

Compelled by Christ's Love

2 Corinthians 5:14–15

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Introduction

Our text this evening will be 2 Corinthians 5, verses 14 and 15, so please turn there with me in your Bibles. 2 Corinthians 5, verses 14 to 15. Paul writes, “For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 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.”

What drives you? What animates you? What gets you going in the morning? What is the driving motivational force of your life? There are many answers that people give to that question. People driven by competition—by finding obstacles in life and trying to overcome them. They’re driven by being the best at what they do; what compels them to get out of bed in the morning and keeps them firing on all cylinders is the prospect of being recognized as the best at something. People are driven by ambition, by a lust for success and fame. They’re driven by money, financial security, by the need to acquire more and more wealth. Some people are driven by the fear of man; they’re slaves to the expectations and high estimations of others; they want people to be proud of them, to admire them, to make much of them. Still others are driven by the need to “make a difference” in the world—to leave their mark, to leave the world a better place than the way they found it. But what drives *you*? What is the compelling passion of your life? What dominates your thinking? What occupies your time? What makes you tick? What drives you?

The Apostle Paul was a driven man. The great men and women of the world are always driven—naturally compelled to press on, to push forward, to work harder, to persevere. And certainly that describes Paul. His sufferings in the cause of Gospel ministry are well-documented in the New Testament, and especially in the Book of 2 Corinthians. In chapter 4 verses 8 and 9 Paul says he was afflicted, crushed, persecuted, and struck down. In chapter 6, verses 4 and 5, he spoke of his afflictions, hardships, distresses, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, sleeplessness, and hunger. And besides these external things, chapter 11 verse 28, there was “the daily pressure of concern for all the churches.” And yet a recurring phrase in the Second Letter to the Corinthians is, “We do not lose heart.” We don’t lose heart. We keep going. We press on in joyful, enduring ministry even in the midst of affliction.

And in this section of 2 Corinthians, Paul speaks about what drives him in his ministry—what keeps him going, what keeps him from losing heart, what compels him each morning to lay his life down for Christ and the Gospel even in the midst of great hostility and opposition. He begins

speaking about the **driving motivations** in his life that fuel and empower him for radically sacrificial ministry, really in verse 11. The **first** that he mentioned was **the fear of God**. He says in verse 11, “Therefore, *knowing the fear of the Lord*, we persuade men.” And “the fear of the Lord” there is a reference to the reality he spoke about in verse 10—that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to have our lives and our labors and our ministries and our motives stripped of every outward pretension, laid bare before the Judge of the world, and exposed for what we truly are. Paul says that he conducts every aspect of his ministry in light of the fact that he will one day give an account of his every thought, word, and deed to his Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then in verse 14, he introduces a **second driving motivation** in his life that compelled him to press on in radically sacrificial ministry. Paul was driven not only by the fear of God but also by **the love of Christ**. Verse 14: “For the love of Christ **controls** us.” Paul is compellingly motivated—he is absolutely driven; he is entirely consumed—by the love that Christ had demonstrated to His people by saving them through His death on the cross. He said in Galatians 2:20: I live my life “by faith in the Son of God, who *loved* me and gave Himself up for me.” He prayed earnestly in Ephesians 3:18 and 19 that the people of God “might be able to comprehend . . . what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know *the love of Christ* which surpasses knowledge.”

The reality that God the Son, fully equal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, fully entitled to remain in the bliss and majesty of heaven, left the incessant worship of the saints and angels, and left the face-to-face fellowship with His Father—both of which were His right—and took to Himself the weakness and indignity of human nature; the infinite One confined to the space of a human body, the immutable One subject to the pains of growth and maturity, the sustainer of all things being sustained in the womb of a teenage Hebrew girl; the giver of the law born under the law, the Lord become obedient, the Master become the slave of all. The Author of life put to death, and not just death, but death on a cross. And not just death on a cross, but bearing the divine curse that falls upon everyone who is hanged on a tree—bearing in Himself the very punishment that I deserved, experiencing in His own consciousness the alienation and abandonment of His Father that belonged to me for eternity in hell. “The reality that the Son of God loved me, and gave Himself up for me—that love is measureless! It is infinite! It’s breadth and length and height and depth are beyond tracing out! It is a love that surpasses all knowledge!”

Paul says, That love—the love of Christ—controls us. It constrains us. It compels us. It overmasters us. It dominates us. It overwhelms us. The word is *sunechō*. It means to be hard-pressed from both directions (cf. Phil 1:23), to be hemmed in on every side (cf. Luke 19:43). One commentator said, “Christ’s love is a compulsive force in the life of believers, a dominating power that effectively eradicates choice in that it leaves them no option but to live for God and

Christ” (Harris, 419). Paul says, “The love of Christ displayed in the Gospel is the driving passion of my life! It’s what gets me out of bed in the morning! It’s what gets the blood flowing through my veins! And if the persecution and suffering that I face ever tempts me to slacken up in ministry—to slow down or back off or even give up—I raise my eyes to Calvary’s Cross and behold my Savior being crushed under the weight of God’s wrath in my place, and His love so beautifully displayed in that cross ignites a passion in my heart that no promise of a comfortable life or the praise of men could ever extinguish!” (Storms, 156). “I am compelled! I am constrained! I am *driven* to lay down my life for the glory of God and the good of my neighbor by the *love* of Jesus Christ my Savior!”

It is the love of Christ as displayed in the Gospel that drove the Apostle Paul to incessant, tireless faithfulness in ministry. And if we would follow his example in pressing on in joyful, enduring ministry even in the midst of affliction—the ministry that each of us, as followers of Christ, has been called to, both in the preaching of the Gospel to the lost and ministering to one another in the body of Christ—if we’re going to follow Paul’s example of endurance, we need to be driven by what he was driven by. We must be overwhelmed, and dominated, and ravished by the love of Christ, just as he was. And if that’s going to be the case, the love of Christ has to be the object of our meditation.

So over the next several Sunday nights, I’m going to be focusing on 2 Corinthians 5:14–21. In this passage, Paul reflects on key components of the Gospel that so brilliantly displays the love of Christ for His people. And this evening, as we focus particularly on the rest of verse 14 and verse 15, we’re going to meditate on **four key truths of the Gospel—four theological components of the Gospel** that magnify the brilliance of Christ’s love, which motivates and drives the minister of that Gospel.

I. Substitution (v. 14)

That **first key truth** concerning the Gospel lies at its very heart. And that is that the Gospel is fundamentally a matter of **substitution**. Look again at verse 14. Paul writes, “For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that *one died for all*.” “One died for all.” That is to say that one died *on behalf of* all. One died *in place of* all. One died as a **substitute** for all those for whom He died.

And this doctrine of the penal substitutionary atonement of Christ is the very heart of the Gospel—at the very heart of Christianity itself. The cross is the heart of Christianity, and **substitution** is at the heart of the cross. And penal substitution simply means this: that on the cross, Jesus suffered the *penalty* for the sins of His people as a *substitute* for us. He died the death that we, because of our sin, were required to die, but couldn’t survive.

All sin is a capital offense against the holiness of God; it is an attack against the very fiber of His character, an assault against the core of who God is. And as a result of our sin, we are alienated from God. His righteous wrath is justly aroused against us. And we ourselves—we who were created for fellowship and communion with God—are now hostile to God, by nature His enemies. Because we have broken His law, we stand guilty before Him! And so we are required to suffer the penalty for sin—eternal punishment under God’s wrath in hell, cut off from communion with Him forever. But in His great **love**, the Lord Jesus Christ—God the Son—voluntarily agreed to surrender His own rights and privileges and become our **substitute**—to willingly stand in the place of His people and bear our sin, to carry our guilt, to receive our punishment, and thereby to satisfy the righteous wrath of God on our behalf.

This magnificent doctrine is wrapped up in that tiny little word “for” in our text. “One died *for* all.” “*Huper*.” It means “on behalf of” or “in the place of.” And it is absolutely everywhere in so many of the key texts of the New Testament that speak of the atoning death of Christ. John 10:11 – Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life **for** the sheep.” The shepherd dies *in place of* the sheep. In Romans 5 verse 6, Paul says, “For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died **for** the ungodly.” And verse 8: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died **for** us.” Galatians 3:13: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse **for** us.” We were doomed to bear the curse of sin for ourselves, and yet Christ has stood in our place and has become a curse *for* us. He has borne the curse of sin as our substitute. 1 Peter 3:18 – “Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous **for** the unrighteous, so that He might bring us to God.” The righteous One has died *in the place of* the unrighteous, so that having borne our punishment and having absorbed our alienation, we might be reconciled back to fellowship with God.

And we could go on and on! Christ is our Passover Lamb, 1 Corinthians 5:7, who has been sacrificed to death so that we, covered by His blood, might escape the wrath of God that was rightly due to us. He is the Scapegoat of Leviticus 16, who bears the sins of God’s people in Himself and is banished from God’s presence so that His people might remain in communion with God. He is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, who justifies the many by bearing their iniquities (53:11). “He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and [by] his wounds we are healed” (53:5). Penal substitutionary atonement is woven into the very fabric of God’s revelation from beginning to end, because this is what the cross *is*.

So many of us hear the statement that “Jesus died for you,” and we put the emphasis on that second word: “Jesus *died* for you!” “He loved you *so much* that He *died* for you!” Which is true! But it’s so often said in a way that sounds so man-centered. But when you hear “Jesus died for you,” you ought to hear: “Jesus died *for* you!” Your sins were so great—your iniquities had gone so far over your head—that you had absolutely no hope but to die, to perish eternally as just

payment for your crimes against a holy God! And while you were helpless, while you could do nothing to avert your necessary spiritual death, Jesus died *for* you! He—the infinitely worthy One—stepped into your place, and died the death of a criminal, a traitor, a brigand like you, under the infinite weight of the wrath of Almighty God!

All the wrath you rightly deserved—every ounce of the unmixed fury that God would have justly visited upon you in the eternal torments of hell—was fully poured out on our **substitute** in those three terrible hours on Calvary! That is Christianity, friends! That is the cross! Not merely an example for us to follow; not merely a demonstration of love; but the innocent Son of God, standing in the place of guilty sinners, bearing in His own Person the full exercise of the righteous wrath of His Father against the sins of His people, so that we who are guilty, may be justly declared righteous—because our penalty has been paid by our **substitute**.

Dear friends, can you behold the love of Christ so magnificently displayed in that Gospel of **substitution**? As a beneficiary of this penal substitutionary atonement, can you apprehend the loveliness of the Christ who has stood in your place? If so, If so, you will be driven by this Gospel of **substitution** to lay down your life in the proclamation of it! You will be compelled by Christ’s love to minister this Gospel to your brothers and sisters in the body of Christ!

II. Solidarity (v. 14)

A **second theological component** of the Gospel that we see in this text in addition to the doctrine of substitution is the doctrine of **solidarity**. Verse 14 again: “For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that *one died for all, therefore all died.*”

This concept of “one for all,” or “one in the place of the many,” is the doctrine of corporate **solidarity**—that the actions of a single legal representative have consequences for the multiple people he represents. For that reason, it’s also called representative headship—the idea that the actions of the head affect the body that is united to the head. And Paul says this very thing in the latter part of verse 14: “One died for all, *therefore* all died.” Christ’s death effects, or produces, or brings about the death of all those for whom He died. And this is an absolutely crucial doctrine to understand, because it is this concept of corporate **solidarity**, or representative headship, that provides the framework for the entire Gospel itself.

Let’s turn to the text that teaches this doctrine most clearly, Romans chapter 5, verses 12 to 21. Just like in 2 Corinthians 5:14–15, Romans 5:12–21 speaks of how the actions of the one count for the many—how the death of one means the death of all, and how the life of One means the life of the many. Romans 5:12. Paul begins this section by saying, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—” and he kind of interrupts his thought there for a while.

But what he's just taught us in that sentence is key: sin entered the world through one man. Who is that? Adam. And he tells us that when Adam sinned, all people sinned with him and in him. Do you see that? End of verse 12: "and so death spread to all men *because all sinned*." The death that Adam's sin deserved was passed on to all people because all people *sinned*, past tense. Well, at what point in the past did all people without exception sin? Answer: we all sinned when Adam sinned. All of the entire human race was reckoned to be in Adam; we were all united to him; he was our representative head, so that what he did, we did. Paul says this several times in the rest of the paragraph: Verse 15: "By the transgression of the one, the many died." Verse 18: "Through the transgression of the one [that is, Adam] there resulted condemnation to all men." Verse 19: "Through the disobedience of the one man [again, Adam] the many were constituted sinners." Over and over again, you hear the "one-many" or "one-all" parallel. The point is: when Adam acts as representative head, all those who are united to him suffer the consequences for his actions. He sins, and we are reckoned to have sinned *in union with him*, so that the death and condemnation that he deserved is justly imputed (or counted) to be ours. There is a corporate **solidarity** between Adam, our representative head, and the entire human race who was united with him in the Garden.

Now, the crux of Paul's argument in Romans 5 is that in the same way that humanity fell *into* sin as a result of their **solidarity** with Adam, their representative head, so also is a new humanity rescued *out* of sin as a result of their **solidarity** with Jesus Christ—a new Adam, the greater and second Adam, to whom they are united as a body is united to its head. Look at the way Paul sets up Christ as the new "One" for the "many" and the new "One" for "all": Verse 15: "For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many." Verse 17: "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." Verse 18: "So then, through the transgression of the one [Adam] there resulted condemnation to all men, so also through the righteousness of the One [Christ] there resulted justification of life to all men." And verse 19: "For as through the disobedience of the one [Adam] the many were constituted sinners, so by the obedience of the One [Christ] the many will be made righteous."

Jesus is the second Adam! Paul calls him "the last Adam" in 1 Corinthians 15:45. Just as Adam is the representative head of the old humanity, whose sin brought condemnation to all who were in *him*, so also is Jesus the representative head of the new humanity, whose obedience brought justification and righteousness to all who are in *Him*. This **solidarity** is one of union; 1 Corinthians 15:22: "For as *in Adam* all die, so also *in Christ* all will be made alive." That is the Gospel: All humanity was reckoned to be united with Adam as our representative, such that his disobedience counted as our disobedience and brought condemnation on us. In the same way, all

those in Christ are united to the last Adam as their representative, such that His obedience counts as our obedience and brings righteousness to us.

And this union with Christ is not merely limited to obedience and justification. Paul says in Colossians 2:20 that we have died with Christ. He says in Colossians 3:1 that we have been raised up with Christ. Ephesians 2:6 says that we have ascended with Christ, as God has seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ. Because of the believer's **solidarity**—his union—with Christ, there is no element of Christ's human life that we do not partake in.

And that is what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 5:14. What can it possibly mean to say that “one died for all, *therefore* all died”? Well Paul is drawing on this reality that Christ is the representative head of His people—that what happens to Him happens to them. There exists such a union between Christ and His people that when He died on the cross, we died to sin and to self *in* Him. Romans 6: “Are we to continue in sin so that grace may abound? May it never be! *How shall we who died to sin* still live in it?” You say, how did we die to sin? Verse 3: “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus”—that is to say, have been *immersed* into spiritual union with Christ—“have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him.” We were crucified with Christ! The death that He died to sin, we died to sin! And since He died to sin once for all, never to die again, so also did we die to sin once for all, and therefore simply cannot go on living in sin once we are united to Christ by faith!

Paul is saying that when the One died for all, the “all” who were in Him died to sin, and died to self, and now are alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

III. Particularity (v. 14)

And that leads me, quite naturally, to our **third key truth** concerning the Gospel that we see in this text, and that is, **number three**, the **particularity** of the Gospel. And we discover this as we ask the question concerning the extent of Christ's cross work. Paul repeats the word “all” three times in these two verses: “One died for *all*, therefore *all* died; 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.” Who are the “all” for whom Christ died?

Well, we've just said it throughout our discussion of solidarity. When Paul says, “One died for all, *therefore* all died,” he makes the death of “all” the *necessary consequence* of the death of the One. And it's very important to get this right. It doesn't say, “One died for all, *because* all were

dead,” as if Paul were teaching that since everyone without exception was spiritually dead in sin therefore Christ died for all of them. The text doesn’t say that. Neither does it say, “One died for all, therefore all *deserved* to die.” There are some who argue that’s what Paul means here, but it’s plain that that’s not what he says. Still others say, “One died for all, therefore all *potentially* die,” or “all have the *opportunity* to die in Christ.” No, “One died for all, therefore all *died*.”

That can only mean that the “all” for whom Christ died are the “all” who died to sin and self as a consequence of their union with Him in His death. And who does that describe? It can only describe believers. It can only describe the elect of God who, by the irresistible, regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, are united to Christ by faith. Has any unbelieving person ever been said to have died to sin with Christ? Is it right to speak of any unbeliever as united with Christ in His death? No, that’s absolutely impossible. Because Paul says in Romans 6:5, “For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.” And then in verse 8: “Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.” Paul says that there is no such thing as union with Christ in His death without union with Christ in His resurrection. And yet we know that no unbeliever will ever be raised to spiritual life with Christ; no one who has finally rejected the Gospel will rise unto a resurrection of life on the New Earth after the pattern of Christ’s own bodily resurrection! No non-elect person will ever be united with Christ in His resurrection, and therefore no non-elect person has ever been united to Christ in His death. Since the “all” for whom Christ died are the “all” who have died in Christ, the “all” must not refer to every person who ever lived, but to the elect alone.

You say, “So then why did Paul use the term ‘all’ then? If he meant ‘One died for the elect,’ why didn’t he just say that?” Well the answer is because Paul is using the terminology of corporate solidarity—the language of “the one and the many” or the “one for all” that we saw him use in Romans 5. In Romans 5:18, Paul says, “So then, through the transgression of the one [Adam] there resulted condemnation to all men, so also through the righteousness of the One [Christ] there resulted justification of life to all men.” Now, were all people without exception justified as a result of Christ’s obedience? No; if that were the case, we’d have to be universalists and teach that everyone—from Judas, to Caiaphas, to Hitler—will finally be saved. And we know that’s not right because Jesus says the gate is wide and way is broad that leads to destruction and there are *many* who enter through it (Matt 7:13). So we know that the “all” in Romans 5:18 can’t mean “all without exception;” it can’t mean “every individual throughout history.” And in fact, in the next verse, Romans 5:19, Paul switches from “all” to “many!” The point of using “all” isn’t to teach a universal atonement, but to contrast the “all” with the “One.” It’s to teach the principle of corporate solidarity—that the actions of the one affect *all* who are *in* him. Just as Adam’s actions affect all who are in him, so also Christ’s actions affect all those who are in Him. And who were in Adam? All human beings who ever lived or will live except Christ. But who are in Christ?

Only those whom the Father has chosen from eternity past to sovereignly grant the gift of saving faith.

This is the **particularity** of the Gospel, friends. The atonement of Christ was not a generalized sacrifice made for a nameless, faceless group who would eventually actualize the inefficacious atonement's potential. No, the death of Christ was a personal sacrifice, efficaciously accomplished by the Savior who said, "I am the good shepherd, and I *know* My own and My own *know* Me, . . . and I lay down My life for the sheep," John 10:14–15; and "I have come down from heaven to do the will of Him who sent me. This is the will of Him who sent me, that of *all that He has given Me* I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day," John 6:38–39.

Jesus died for all whom the Father gave to Him, those whom the Father chose from before the foundation of the world—on the basis of nothing that they would ever do, but solely according to the good pleasure of His will. Jesus died for His sheep, those whom He knows by name. This is not a generalized, faceless Gospel for nobody in particular! No, this is an intensely personal Gospel of which we can sing, "My name is graven on His hands. My name is written on His heart." That when the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth to live and die as a substitute on the cross to bear the wrath of God and to pay for sin, He did it for me! I personally was on His mind as He suffered the divine curse! *My* name was graven on His hands! *My* sin was paid for! *My* salvation was purchased! Because in the mystery of divine grace, God the Father chose me to be a vessel of mercy in which He would display His boundless grace rather than His righteous judgment, based on nothing in me!

That is a Gospel that *drives* you! Can you see why Paul is so driven and so motivated by this Gospel? Because the love of Christ that compels him isn't a general, potential love, but a personal, actual love for Paul himself! The **particularity** of the Gospel—that Christ has died for me personally, in a way that He hasn't died for those who end up in hell separated from Him forever, *that* Gospel is worth preaching, and living for, and suffering for, and dying for!

IV. Purpose (v. 15)

Well, we've seen the doctrine of substitution that lies at the heart of the Gospel, the doctrine of the corporate solidarity that is the framework for the Gospel, and the doctrine of the particularity that personalizes the Gospel for each of Christ's people. We come, finally, then, to the **fourth key truth** of the Gospel that Paul teaches us in this text. And that is the **purpose** of the Gospel. Look once more at verse 15: "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."

This is the **purpose** for which Christ has died for His people. He has died for us, paid the penalty of our sin, broken the power of sin in our lives, in order that we might turn from living for

ourselves, and live all of our lives committed, and devoted, and sold out for Him. Titus 2:14 says, “He gave Himself for us”—there’s that word *for* again, indicating substitution. “He gave Himself [as a substitute] for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and *to purify for Himself* a people for His own possession, *zealous for good deeds*.” 1 Peter 2:24: “And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, *so that* we might die to sin and live to righteousness.” Ephesians 5:25–27 says that Christ gave Himself up for His bride “*so that* He might *sanctify* her . . . that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” The entire purpose of Christ’s substitutionary death and resurrection on behalf of His people is to progressively conform them to the image of His own glory!

And that means that if you have been united with Christ in His death, you have died to sin and have been united with Him in His resurrection, raised to walk in newness of life! And the one who disclaims union with Christ in His resurrection by living in sin and *not* walking in newness of life, gives evidence that He has never been united to Christ in His death. To put it simply: If you aren’t living *for* Him, you can have no assurance that you’ve died *in* Him. If you aren’t being progressively conformed into His image, doing battle with sin, putting to death the deeds of the body, laboring and making progress in the fight of sanctification, then you haven’t been justified by Him. Because the entire purpose for which He justifies His people is so that He can sanctify them! “He died for all *so that* they who live would no longer live for themselves but for Him.”

For Paul to use the phrase, “*no longer* live for themselves,” means that the fundamental, orienting principle of our lives outside of Christ is living for and unto ourselves. Isaiah 53:6 says, “All we like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has *turned to his own way*.” This is what sin is: it is living unto ourselves. Self-focus, self-centeredness, self-gratification, self-will, self-pleasing—with no consideration for God’s will, God’s design, God’s standards and purposes. And it doesn’t matter if that manifests itself in (a) lecherous sexual indulgence, enslavement to drugs and alcohol, and foul-mouthed vulgarity, (b) in the idolatrous arrogance of educated professionals who exalt their own reason above God’s revelation and make demands upon the Lord of the universe to satisfy their intellectual sensibilities before they give Him the privilege of their faith, or (c) in the polite church member who drags himself to church on Sunday but who spends the rest of the week pursuing his own hobbies and desires without a thought for how God would have him steward his time! All three—the immoral lecher, the educated mocker, and the clean-cut hypocrite—all three have this in common: they are living to please themselves!

Paul says: The one for whom Christ died has died in Him. He has died to his sin and to himself. He has repented from a life lived only unto himself—to his own ends in his own way—and now has devoted himself to living for Christ. “It is *His* agenda that rules my life! *His* desires and will shape the decisions I make and the way I spend my time! *His* standards, so clearly set out in His Word—and not my own feelings, inclinations, or intuitions—are the measurement by which I

evaluate myself. *His* ways are the footsteps in which I now walk!” To live for Christ sounds like what Paul said in Acts 20:24: “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.” And in Romans 14:8: “For if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.”

“My life is not my own! I have been bought with a price! And so whether I live or die, I belong to my Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. All my goals and hobbies and ambitions and joys in life are like a building that has been completely *leveled* by *wrecking ball* of regeneration! And in its place is an entirely new creation, built by the Spirit of God on the foundation of Christ—with new tastes, and new affections, and new joys, and new ambitions! Where I once lived to please only myself, now I seek my pleasure in the pleasure of Christ and in seeing that others find their pleasure in Christ! For to me, to live *is* Christ!”

Dear friends, is this your testimony? Has the Lord Jesus Christ so radically disrupted the very center of your life? Has your life been leveled to the ground by the wrecking ball of regeneration? And has a new creation been erected in its place, re-created in the likeness of Jesus, devoted to serve Him? This is the genuine evidence of true salvation—the very **purpose** for which salvation has been granted to you.

Conclusion

The great theologian of Old Princeton, Charles Hodge, wrote, “A Christian is one who recognizes Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, as God manifested in the flesh, loving us and dying for our redemption; and who is so affected by a sense of the love of this incarnate God as to be constrained to make the will of Christ the rule of his obedience, and the glory of Christ the great end for which he lives. ... What constitutes a Christian? It is being so constrained by a sense of the love of our divine Lord to us, that we consecrate our lives to him” (Hodge, 509). It is to behold the love of Christ displayed in the Gospel—in the Gospel rooted in the principles of substitution and solidarity—to behold this particularizing love of Christ expressed personally to us in His death on the cross, and to be driven *by* that love to love and serve Christ and His Church even amidst the fiercest of opposition.

If you are a stranger to that love—if you know that love only as a subject of study in a textbook, and have not yourself tasted and experienced that love in a living relationship with the living Christ—He Himself calls you this evening to repentance from sin and faith in Him, unto a life of fellowship and communion with Him in the delightful bonds of that very love. You say, “But Jesus’ love is particular and discriminating. How can I know if He died as a substitute in *my* place?” The only true evidence of being among the elect of God whom Jesus died to save is genuine repentance from sin and wholehearted trust in Christ alone for your righteousness before

the Father. The sovereign Savior spoke both phrases of John 6:37: “All that the Father *gives* Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will *certainly* not cast out!” Come to Christ! who has borne the full exercise of the wrath of God for sinners! and who by His obedience makes sinners righteous!

And to my brothers and sisters: give your hearts and your minds to the contemplation and meditation of the love of Christ displayed in this Gospel. Look to the love of a Savior who looked not to His own interests, but surrendered what was rightfully His and gave His life for the life and health and growth of the Church. And looking to *that* love—having recovered *that* Gospel—be *driven* to do all for the glory of God and for the good of His people.