

Constrained by Love

2 Cor. 5:14-15

Introduction:

- A. The “love of Christ” constrained Paul’s actions toward and on behalf of Christ.
 - 1. Subject to two interpretations: Love Christ has for us or love we have for him.
 - 2. The results are the same if our love for Him or His love for us.
 - 3. “Constrain” or “compel” are strong words prompted by a strong love.
- B. Some people seem to have trouble with love.
 - 1. Some cannot accept love.
 - 2. Some cannot give love.
 - 3. Some cannot return love.
- C. We see two aspects of the constraining love in this text:

Discussion:

I. The Love That Constrained Christ to Love Us.

- A. A death made necessary by the sin of all men.
 - 1. God’s perfect justice demands the ultimate punishment for sin – death (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23)
 - a. Physical death (separation of body and spirit) and spiritual death (separation from God).
 - b. Adam and Eve suffered both – spiritual the day they ate and physically later.
 - 2. God’s perfect love demands a way for the sinner to be spared without sin going unpunished.
 - a. This can only be done by atonement or redemption – the price/penalty is paid by another.
 - b. The sinner cannot be the atonement – he has his own penalty to pay for his own sin.
 - c. Only an innocent being is qualified to die for the sin of another.
 - (1) Until Christ came, innocent animals died for sinful men – a foreshadow of that to come. (Heb. 9:11-28)
 - (2) Christ came, the only completely innocent man and died for all sinners (cf. Matt. 27:46)
 - (3) Others might have died for us – only Jesus could die for us.
- B. A death that combined God’s perfect justice with his perfect love (Rom. 3:25-26)
 - 1. Jesus was compelled by his love for us – not by force (John 10:15, 17; Matt. 26:51-54)
 - 2. We should feel compelled by his love to return that love.

II. The Love That Constrains Us to Love Christ.

- A. We love him because he first loved us (1 John 4:19)
- B. Because of Christ’s great love Paul felt constrained to:
 - 1. Accept Christ by being baptized into Christ (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 12:13)
 - 2. Preach Christ (1 Cor. 9:16; Acts 26:19-20)
 - 3. Live Christ (v. 15; Gal. 2:20)
- C. How strong is your love for Christ?
 - 1. Enough to be constrained to serve him daily?
 - 2. Enough to be constrained to obey him in all things?
 - 3. Enough to “gather in his name” and worship him regularly?
 - 4. Enough to teach others about his great love and what it means?

Conclusion:

- A. How can we not love Christ, when we understand his love for us?
- B. How can we say that we love Christ, and be so indifferent about faithfully serving him?
- C. How can we say that we love Christ and do so little to support his church and its activities?