

# For the Love of Christ Constraineth Us

by J. Glyn Owen

---

*The love of Christ compels us to live for Him, because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died.*

**Duration:** 41:05

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 2 Corinthians 5:11, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Philippians 2:13

**Topics:** "Love Of God"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the lack of understanding and commitment among Christians towards the love of Christ. He emphasizes that many believers talk and sing about the cross but fail to truly comprehend its significance. The speaker highlights the example of the apostle Paul, who was compelled by the love of Christ to give himself fully to the service of the Lord. The key to experiencing this compelling love, according to the speaker, is to meditate on and reason about the love of Christ, allowing it to deeply impact and transform our lives.

---

## Transcript

I would sense from your singing this morning that you want to say hallelujah, but you're a little too timid to do so. Well, praise the Lord. In his goodness we are found in his house.

In his wonderful grace we do not meet in his absence. He has promised that where two or three are gathered together in his name, he himself is there. He is here by his word.

We have his own word to turn to, and he is here by his spirit. Let us then continue to wait upon him, and to expect him to meet us at the point of our need, and to speak to us clearly, unambiguously, as he alone can. Now, last Lord's Day morning we began looking at the passage in 2 Corinthians 5 that begins with verse 11 and concludes with verse 15.

Time was a little too short, and we simply mentioned the second of the two main springs of action or motivating forces in the life of the Apostle Paul. Now I want to return to consider the second of those two again this morning. If you look at the passage, you will see what they are.

In verse 11, the Apostle Paul refers to the fear of the Lord. Since then we know what it is to fear the Lord. We persuade man.

And that was the particular motivating force in the Apostle's life which we were dwelling upon and trying to expound and apply to ourselves last Sunday morning. There's a wonderful balance in the scriptures, and before we come to the end of the chapter, we read these words, and this will be our text this morning. Verse 14 and then verse 15.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again. Without forgetting the first of these two motivating forces, we come to the second.

The fear of God, the awesome fear of God Almighty, holy and majestic, should always leave its imprint upon our lives and have something to do with our attitude when we come to the house of God, when we walk the streets, wherever we are, whatever we're doing. But so too should the amazing love of Christ. And that is going to be our subject now.

That the one time bigoted Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, arch persecutor of the Christian church in his day, should be so transformed by the grace of God as to become one of the chiefest proclaimers of the gospel he previously despised and denied, is a fact of history. It is not always appreciated, however, what the mainspring of his vast apostolic activity really was, what caused him to spend his life day after day, year after year, until from the point of his conversion to the point of his death in this world, he did nothing but give of himself. Now in these two main principles mentioned in this passage, we see into the innermost soul of the apostle, and we see that these two principles pressurized him, goaded him, inspired him, use any word you like, but they were responsible for his immense service for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Particularly now are we thinking of the second. The love of Christ, he said, compels me, or compels us. Two things I want to try to say this morning, and you'll find them in the subject in the calendar.

Our title really divides the whole thing into two main points, Christ's love and the Christian's logic. We are going to look first of all at the constraining love of Christ our Savior. The constraining love of Christ our Savior.

Why, Paul, were you prepared at any turn to lay down your life for your Savior? Why, Paul, did you give yourself so unremittingly, so ceaselessly, so completely in body, in mind, and in spirit to the service of your Lord? Well, here is his reply. The love of Christ, he said, compelled me. And yet, you see, this is the tragedy and this is the question that emerges.

Why is it that there are many of us who own the name of the Lord Jesus who can come to church this morning and go away and live the rest of the week hardly knowing anything of this dimension? Though Paul says that the love of Christ constrained him, does it constrain us? If not, why not? But before we come to that, let's look at the significance of his statement. First of all, the source of this constraint. Christ's love compels us or constrains us.

Now, linguistically, the phrase Christ's love or the love of Christ in the King James could legitimately be understood as referring either to Paul's love for Christ or Christ's love for Paul. And on that basis, many have wrongly concluded, it would seem to us, that Paul was here referring to his own love for the Savior as the cause, as the mainspring of his ministries. I think that the context demands the other reply to the question.

It was not so much Paul's love for Christ as Christ's amazing love for Paul. Now, of course, Christ's love for Paul elicited in his heart a responsive love, that is very true. But in this context, if you notice, in verses 14 and 15, the apostle goes on to explain what this love is, and he describes it in this way.

Christ's love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all. Now, that's the love that compelled him. The love that compelled him was the love of the one who died for all, and that was not Paul, that was Jesus Christ.

And then he goes on to say, and therefore all died. And he, not me, says Paul, he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again. So the source of this constraining, this overmastering power that galvanized the apostle Paul into constant action is the love of Jesus Christ for him.

A word about the force of that constraint. The pressure that kindled Paul's devotion to Christ is very graphically suggested by the word that he uses here in the Greek language. It's a very ordinary word, and yet a very colorful one.

It can be used in so many circumstances. You will notice that, those of you who read the different translations, you will see how the verb is variously translated. In the NIV here we have, the love of Christ compels us.

In the King James Version, the love of Christ constrains us. In the Revised Standard Version, the love of Christ controls us. In Weymouth's translation, the love of Christ overmasters us.

And in the New English Bible, which is probably the best of all here, leaves us no choice. The love of Christ leaves us no choice. There is nothing else we can do.

It masters us. It controls us. It galvanizes us.

It shuts us in. What do you mean, Paul? Well, the word is so rich. Having examined the various other usages of the term in the New Testament, John R. W. Stott summarizes in this way, that from all the evidence in the New Testament, it is clear that the verb means to hem someone in.

Like the crowds thronging Jesus, it was used there. Or the legions that would surround Jerusalem, to hold someone tight as the soldiers held Jesus, or the Sanhedrin held their ears and wouldn't listen to him. To have someone in one's grip as pain or disease can wreck the body and fear can paralyze the soul.

In each case, there is a sense of constraint and constriction, a tight grip which prevents you from escaping or doing anything else. So Christ's love grips us. We feel its hold upon us.

We are hemmed in by it. We cannot escape its pressure. As the N.E.B. puts it, it leaves us no choice.

Now, perhaps we can focus attention upon three cardinal stresses underlying the sevenfold usage of that term in the New Testament, according to the Arndt-Gingrich Greek-English lexicon. And they will bring out three aspects of this constraining love of God. First of all, this verb describes the love of Christ closing in upon us.

Closing in. Now, the best illustration that I can give of this takes me back to the county where I was born. And it's good to have someone in our service this morning who also hails from that same county, Pembrokeshire, in South Wales.

Sometimes when we were down with relatives, and we had the children with us, we used to go for a little tour in the car. And the children often wanted to return through the country, right away from the main roads. There was one particular fourth-class, fifth-class road, maybe.

And when we got into it, the hedges on either side were so constricted, high, but so constricted, so narrow that they touched the sides of the car. And you could stop the car and pick some strawberries on either side for they had some strawberries there. Now, if you met a person coming to meet you, the only thing he could do was lie against the hedge, hoping that the car wouldn't go over his feet.

The point is, you see, you couldn't turn to the left or you couldn't turn to the right. You're hedged in. You're hemmed in.

You've got to go forwards or backwards. Do you know anything of the love of Calvary hedging you in? So that you cannot turn away, you cannot go to the right or to the left. You've got to go forwards.

Because of the next statement, I'm going to say you can only go forwards, you can't go backwards. Because the same love which closes in upon us like two insurmountable hedges on either side also serves as a compelling current that carries you along within those hedges to the destination your Lord wants you to go to. The verb here employed is used of an arrested prisoner being forcibly carried along.

It is used of someone caught in a crowd and being jostled and carried involuntarily by that throng to a place he did not choose. Have you ever been caught in a crowd? Have you ever been carried along? Have you ever come out of watching a football game through an entrance that you'd never expected to come through? Now that's the pressure. Paul is talking about something very real here.

It's not in the mind, it's in reality and it's catching him, it's surrounding him and it's carrying him along. The love which encloses a person within its embrace and compels one to move along with its mighty current thereby controls the individual concern. It masters him.

He becomes its slave. That's evident from the translations. Christ's love compels us, over masters us, controls us, leaves us no choice.

You see, the believer who knows the love of Christ is mastered by it. It leaves him no choice. He's got to go on.

Something of that compelling mastery is reflected in the words of Samuel Trevor Francis's hymn that we've just sung. Oh, the deep, deep love of Jesus. Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free.

Flowing, rolling as a mighty ocean in its fullness over me. Listen to this. Underneath me, all around me is the current of thy love.

Leading onward, ever homeward to my glorious rest above. You see, anybody caught up in this love is going in one way. It's the way the love of Christ constrain.

A source of the compulsion, the force of the compulsion. And I want to say one other word about the course along which the love of Christ leads its prisoners. I just want you to look back over the chapter, and I just want to give two illustrations.

It would take too much time to give more. Go back to verse 9. We've considered this together. Go back to verse 9 and look at these words of Paul's.

So we make it our goal to please him. Whether we are at home in the body or away from it. Now the context there is this.

The apostle Paul's real desire, if he had his choice, was not to see death, but to be alive when Jesus would come. So that what is mortal, this body would, as he says, be swallowed up of immortality, and a new garment of the new body would, as it were, be clothed over, be placed over, like a mantle over the old, and the Lord would effect the change. But then he says, doesn't really matter, he says, of one thing I'm determined.

Whether I'm in this body or out of the body, in the intermediate state or wherever, my desire is to please him. Brothers and sisters in Christ, redeemed men and women, do we know anything of this? Whether you're in the body or out of the body, whether you're on earth or in heaven, wherever you are, what is your desire? What are you out for? What are you running for? What are you living for? Do you know anything of the grace of God, wanting, yearning, determining to please the one who loved you? Or take another illustration. Go to verse 13.

If you have a clearer view of the course along which the love of Christ constrains men and women to travel, take a look at this verse. If we are out of our minds, says Paul, it's for the sake of God. If we are in our right mind, it is for you.

Now, it seems quite clear that the charge brought against Paul was that he was mad, just as it was brought against his Lord before him, Mark 3, 17. Because he embraced a crucified Christ risen again and preached him as the only hope of mankind and the only author of salvation, Paul was deemed to be mad by Jews and Gentiles alike. But when he came to spend, as they said, to squander his life in the service of a crucified master, that only added insult to injury.

He was a sheer fool of a man. Very well, says Paul, you take it from me, naturally, he didn't like to be called a fool any more than you like to be called a fool or I like to be called a fool. No, no, he didn't.

But let them call me a fool if they will, he says, of one thing I'm certain. If I am a fool, I'm a fool for God. And if I'm not a fool, then I'm in the service of my fellow Christians.

I have only two folk. I am virtually they come. They are one.

And that is God and his will for his people. Whether people call me sane or insane, it matters not. I'm going on.

Paul, why? Oh, he says, the love of Christ constrains me. It keeps me going. It set me out.

It keeps me going. It hedges me in. It carries me along.

It determines my life for me. Such is the constraining love of Christ. Not only for an apostle, an apostle living 2000 years ago, but if we are living in the world of real Christian communion with God, something that we should also be experiencing ourselves.

That brings me to the compelling logic of a Christian believer. For Christ's love compels us. Why, Paul? Why does it compel you when it doesn't compel all of us gathered here this morning or other Christians gathering in other places? Why? Well, he tells us because we are convinced, or in your King James version, because we thus judge.

We reason. And we've come to a conclusion. We've thought the thing through.

Because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died. And he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again. Let me pose the question again.

Why is it that our Lord's love should in practice thus master some of his people and not others? If I understand this passage all right, then Paul is telling us how this love of Christ came to master him. And the answer in simplest form, put in a thimble, is this. He thought about it.

And he meditated on it. And he reasoned on the basis of it. And having reasoned on the basis of it, he came to a certain conclusion.

No, he came to a conviction. And the conviction compelled him. You see, my friends, you notice those words, because we thus judge.

The tragedy with us is this, that we know so very little, sometimes we know nothing of the force of the because and the therefore in Paul's words. Oh, we see the love of Christ on Calvary and we talk about it sometimes and we read about it sometimes and we read quickly through a passage of scripture to say we've had our daily devotions and we come to the Lord's house and we're in too much of a hurry to go out hardly before we've come in. We've no real time to wait and think and ponder and let the truth of God saturate our soul.

The apostle had thought and reasoned and concluded so that there was a moral compulsion upon him. He was a man under pressure. You and I who remain thoughtless, though we talk and sing about the cross and cast it all off like the water that flows from a duck's back.

I know men and women who can come to the communion service and sing with oh a sense of awe and a sob in their throat. But they know nothing, I say. They know nothing of the compulsion that takes them in search of the lost, that enables them to give of themselves for Christ and give of their substance for Christ and give of their time for Christ.

You know why? We're too lazy to think things through or are we afraid of it? We know nothing of the because and the therefore. We're illogical even when we begin to think. Now we're touching a raw spot here, you see.

I'll say it again. Christ's love for you and for me is not one whit less than his love for Saul of Tarsus. You and I, by the grace of God if we're Christian this morning, have been saved from the same hell and eternal destruction.

You and I, by the grace of God this morning, have been saved to the same glory that awaits us. You and I have the same mighty presence and power of God within us and the same Holy Spirit at our disposal to guide us and to comfort us and to transform us. Exactly the same.

Our inheritance is the same. Christ does not love the Apostle any more than he's loved you and me. Why then does not his love move me more? I'll put it to you in two simple points.

Paul came to a logical conclusion concerning the extent of the impact of Christ's substitutionary death. He put it like this. Christ's love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all

died.

Now can I try to summarize that? I want to put it like this. The all for whom Christ died actually died when Christ died for them. That's what Paul is saying.

Christ's death for them meant that they were no longer liable to death. The all, whatever the all represents there, the all for whom Christ died actually died when Christ died. He drank their cup to the dregs.

He took their death upon himself and died it so that nothing remains. Death is no longer on the pathway of the all for whom Christ died. He's taken the sting out of it.

No, no. He's taken it all in his own body to the tree. He's died our death.

So Paul was convinced that because Christ died for all, therefore the all for whom he died actually died in their substitute Savior, so that death in the sense of the penalty of sin no longer awaits those for whom Christ died. Now let's come to the second and this clinches the whole thing. Paul likewise concluded something vital concerning the intent, the purpose of that sacrificial and substitutionary death.

He died for all, he says, so that in order that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. All those for whom the Savior died have life through his death. Not only has he taken our death so that death is no longer ours.

Oh, I trust we're all there this morning that we know that the Lord Jesus died for us and we trust him and we believe him and that means this for you and for me. Death, eternal death is no longer ours. He took it, but he did much more than that.

He rose again as the author of life and the prince of life and he imparts life to all who believe in him, not only taking death away but he imparts eternal life. Now the logic of that is this. The life we now have, therefore, does not belong to ourselves.

Christ took our death so we did not die, therefore we are his. He died in our place. More than that, he gave us our life and the life we now live in the flesh, it is by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us.

He gives us our life and he took our death, therefore we are doubly bound to be his. We are his property. More the logic goes further.

It says this. It was in the very intention of God that when Christ died, he should die that those who live through his death and resurrection should not live anymore for themselves. Well, what are we going to live for then? For him who died for them and is risen again.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I feel a little bit afraid in talking to you this morning. How may God help us? You cannot read a passage like this, you cannot listen to a passage like this and be quite the same afterwards. If you and I can, God have mercy upon us.

I want to haunt you this morning as this has haunted me. If you and I, blood-bought children of God, for whom Christ died and rose again to impart his eternal life to us, if we are living for ourselves, I want to tell you, you and I are dealing in stolen property. You're a thief.

I'm a thief. Well, you wouldn't like to be called a thief and you won't come back to Knox again, because that man in the pulpit there, that crazy character, said, I'm a thief. I want to tell you, you're a thief.

If you are living your life as a Christian, according to your own desires, you've no right to do that. He has established crown rights over you. He died to make you his own.

And the whole purpose of his passion was ultimately this, to win us back to God, not by the thunders of Sinai, though the thunders of Sinai are still in the scriptures, but fundamentally by the wooing, constraining, constricting love of his own heart, appealing to the new nature and the new life in us, and appealing to us whose death he died and said, come with me, do the will of our heavenly Father. Now, I have no time to continue with this great theme. It's a massive, must, massive theme of scripture.

And I want to conclude by just reminding you that there are echoes of this everywhere. If you really listen to the scriptures as you read them, you will find echoes of this principle everywhere. In Paul's epistles, for example, the often quoted verse Romans 12, 1, it reflects the same principle.

Therefore, says Paul, the same logic. I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual worship or your reasonable service. Your only reasonable thing, says Paul, is this, and it is really a worship.

The only reasonable thing a believer can do in the light of the fact that Christ died his death and rose again to impart life to him and keeps him alive for he's been given eternal life, the only reasonable thing is this, it's to worship him and to be caught up in his purposes and compelled by his love. Later on in Romans, he says, for this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Hear one other.

To me, this has had a great formative influence on my life. It's in the first epistle to the Corinthians. You remember how these Corinthians were living so very much to themselves.

Paul pursues these rebellious men and women in Corinth, sometimes luxuriating in supposedly spiritual experience, which were not always spiritual, sometimes sensual. Sometimes they were lusting in their own license to a point beyond it isn't appropriate to mention. Paul haunts them with his word.

He says, look, he says, you're not your own. You were bought with a price. Men and women, he says, wake up.

It's time to think. It's time to take account of things. You don't belong to yourselves.

Are we thoughtless then? He pursues the rebellious Corinthians. Does he not pursue us in the same way? Do you not hear the voice of God telling you and telling me this morning we don't belong to ourselves? We thus judge, says the King James. That is the language of Paul and of all who have ever counted for God, the thoughtless remain careless.

The thoughtful may yet count for God because they will be caught up in the current, caught up by the might of the marvelous love of God in his son. Listen to C.T. Studd. If Christ be God and died for me, then there's no sacrifice too great for me to give to him or to make for him.

Would you get that from C.T. Studd? His love. He thought about it. The words and the sentiments of the hymn we sang last Lord's Day morning, I cannot, I cannot pass over where the whole realm of nature mind

says, or rather asks Isaac Watts.

No, it's a statement, isn't it? Where the whole realm of nature mind that were an offering far too small. Love so amazing, so divine demands my soul, my life, my all. And George Matheson agrees.

Oh, love that wilt not let me go. I rest my weary soul in thee. I give thee back the life I owe.

You got it? The life I owe, the life I owe, the life that is not mine that I received because Christ died and rose again. I give thee back the life I owe, that in thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be. Oh, cross that liftest up my head.

I dare not ask to fly from thee. I lay in dust life's glory dead and from the ground there blossoms red life that shall endless be. Oh, love of God in Christ, my friend, do you feel anything of its current around you this morning gathering around you, hemming you in, reminding you of the way in which you ought to go and assuring you God requires this of you.

Then walk in it. Yield to it. Surrender to it.

Bow to it. Go with it. For though it be the way of the cross, it is the way to glory.

And you will not ultimately be the loser, for you suffer on the road. Let us bow before the throne of grace in prayer. Shall we pause quietly for just a moment, remembering these two aspects of this theme in scripture.

The love of Christ controlling his beloved. And a Christian's logic constraining the same beloved of the Lord. Who have seriously thought about it, and then acted morally and logically in the light of it.

Our God and our Father, we confess our sins to you. For we cannot meditate upon a subject like this without becoming aware of the fact that we are not we have not been true to the heavenly vision or the demands of your word. We have sinned.

Passions have driven us off course. Satan has seduced us. And we have gone hither and thither, and we have defied the very current of Calvary's love.

And thereby we have come ourselves defiled. Oh Lord, let your love envelop us anew. And of your mercy, grant us to know something of the experience of the apostle, of being constrained and hemmed in and carried along and having no option.

But be the bond slaves of Jesus Christ. Spirit of God, abide with us throughout this day. Do not let the birds come and take the seed away, but bring forth fruit to your glory in each of our lives.

Through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/4/SID4730.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-glyn-owen/for-the-love-of-christ-constraineth-us/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**