

## Preached on 1/28/24 at GBC – Ruston

### "Christ's Constraining LOVE, Pt.2"

II Cor.5:14-16

Most of what promotes itself under the name of “evangelical Christianity” is nothing more or less than legal, mercenary, conditional, works salvation, seeing they are ignorant of and not submitted to Christ’s righteousness **ALONE** as their only hope and cause of salvation – “*Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*”(Rom.10:1-3) That being the case, **EVERYTHING THEY DO** is done from a “**carrot or stick**” mentality. I’m pretty sure you know what I mean by that, but if you don’t, I mean **EVERYTHING THEY DO** is done out of either legal fear or mercenary promise of reward. The problem with this sort of religious effort is that it is contrary to what the Scriptures declare concerning true, acceptable obedience. Christ made this clear in His discourse with those **JEWS** that were angry at Him because He commanded that lame man to walk on the Sabbath day – “*But I have greater witness than [that] of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. **How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that [cometh] from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is [one] that accuseth you, [even] Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?**”(Jn.5:36-47) I think a statement Bill Parker made years ago states this about as simply and clearly as it can be stated: “The **JUSTIFIED SAINT** has for their starting place what the **SELF-RIGHTEOUS RELIGIONIST** had for their **GOAL**.” In other words, the **LOST** are seeking to establish a righteousness by which they might be saved, while God’s elect **BEGIN** their life of faith made “*the righteousness of God in Him*.” This is the truth Paul is setting forth in these verses we want to look at today – “*For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And [that] he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we [him] no more.*”*

Think about this opening statement - “*For the love of Christ constraineth us.*” Let me read you a literal translation of it – “for the love of the Christ doth constrain us”. When I was in false religion, I ignorantly read these words and thought they spoke of our love to Him, kind of like the song we used to sing so proudly – “Oh, how I love Jesus, Oh, how I love Jesus, Oh, how I love Jesus, because He first loved me.” While it is true that God’s redeemed **DO LOVE HIM** – “*We LOVE Him, because HE FIRST LOVED US*”(I Jn.4:19), **OUR LOVE** to Him is not what constrains

us. The Greek word translated “*constraineth*” means ‘to hold together’ or ‘to hold completely or hold fast like a prisoner’. It’s not **OUR LOVE to Him**, but Christ’s **LOVE FOR US** that holds us to Him and to one another, holding us fast to Himself as His willing bondslaves. Whatever this “*love of Christ*” is of which Paul wrote, that’s what holds us completely. What is “*the love of Christ*”? Paul tells us in the next words – “*because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.*” If you’ll recall, I have continually told you the **THEME** of this entire section is **RECONCILIATION**, i.e., how God reconciled sinners to Himself. The **ONLY WAY** God **CAN** and **DID** reconcile sinners to Himself was through the **DEATH** of the God sent Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul preached this Gospel message of reconciliation through the death of Christ everywhere he was sent to preach – “*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*”(Rom.5:10); “*And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in [your] mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.*”(Col.1:21,22) It is the same exact truth John taught when he wrote these words – “*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins.*”(I Jn.4:10) Think about what this means in light of John’s words in I Jn.4:19 – “*We LOVE Him, BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.*” Again, **HOW DID HE LOVE US** – **QUOTE Vs.10**. The implications of this truth are **STAGGERING!** The **EFFECT** of God’s **LOVE** on **WHOEVER** John declares as “**US**” is this - **THEY LOVE HIM**. It’s not that there is a possibility they’ll love Him, **THEY WILL LOVE HIM**. The one, true God who cannot lie, moved His servant by His Holy Spirit to record this. In our text today, Paul stated that “*we thus judge, that if one died for ALL, then were ALL dead.*” The context **QUALIFIES** the scope of this little word “**ALL**”. Christ didn’t **DIE** for every, single, solitary sinner that has or will ever be born. According to His own words, Christ laid down His life for the SHEEP. So “*the love of Christ*” which holds the heart and soul of the child of God captive is that HE died in our place as our Substitute and Surety. Since we are “*in Him*”, when **HE DIED, WE DIED**. We died to the guilt, penalty, and condemnation of sin **IN HIM** – “*For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*”(Rom.6:7-10); “*For the wages of sin [is] death; but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to [her] husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of [her] husband. So then if, while [her] husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, [even] to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*”(Rom.6:23-7:4) The entirety of Christ’s work, His very obedience unto death, **WAS NOT FOR HIS SAKE**, but for the sake of those He represented as their Surety and Substitute. **DO YOU SEE THAT THIS MORNING?** I hope that clears up the meaning of Paul’s words. It is this “*love of Christ*”, i.e., **His accomplished death and resurrection**, which “*constraineth*” or holds captive the hearts of those He redeemed. It has no effect on the reprobate, the goats, or the tares. Matter of fact, to them, the “*love of Christ*” is a “*rock of offense and a stone of stumbling.*”

Notice the result of such God-given knowledge of full, free, eternal salvation – “*And [that] he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*”(Vs.15) Remember what John wrote: “*We LOVE Him, because HE FIRST LOVED US.*” There’s something to be said for the gift of faith the Lord bestows on His elect in regeneration by which they look to Christ and see Him as their SIN-BEARER. I’ve said this is long as I’ve been your pastor: **NO ONE** “*fears*” and “*LOVES*” the Lord like those who have been brought to see the “**FORGIVENESS OF SIN**” – “*If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But [there is] forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*”(Ps.130:3,4) David’s son Solomon declared – “*The fear of the LORD [is] the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy [is] understanding.*”(Prov.9:10) **Let me try to state this as simply and clearly as I can:** The Apostle Paul under inspiration of God the Holy Spirit wrote of **ALL MEN BY NATURE, INCLUDING GOD’S ELECT before regeneration and conversion** – “*There is no fear of God before their eyes.*”(Rom.3:18) But thank God, the **SAME HOLY SPIRIT** moved Jeremiah to write: “*And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*”(Jer.32:40) This “*fear*” of the Lord which God puts in His people’s heart is the result of His revealing to them the **PRICE REQUIRED** to put away their sins. When I think of the “*fear of the Lord*”, I think of Zechariah’s words – “*And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for [his] only [son], and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for [his] firstborn.*”(Zech.12:9,10) The price or cost of forgiveness **ISN’T** the sinner’s law-keeping, or their repentance, or their perseverance, or even their faith. The **PRICE REQUIRED** for the “*forgiveness of sins*” is the blood of Christ – “*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*”(Eph.1:7); “*In whom we have redemption through his blood, [even] the forgiveness of sins.*”(Col.1:14) According to Paul’s words in our text, those who by God-given faith see this great price are those described by these words - “*that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*” You don’t have to beg them, threaten them, or promise them anything . Being “*taught of God*”, they **KNOW** and **LIVE** by this truth: “*For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.*”(I Cor.6:20) They are like that woman that came into Simon’s house that was a great sinner, and being forgiven much, **SHE LOVED MUCH**. If you ever see **FORGIVENESS** through Christ alone, **YOU WILL LOVE HIM**.

Look quickly at **Vs.16** and we’ll wrap this up: “*Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh.*” I like what Mr.Gill said on this opening part of verse: “Since the death and resurrection of Christ, which has broken down the middle wall of partition, and has took away all distinction of men, we know, we esteem, we value no man on account of his carnal descent, and fleshy privileges, as being of the Jewish nation, a descendant of Abraham, and circumcised as he was; or on account of their outward state and condition, as being rich and honourable among men, or on account of their natural parts and acquirements, their learning, wisdom, and eloquence; nor do we own any man to be a Christian, that lives after the flesh, to himself, and not to Christ; nor do we make account of the saints themselves as in this mortal state, but as they will be in the resurrection, in

consequence of Christ's having died for them, and rose again." In other words, being **ONE WITH CHRIST**, it can be said of all God's redeemed – "**As He is, so are we IN THIS WORLD.**"

But pay careful attention to these next words, because I believe they set up what Paul is about to declare in the end of II Cor.5 – "**yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we [him] no more.**" In reality, the Apostle Paul hadn't "**known Christ after the flesh**", i.e., he knew nothing of Christ's **PERSON** during His earthly ministry. That being the case, I believe these words, "**though we have known Christ after the flesh**" mean something more than just knowing of Him personally, as men know one another. The sense of these words to me seem to indicate the accomplishment of **WHAT CHRIST DID** for His people while "**in the flesh**" as God-man. Robert Hawker stated it this way: "The one sacrifice of the LORD JESUS on the cross, is altogether so great and glorious, and hath such infinite value and efficacy in it, that it can be offered no more. **But to know CHRIST after the flesh, that is coming again in the likeness of sinful flesh, would carry with it an idea as if that one offering of CHRIST needed to be repealed. A thing in direct opposition to the whole Gospel.**" To me, Paul's word set forth the same truth as **Heb.10:10-14**. The fact that Christ is **NO LONGER** in the "**flesh**" which they had previously known and handled, is **PROOF POSITIVE** that the work of reconciliation is **ACCOMPLISHED**. **Listen to Mr.Hawker one more time:** "Reader! do not fail to observe, with what earnestness of affection the Apostle regarded the infinitely precious efficacy of CHRIST'S blood. So great to need nothing beside: so effectual, that by it, **JESUS** hath forever perfected them that are sanctified!" Please know this as the children of God - Our glorified Savior and Redeemer is **SEATED** at the right hand of the majesty on High, directing His kingdom to its appointed end.

We'll stop there and comeback next time to look at Vs.17.