)

**The Gospel Coalition:**

## ***The Compelling Love of Christ***

by Murray Campbell

*What motivates Christians to tell people about Jesus?*

Even when a society is overwhelmingly averse to the Christian message, Christians keep on talking about the man from Nazareth. Why? I understand there are people in our communities whose motives are questionable, even unprincipled, however, it would be misleading to define the many by a few wolves who have found their way into the sheep paddock.

**In Romans ch. 9 the Apostle Paul explains his evangelistic heart...**

Last year at Mentone Baptist, we spent an entire term teaching through **Romans ch. 8**; one of the great climatic points of the Bible. The **final verses** of this Scripture **explore the unchanging character of God's love for his people in Christ Jesus**. Paul writes:

***“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that***

*neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus **our Lord.***”

God’s ever constant and never ending love is a love that is ours in Christ Jesus. And this love has a centre, the cross, which is alluded to by the phrase, ‘through him who loved us’. When Paul uses this form of the verb ‘to love’, he is referring to a completed love, which is one way of talking about Jesus’ sufficient substitutionary death on the cross.

*Chapter 9:1 then introduces a new section in Romans, providing us with one of the longest expositions of a theology of mission in the entire Bible (chs. 9-11).*

Paul’s teaching on mission here needs to be appropriated in light of his understanding of God’s love in Christ.

**There may not be any conjunctions connecting 9:1 with 8:39, but the very first subject on Paul’s mind after meditating upon God’s love is**

## evangelism, 9:1-5:

*“I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit— I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.”*

**When we have truly experienced this love of God, it is impossible to keep it to ourselves. Embracing this love is personal and real, but God’s love experienced will become God’s love expressed.**

It is too wonderful to keep to yourself. The news is too important to keep private.

**According to Paul, assurance of Christ’s love:**

**1. Changes how we view people.** He writes, “I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I

could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people". There is no hint of spite or envy, no Hamlet-esque soliloquy. **He grieves for his fellow Jews.**

**2. Changes what we want for people.** Paul desires their salvation and for people to realize that Jesus is the Christ. He goes as far as to say that if it were possible, he would suffer God's judgement for them in order that they might know Christ. The Gospel is too important and too phenomenal to hide.

Paul is of course under no illusions, not everyone would appreciate his endeavors, and at times the opposition would be strident, but some will respond by confessing with their mouths and believing in their hearts, Jesus is Lord.

**3. Changes how we speak to people.** Notice, **there is an earnestness in Paul's tone, and as he reflects upon the plight of his people** he turns to the story of the Bible, God's promise of salvation. **Paul's speech is theologically shaped and Gospel driven, and his manner is in tune with the very words he speaks.**

In any culture, not in least 21st Century Australia, we anticipate that some folk will throw hissy fits at our evangelism, some will be genuinely angered, and others indifferent. But of course the aim of evangelism isn't to win Australia's Got Talent. **Paul experienced opposition on mission, as did all the Apostles, and of course Jesus' mission brought about his crucifixion. Should we expect any different?**



*Pride always wants to win the argument.*  
*Greed looks for personal gain.*

Retaliation uses the Gospel as a weapon to crush those who hurt us.

We are familiar with these temptations, but they are not what we most desire; they are intruders that distract us from God's love. Indeed, **the extent to which we know that Christ has loved us, this love will motivate our hearts to love the people around us:** deeply, earnestly, and freeing us to speak of Christ with clarity and grace, boldness and love.

Australia's view of Christianity may be shifting from a paradigm of suspicion to one of antagonism. Turning to fear, pride or retaliation are not options for us. Instead, **let us all the more remind one another of Romans 8:35-39, and let this extraordinary knowledge fill our lives and words.**

# The Depth of Christ's Love: Its Cost

- 
- Resource by  
John Piper

- Scripture: Ephesians 5:1–2 Topic: The Death of Christ

And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

## Review

If love for one another is going to flourish and grow in our church, we must be rooted more deeply in love. That was the point of last week's message. In other words becoming a loving person means living with the roots of your life sunk deep in the love of Christ for you. Being loved by Christ is the ground of becoming loving. And the root that you send into that ground is the faith that you are loved.

There's a phrase in [1 John 4:16](#) that describes this root:

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us.



We have come to know, and have *believed* the love which God has for us. The love that God has for us is the ground of our becoming loving people. And the root that we send down into that ground, to be nourished by it, is faith—"we have *believed* the love that God has for us."

Believing the depth of God's love for me is the key to my growing into a loving person.

And the key to believing the love that God has for us is *seeing it revealed in the word of Scripture*. A few people were allowed to see Jesus in the flesh and touch him and watch him teach and heal and suffer and die and rise. We might feel jealous that our faith in the love of Christ can't be based on that kind of first hand sight and touch. But that was not God's plan. When Jesus prayed for his disciples in [John 17:20](#), he said, "[Father], I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me *through their word*." It was the plan of God that we come to faith, not by seeing the love of Christ in the flesh, but by *seeing the love of Christ in the word* of those who knew him.

## Focusing on the Depth of Christ's Love for Us

Because of all that, here's the plan for the next four weeks. I hope this will help you prepare yourself in prayer and meditation for what's coming. And I hope it will help you know when God is moving you to invite others to attend with you. My aim in this series is that our love for one another and for those outside would grow and deepen. But this will happen only as we are rooted—that is, as we believe—more and more deeply in the love of Christ for us. And that belief comes by seeing the depth of Christ's love for us revealed in his Word. So for four weeks

climaxing on Easter Sunday I want to direct our attention to the depth of Christ's love for us.

As I have pondered the love of Christ for us, and the different ways that the Bible presents it to us, I have seen four ways that the depth of Christ's love is revealed. We will spend a week on each of these.

1. First, we know the depth of someone's love for us by what it costs him: if he sacrifices his life for us, it assures us of deeper love than if he only sacrifices a few bruises. So we will see the depth of Christ's love by the greatness of what it cost him.
2. Second, we know the depth of someone's love for us by how little we deserve it. If we have treated him well all our life, and have done all that he expects of us, then when he loves us, it will not prove as much love as it would if he loved us when we had offended him, and shunned him, and disdained him. The more undeserving we are, the more amazing and deep is his love for us. So we will see the depth of Christ's love in relation to how undeserving are the objects of his love ([Romans 5:5-8](#)).
3. Third, we know the depth of someone's love for us by the greatness of the benefits we receive in being loved. If we are helped to pass an exam, we will feel loved in one way. If we are helped to get a job, we will feel loved another way. If we are helped to escape from an oppressive captivity and given freedom for the rest of our life, we will feel loved another way. And if we are rescued from eternal torment and given a place in the presence of God with fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore, we will know a depth of love that surpasses all others ([1](#)

[John 3:1–3](#)). So we will see the depth of Christ's love by the greatness of the benefits we receive in being loved by him.

4. Fourth, we know the depth of someone's love for us by the freedom with which they love us. If a person does good things for us because someone is making him, when he doesn't really want to, then we don't think the love is very deep. *Love is deep in proportion to its liberty*. So if an insurance company pays you \$40,000 because you lose your spouse, you don't usually marvel at how much this company loves you. There were legal constraints. But if your Sunday School class makes all your meals for a month after your spouse dies, and someone calls you every day, and visits you every week, then you call it love, because they don't have to do this. It is free and willing. So we will see the depth of Christ's love for us in his freedom: "No one takes my life from me; I lay it down of my own accord" ([John 10:18](#)).

That's what I see in the New Testament...

## **The Love of Paul**

Paul, the former cold aggressor and legalist, had now become a person who could write of the key attribute that witnessed above everything else in 1 Corinthians 13 – love for God and those around him. The one who was supremely educated in knowledge had come to the point of saying that knowledge devoid of love only makes one arrogant, but love edifies (1 Corinthians 8:1).

The book of Acts and Paul's letters testify to a tenderness that had come over the apostle for both the unbelieving world and those inside the Church. As to the latter, in his farewell address to the Ephesian believers in Acts 20, he tells them that "night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears" (Acts 20:31). He tells the Galatian believers they are his "little children" (Galatians 4:19). He reminds the Corinthians that whenever they experience pain, he is wounded as well (2 Corinthians 11:29). He speaks of believers in Philippi as "having them in his heart" (Philippians 1:7). He tells the Thessalonian church that he "abounds" in love for them (1 Thessalonians 3:12) and demonstrated that fact by living among them and helping build up a Christian community (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1-2). Repeatedly throughout his writings, Paul reminds his believing readers of his care and love for them.

Paul's attitude toward unbelievers is one of caring and deep concern as well, with perhaps the clearest example of this being his articulation in the letter to the Romans of the sorrow he felt for his fellow Israelites who had not come to faith in Christ: "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:1-3).

This type of angst exhibited by Paul for unbelievers was

also not restricted to his own nationality, but extended to non-Jews as well. As just one example, when he entered Athens, the text in Acts 17:16 makes clear that Paul was both repulsed and “greatly distressed” over the idolatrous situation the city was in. Yet he deeply cared about God’s rightful place as well as the people who were involved in false worship, and he immediately went about trying to engage the pagan unbelievers in discourse about the gospel which had been entrusted to him (Acts 17:17-34). And at the heart of his message was Jesus.

## ILLUSTRATION:

Peter Cameron Scott, a gifted young vocalist, was on the steps of an opera house ready to pursue a career as a singer, when God challenged him, “Will you seek a life of self-glory and applause in the entertainment world, or will you dedicate your life to My service?” He obeyed God’s call, received some missionary training, and at age 23 he sailed for Africa. Within a few months, his brother joined him, but the harsh African climate and environment that became known as “the white man’s graveyard” took its toll. His brother died. Peter built a crude coffin, dug the grave himself, and buried his brother. Alone at the grave, he recommitted himself to preach the gospel in Africa.

His own health broke, and he went first to England and then back to the U.S. to recruit others for the cause. In 1895, at age 28, he established the Africa Inland Mission. But just 14 months after he and his party had landed on African soil, Scott fell ill and died.

After Scott’s death, the mission nearly failed as one after another of the workers died. By the summer of 1899, only one missionary remained on the field. But they persisted, and ten years after the mission’s founding, there were 31 missionaries on the field. In the early years, more missionaries died from the harsh conditions than people came to Christ. But still more missionaries came, arriving with their goods packed in coffins. The

Africans were amazed at such determination. They said, “Surely only a message of great importance would inspire such actions.” By 1971, there were a million and a half members in the Africa Inland Church. (Story culled from “The Global Prayer Digest” [10/84] and from Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya* [Zondervan], pp. 300-304.)

### ***CONVERSION MANIFESTS ITSELF IN RADICAL, LIFELONG OBEDIENCE TO JESUS CHRIST.***

As I said, repentance is an essential part of conversion. Paul preached that people “should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance” (26:20). Repentance means doing a 180, turning from sin toward God. Before conversion, we all were living for self and for the things of this world. After conversion, we live to please and glorify Jesus Christ and to seek first His kingdom. Paul describes his own repentance in [Philippians 3:7-8](#),

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.

Here Paul describes his life after conversion: “I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision” (26:19). That vision included his commission to preach not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles (26:17, 20), which was the reason the Jews hated him. It took radical obedience for a zealous Jew like Paul, who thought that any contact with Gentiles was defiling, to devote his life to reaching Gentiles for Christ and to teach that they had equal standing in the church. But Paul obeyed the Great Commission.

Such radical obedience is not just the calling of the super-committed. Jesus said, “if anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me” ([Mark 8:34](#)). He told us that, instead of seeking after all of the worldly comforts that worldly people seek, we should seek first His kingdom and righteousness ([Matt. 6:31-33](#)). Each of the Gospels and Acts record His Great Commission, that we should go and make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to observe all that He commanded us ([Matt. 28:19-20](#); [Mark 16:15](#); [Luke 24:46-48](#); [John 20:21](#); [Acts 1:8](#)).

I fear that many American Christians have dismissed the Great Commission as pertaining only to those who are called as missionaries to foreign lands. Since they have never sensed that call, they pretty much ignore Christ's command and get on with their careers, their families, and their private pursuits and interests. Once in a while they drop a few bucks in the offering plate to do their bit for the cause. Church is a nice slice of the good life that they enjoy as Christians. But they don't live with radical obedience to the Great Commission. It plays little if any part in how they live their lives. In fact, they hardly ever give it much thought at all.

But the Bible clearly teaches that *every* Christian should put Jesus Christ and His kingdom at the center of their lives. Knowing Him and making Him known, both locally and globally, should be our passion in life. I like the way John Piper's church, Bethlehem Baptist, puts it:

*We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples.* One of the Biblical truths that drives us is great news that *God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.*

And this vision of reality radically frees us from passing and dying trinkets of the world and compels us (as joy always does) to spread what we love the most through radical acts of love. We long to see those who do not treasure God now, whether in the American urban centers or suburban sprawls or among the unreached peoples of the world, to come to know true and forever Joy -- which is only found in God.

You don't accidentally fall into that kind of radical obedience to the Great Commission. It must be your deliberate focus. You've got to keep shrugging off the enticements of this world in order to be obedient to the heavenly vision.

- Bible.org (Steven Cole)

The love of Christ for us in his dying was as conscious as his suffering was intentional. "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us" (1 [John 3:16](#)). If he was intentional in laying down his life, it was for us. It was love. "When Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved

them to the end" (John 13:1). Every step on the Calvary road meant, "I love you."

Therefore, to feel the love of Christ in the laying down of his life, it helps to see how utterly intentional it was. Consider these five ways of seeing Christ's intentionality in dying for us. First, look at what Jesus said just after that violent moment when Peter tried to cleave the skull of the servant, but only cut off his ear.

Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" (Matthew 26:52-54)

It is one thing to say that the details of Jesus' death were predicted in the Old Testament. But it is much more to say that Jesus himself was making his choices precisely to see to it that the Scriptures would be fulfilled.

That is what Jesus said he was doing in Matthew 26:54. "I could escape this misery, but how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" I am not choosing to take the way out that I could take because I know the Scriptures. I know what must take place. It is my choice to fulfill all that is predicted of me in the Word of God.

A second way this intentionality is seen is in the repeated expressions to go to Jerusalem--into the very jaws of the lion.

Taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over



to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise." (Mark 10:32-34)

Jesus had one all-controlling goal: to die according the Scriptures. He knew when the time was near and set his face like flint: "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

A third way that we see the intentionality of Jesus to suffer for us is in the words he spoke in the mouth of Isaiah the prophet:

I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;

I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. (Isaiah 50:6)

I have to work hard in my imagination to keep before me what iron will this required. Humans recoil from suffering. We recoil a hundred times more from suffering that is caused by unjust, ugly, sniveling, low-down, arrogant people. At every moment of pain and indignity, Jesus chose not to do what would have been immediately just. He gave his back to the smiter. He gave his cheek to slapping. He gave his beard to plucking. He offered his face to spitting. And he was doing it for the very ones causing the pain.

A fourth way we see the intentionality of Jesus' suffering is in the way Peter explains how this was possible. He said, "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23).

The way Jesus handled the injustice of it all was not by saying, "Injustice doesn't matter," but by entrusting his cause to "him who judges justly." God would see that justice is done. That was not Jesus' calling at Calvary. (Nor is it our highest calling now. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord, Romans 12:19.)

The fifth and perhaps the clearest statement that Jesus

makes about his own intentionality to die is in John 10:17-18:

For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father... Jesus' point in these words is that he is acting completely voluntarily. He is under no constraint from any mere human. Circumstances have not overtaken him. He is not being swept along in the injustice of the moment. He is in control.

Therefore, when John says, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16), we should feel the intensity of his love for us to the degree that we see his intentionality to suffer and die. I pray that you will feel it profoundly. And may that profound experience of being loved by Christ have this effect on you:

The love of Christ controls us . . . . He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

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## **The love of Christ – What is it?**

The phrase "love of Christ" used in the New Testament refers to His love for humanity. Jesus shows His love toward us in many ways, ultimately proving it through His death and resurrection from the dead.

First, the love of Christ is shown through Jesus coming from heaven to earth. John 1:14 teaches that, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Second, Jesus experienced temptation, yet did not sin: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

Third, Jesus endured being betrayed by a close follower. Luke 22:3-4 shares, "Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them."

Fourth, the love of Christ was shown through the pain Jesus suffered in His beatings and death upon the cross. Romans 5:8 teaches, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

The phrase "love of Christ" is used three times in the New Testament and reveals additional aspects of His love for us. First, Romans 8:35 asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Verses 38-39 answer, "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Second Corinthians 5:14-15 share how the love of Christ changes our lives: "For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." The love of Christ controls how we live in showing love to others.

Finally, knowing the love of Christ helps us to be filled with the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:17-19 shares, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

The love of Christ is seen in many ways, including the changes that take

place in our own lives. His love in us allows us to show love to others, impacting people with the love of Christ everywhere we go.

- [CompellingTruth.org](http://CompellingTruth.org)

## Christ's Love

### Most Relevant Verses

**Mark 10:21** (compassionate confrontation)

Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

**John 11:5** (responds in ways not immediately understood)

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

**John 11:3**

So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."

**John 11:36** (love in action is a witness!)

So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!"

**John 13:23**

There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.

### **John 19:26**

When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"

### **John 20:2**

So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

### **John 21:7**

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea.

### **John 21:20**

Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"

### **John 15:9** (Christ's love will provide as we abide!)

**"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.**

**John 15:10** (obeying is conditional via abiding)

**"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.**

**Galatians 2:20** (sacrifices & surrenders)

**"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.**

**Ephesians 5:2** (self-less & sacrificial)

**and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.**

**1 John 3:16** (defined/deployed in sacrifice/selfless surrender)

**We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**

**John 14:21** (obeying & abiding can't be divorced of disclosing)

**"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."**

**Ephesians 3:18-19** (surpasses knowledge & fills us full of God)  
**may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the**

**love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.**

**John 13:1** (love doesn't just start... love finishes strong!)

Now before the Feast of the Passover, **Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.**

**Ephesians 5:25** (emulated sacrifice & service)

**Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,**

**Psalm 45:7**

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of joy above Your fellows.

**2 Timothy 1:13** (tenaciously truthful in faith & love)

**Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.**

**Revelation 1:5** (redeems & restores sinners by His blood)

and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth **To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—**

2 Corinthians 5:14 (defines & deploys us)

**For the love of Christ controls/compels/constrains/changes us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;**

# LOVE

**Unselfish, loyal, and benevolent concern for the well-being of another.**

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul described “love” as a “more excellent way” than tongues or even preaching. The New Testament maintains this estimation of love throughout. The King James Version uses the word *charity* instead of “love” to translate the Greek word Paul used (*agape*). The word *charity* comes from the Latin *caritas* which means “dearness,” “affection,” or “high regard.” Today, the word *charity* is normally used for acts of benevolence, and so the word *love* is to be preferred as a translation of *agape*. Nevertheless, the reader who comes to the *agape* of the New Testament with the idea of benevolence in mind is better off than the reader who comes with the idea of physical pleasure and satisfaction.

**In the Old Testament** In the Old Testament, the verb “to love” has a range of meanings as broad as the English verb. It describes physical love between the sexes, even sexual desire (Judg. 16:14;



[2 Sam. 13:1-4](#)). It describes the love within a family and among friends ([Gen. 22:1-2](#)). Love as self-giving appears in the significant commandment that Israelites love the stranger. The basis for such selfless love is God's act of redemption ([Lev. 19:33-34](#)).

Hosea used the image of married love to teach us to understand both the faithlessness of Israel and the faithfulness of God. Israel's love is "like a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away" ([6:4](#)). God desires steadfast love, but Israel had been unfaithful. His own relationship with an adulterous wife allowed Hosea the insight that God had not given up Israel in spite of her faithlessness. **The *Shema* (Hebrew for "hear") of [Deuteronomy 6:4-6](#) is echoed in Paul's declaration that love is the fulfillment of the law ([Rom. 13:10](#)).**

**In the Teachings of Jesus** In Jesus' teachings in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the *Shema* of Deuteronomy (the command to love God) is united with [Leviticus 19:18](#) ("Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself") ([Matt. 22:34-40](#); [Mark 12:28-34](#); [Luke 10:25-28](#)). Just before the parable of the Good Samaritan, a lawyer quoted the two commands to love and then asked Jesus: "And who is my neighbor?" ([Luke 10:29](#)) **Jesus gave the story of the Good Samaritan who took care of the man who fell among robbers to illustrate the selfless love which is to be characteristic of citizens of the Kingdom.**

In [Matthew 5:43-48](#), **Jesus gave the radical command to love one's enemies and to pray for those who persecute.**

**Loving only those who love you is, according to Jesus, no better than those who are not His disciples. The love that Jesus' disciples have for others is to be just as complete as God's love ([Matt 5:48](#); compare [Rom. 5:8](#)).**

In these teachings, of course, the selfless love is a response to God's prior activity. It is a way of living expected of those who are citizens of the Kingdom. **The teachings of Jesus on love of enemy, it will be noted, are a part of the Sermon on the Mount which is directed to Christian disciples. See [Sermon on the Mount](#).**

**In the Teachings of Paul    [In the poem on love in 1 Corinthians 13](#), Paul associated love with the all-important biblical words of faith and hope (see also [1 Thess. 5:8](#); [Gal. 5:6](#)) and declared love the greatest. The context for this poem on love is Paul's discussion of relationships within the church. [First Corinthians 13:1-3](#) indicate that the gifts of the Spirit (ecstatic speech, wisdom, faith, and self-sacrifice) are good for nothing without love; only love builds up. The Spirit distributes His gifts for the common good ([1 Cor. 8:1](#); [12:7](#)).**

**[First Corinthians 13:4-7](#) characterizes love: Love is patient and kind, not jealous or boastful, not arrogant or rude. Love is not selfish, irritable, or resentful. Love does not rejoice at wrong but in the right. Love bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things.**

Finally, [1 Corinthians 13:8-13](#) contrasts love with preaching and knowledge, on the one hand, and faith and hope, on the other.

All of these (with love) are important aspects of our lives here and now. Love in contrast to these, however, is not only for the here and now; it is forever. **Love, therefore, is “the greatest” of the most significant realities we experience as Christians.**

Paul’s understanding and discussion of love make love a central theme, and his use of the noun *agape* makes that term almost a technical term. **Prior to Paul, in fact, the Greek term *agape* was little used. Instead of using a word for love already filled with meaning, Paul took the seldom-used term and filled it with Christian meaning. This love of which Paul wrote is somewhat different from the love we normally experience and speak about. Christian love is not simply an emotion which arises because of the character of the one loved. It is not due to the loving quality of the lover. It is a relationship of self-giving which results from God’s activity in Christ. The source of Christian love is God (Rom. 5:8), and the believer’s response of faith makes love a human possibility (Rom. 5:5).**

Even though love does not begin in the human heart, the believer must actualize love.

**In Paul's admonition to Christians to love, the nature of love as self-giving is manifest ([Gal. 5:13-15](#)). The Christian walk is to be characterized by love so that Paul could even speak of "walking in love" ([Rom. 14:15](#)). The Christian is to increase and abound in love ([1 Thess. 3:12](#)).**

Love is vitally connected with faith in that the believer's faithful response is one of love. Love is also connected with hope. In his prayer for love to increase and abound, Paul indicated that this increase of love has the end that the hearts of Christians might be established "unblameable in holiness" before God when Jesus returns with all his saints ([1 Thess. 3:13](#)). Paul also wrote of the hope we have of sharing the glory of God and declared that this hope does not disappoint us, because our hearts have been filled with God's love through the Holy Spirit ([Rom. 5:2,5](#)). Christian love is evidence of and a foretaste of the goal of God's purposes for His children.

**In the Writings of John** The Johannine writings magnify the significance of love as forcefully and fully as any other writings. **John's writings account for only one tenth of the New Testament but provide one third of the references to love.**

The key text in the first half of the Gospel of John is [John 3:16](#). This passage indicates the relationship of the Father's love to the work of Christ and of both to the life of believers. These themes

are repeated throughout the Gospel of John. **The second half of the Gospel of John emphasizes the ethical dimension of love among Christians. The key passage is Jesus' new commandment in [John 13:34-35](#) (see also [John 14:15,21,23,24](#); [15:9,12,17](#)).**

**This command of Jesus to love one another gives us insight into the nature of Jesus Christ for the church and the nature of Christian love. What is commanded is not an emotion; it is the disciplined will to seek the welfare of others.**

Jesus speaks with the authority of the Father, the only One with authority to make such demands of men and women. Jesus speaks as the incarnate Word ([John 1:1,14](#)). He has authority to give conditions for discipleship. The relationship of this commandment to [Leviticus 19:18](#) should be noted. Both command love, but **Jesus' commandment includes the clause: "as I have loved you."**

When the overall importance of love in the Gospel of John is seen, the dialogue between Jesus and Peter concerning Peter's love for Jesus and Peter's tending the sheep ([21:15-17](#)) becomes more significant. Our love for Jesus Christ is closely related to our fulfillment of the pastoral task.

The Letters of John make explicit statements about the ethical implications of love. **Our appreciation of these letters and the command to love is increased when we realize that John's opponents claimed that they loved God in spite of their unlovely temper and conduct. They claimed enlightenment and communion with God.** (They were Gnostics or

“Knowers.” See [Gnosticism](#)). John’s distress at the gap between profession and practice is seen in his repeated admonition to love.

*The “old commandment” which John saw as basic for Christians is belief in Jesus and love for one another (1 John 3:23). This love is manifested in deeds (1 John 3:18). John left no doubt about the relationship of love and belief in God. Whoever hates his brother is in the darkness (1 John 2:9). Whoever does not do right and love his brother is not of God (1 John 4:20).*

*First John 4:8 is the climax: “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”*

**In 2 and 3 John this command to love is repeated in direct and indirect ways.**

**Second John 5-6 is addressed to the church, and they are explicitly reminded of the command from Jesus to love one another.**

**Third John 5-6 speaks of the love of the “Beloved Gaius” in terms of giving service to Christian brothers. Diotrefes, however, will live in infamy, for he put himself first, refused to**

welcome the brethren, stopped those who wanted to welcome the brethren, and put them out of the church ([3 John 9-10](#)).

**Love and Judgment** The judgment account in [Matthew 25:31-46](#) illuminates and is illuminated by the New Testament teachings on love. The account depicts not only what happens at the end. The narrative makes plain that what happens at the end is what happens here and now. Christians love because they have been loved. In such love, God's eternal purposes are being experienced and carried out by his people ([Matt. 25:34-36](#)).

**Holman Bible Dictionary.**