Introduction

The New Has Come

Illustration: Parenting with Self-love.
And we know that loving our kids selflessly doesn't mean giving them everything they want.
It means taking the time to love them well, especially in discipline!
And this is the hardest part of parenting, marriage, friendships, and church!
Our love of self blinds us and makes us lean away from the needs of others.

In our passage today, Paul is going to say that his self-love has been replaced by a New Love!
And that love now controls his life!

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

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Purpose Statement

Christ died so that we might live as new creations who are compelled and constrained by His love.

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To support this summary statement of God's Word, we will look at the following arguments:
1. Compels & Constrains
2. Conclusions
3. Clarity

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Point 1: Compels & Constrains

Verse
[14] For the love of Christ controls us,

Summary Statement
Christ's love is the generator and guardrail of Paul's ministry.

The Love of Christ Controls

In verse 14, we jump midway into Paul's explanation for WHY he preaches the Gospel.

- And he begins with, For the Love of Christ controls us.

The word controlled here carries several thoughts.

- It can mean constrains; it can mean holds together; it can mean provides the impulse for activity; it can mean directs and guides.

In the context of this chapter, Paul seems to have all of these things in mind.

And to be clear.

- Paul is talking about a love received in this passage.
- That is, because of the love of Christ he has first **received**, his ministry is **compelled** into action, while those actions are also **constrained**.

Compels: Generator

So let's consider these two controls of Christ' love for a moment.

First, for Paul to be controlled by Christ's love means that it is what generates his ministry.

- It is the fuel and the fire that animates the work that he's been called to.
- In light of what we've been studying in James, this reminds us of how the Word of Christ received **WILL cause** the DOING of the work of the Word!

Simply put, part of being controlled by the love of Christ is living a life fueled by the Love of Christ received.

Constraint: Guardrail

On the surface, it's easy to understand how the love Paul's received is the impulse or the generator of his ministry, but again, the word used for "controlled" also carries the weight of **constraint**.

Last week we drove on the Blue Ridge Parkway.
Thankfully, where there was a steep drop-off, there were guardrails.

- And what we understand about a guardrail is that, on a positive level, it shows you where the road is, BUT ALSO, on another level, it keeps you from driving wherever you want to.
- The guardrail hems you in; it CONTROLS the path you take through the mountains.

And this is important!

Paul uses this word to help the church understand that the love of Christ is not **JUST** the fuel for the car of His ministry; it is also the **constraining guardrail** of his ministry life.

He leans into this in Romans 1, when he explains to the church in Rome that he longs to come visit them, **but** he is obligated to preach the Gospel elsewhere.

- So then, therefore, this constraining element of the Love of Christ defines his direction and posture of activity.
  - Paul isn't simply energized by the Gospel; his work is informed by the Gospel.
  - It has direction, goals, and posture.

So, Christ's love is the generator and guardrail of Paul's ministry.

Transition:
And to help the church understand the basis for this posture of ministry, he then moves to the measure of the love he has received.

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Point 2: Conclusions

Verse
…because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; [15] 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.

Summary Statement: Paul has concluded that Christ's death in his place, is so that he might now live for Him.

We Have Concluded

Paul writes, because we have concluded this.

- And the word **concluded** means that Paul and the apostles did not just take the Gospel at face value.
  - It is a careful examination and thoughtful evaluation of the situation.

And so, he writes that the REASON he is now being controlled by the love of Christ is that they have come to a conclusion:

That is, one has died for all; therefore, all have died, and HE died for all, that those who live (that is, those to whom this grace of sacrificial love has been implanted) might no longer live for themselves, but for Christ!

Going back to the meaning of the phrase, controls us.

- If the love Paul received in Christ were simply fuel for life, then the goal would be JUST life.
- BUT - as we said, controls also means constrains; it sets direction and purpose.

And Paul now unfolds that direction and purpose of the love of Christ.

- The goal is that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him, who for their sake died and was raised.
- Paul is saying he no longer lives for his own ambitions!
- Those things have died and have been replaced by something new and better.

And for us as well

So this not only sets the direction of Paul's ministry, but he has clearly opened it up for our consideration as well!

- All who have received the Love of Christ ought to NOW consider that He died in our place, **so that** we might now live for Him in this age.

We have been united with Him in death so that we might now live for Him in Life!

- Christ's love for us is not simply so we might go to heaven one day; it has a calling and controlling purpose in this day!

Consider His Love

This is the continual echo of the Bible!

See and remember His works of Steadfast Love for you!

- Think on them, consider them, treasure them, examine them…and then THEREFORE, as it is with any love that enters our life, be directed and guided by these things, that we might proclaim this peculiar love of our King and Savior!

The natural man in his flesh is controlled by the love of self.

- It is the love that we are born into.
  - We love us.
  - And that love controls us!
    - It doesn't just wake us up motivated; it directs our pursuits.
    - And this controlling self-love is insatiable.
      - Continually seeking to serve itself, restless in its ambition!
      - Always protecting and defending our kingdoms.
      - Constantly scanning every conversation for an insurrection against our throne.
      - Convinced we are underappreciated and undervalued.
  - Being controlled by the love of self is an isolating and exhausting endeavor.
    - Always controlling and rewriting narratives for our name.
    - Hiding our shame in the shadows as we highlight the missteps of others.

And so Paul says, this **love** we have received from Christ now changes who we live for!

Christ Himself makes it clear to those who want to follow Him; He says you must deny yourselves - that is, deny self-love.

- It's what the cross declares!
  - The Love of Christ was not for Himself; it was for "other"!

And Child of God, Christian, this is the love that you have received in Jesus our Christ!

- He put no boundaries on His compassion for you.
- He did not protect His own self-interests.
- His ambition was compelled and constrained by His love for the Father and for those who would be His.
- He EMPTIED His account for you!
  - And of course, it wasn't JUST for YOU as an individual; it was for His bride, the church, but that doesn't mean it wasn't for YOU.

Paul has no problem talking about this personal aspect of God's love.

In Galatians 2:20 he writes:

[20] I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who **loved me** and **gave himself** for **me**. (ESV)

Jesus Loves You!

- Just like a parent loves their kids as their family, that doesn't lessen their love for the individual.
- And also - no child should believe the family revolves around them, or that the goal of the life of the family is them!
- When Nathaniel said to Jesus, where did you see ME, Jesus said, I saw YOU sitting under the tree…And Jesus then does not say, follow me, it's all about you - He says, follow me and I will show you something so much bigger than YOU!

We have been made a people of God, by the work of God in Christ Jesus, for the sake of His glory, honor, and praise throughout all creation forevermore!

- It is not about YOU - this is, and has always been, about the glory of His name!
- See His love for you, as part of His love for us, for the goal of His Beauty and Worth being proclaimed!

That We Might live dying for Him

Christ died for us, not simply that we might live before His face in eternity, but so that we might NO LONGER live for ourselves in this age!

This echoes what Paul wrote in **Romans 12:1–2**

- He writes, Therefore, in light of the mercies, that is, the Love of God in Christ Jesus, present your life as a living sacrifice, that is, die to yourself and live for His good purposes!

And to be clear, to live for Him means to live like Him.

- To declare the sacrificial love of Christ by denying yourself and loving others, and in doing that, we live for His name; we reveal His image!
- In the economy of this age, it is not comfortable, it is not safe, and it is not guarded.
- It is to live dying for the sake of His name.

It looks foolish to the outside world that's controlled by self-love.

- And it causes the self-righteous religious to stumble at the scandalous grace it offers those who have fallen short of our law-abiding.
- The love Christ led Him to the cross for others, and it will lead us to the same place for the sake of His name!

Summary Statement

Paul has concluded that Christ's death in his place is so that he might now live for Him.

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Point 3: Clarity

Paul Sees Clear

There was a time when Paul only saw himself as a Hebrew among Hebrews.

- His credentials as a God's law-abiding, educated man were second to none at his age.
- His zeal was unmatched, and his boast was in his flesh.
- He was undefiled and blameless before man and his God.

And his self-righteous passion blinded him, and he saw the person of Jesus Christ as a man from Nazareth who was a blasphemer of God.

- Paul's people saw Jesus as an insurrectionist and deserving to die among criminals, as they mocked Him for lacking the power to save Himself.
- And because this is how Paul regarded Christ, he lived his life persecuting all those who followed him, trying to kill the flesh of others as he boasted in his.

But then, as he was breathing murder against the Christians, Paul took a trip to Damascus, and Jesus revealed who he actually was!

- And Paul saw that Jesus was not vaining the name of God, but rather that he **WAS and IS** God in the flesh!
- And this realization that the resurrected Jesus was the Son of God led him to a complete transformation.
  - After coming into contact with Christ and receiving His love, it didn't just change how he saw Jesus; it changed how he saw himself!
  - Paul concluded that this man Jesus was no criminal; in fact, He was the only righteous person, and His righteousness led Him to a cross that Paul should have hung on.
- And so he writes:
  - [16] From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

Therefore - How We see Ourselves and Each other

SO then, FROM NOW ON THEREFORE, those who have received the Love of Christ no longer see themselves in their flesh.

- They acknowledge that they have died and have been raised in Christ.
- So then, while they work out this new life in them, they walk as those who are not defined by their sin, nor by their good works.
- They are hidden in Christ - buried with Him, and now alive with Him.

And also, when they regard those around them, they no longer see them for who they are in the flesh.

- They do not see those **in Christ** as having different ethnicities, socio-economics, or educational backgrounds; instead, they regard each other as new creations in Christ.
- They see all those who are in Christ as those who have been loved by God and have been adopted into the family of God!
- And there is NO ONE in this place more deserving or undeserving of the love of God in Christ Jesus!
  - No one is in Christ by the skin of their teeth, and no one is in Christ by a mile.
  - By the Love and Grace of God, we are all equally made and secured in Him.

So we look around the church, and we don't see sinners on probation; we see children of God in their maturation.

- We see those whom Christ died for, and whom the very Spirit of God now indwells and has begun a work He will not abandon.

See it clearly in verse 17:

Read Vs. [17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

If ANYONE is in Christ, then they **are** a new creation!
The old has not simply been forgiven; it has passed away.

- In Christ, the New is not just our covering; it is NOW who we are.
- This is not simply us in a new robe; it is us made new!

If Paul doesn't understand or see that He is a new Creation in Christ, he will be tempted to live the rest of his life trying to prove to the church that he has changed.

- He will live his life trying to convince others that the old Paul is gone.
- And the only way to do that is to live trying to repay the church and God for how he persecuted His people.

And all of it will be acts of self-justification that will not only destroy him, but also blind the church, as they will become the self-righteous judges of Paul's righteousness.

- And his ministry will aim to convince the world that he is the man on the center cross rather than the men on the other crosses that flanked him.
- And his works will not be controlled by the love of Christ; they will be controlled by the love of his own name.

Why that's Vital for us as well

Everyone in this room has past and present things and thoughts they are trying to hide from others and minimize before God.

- And while we may cover these things in paint on Sunday mornings, they will continue to cause us to walk in the exhaustion of hypocrisy and the panic of our penance.
- And we will run to righteous activities to build a resume that covers our defilement.
  - And we will be so very alone.
  - Isolated from that which Jesus died on the cross to reconcile and restore.

No one, but one, has earned the right to stand before God.

- You are not righteous in your flesh.

BUT God, being rich in mercy and abundant in Grace, has sent His Son in the flesh, that we might be united with Him!

In our new life in Christ, we are not criminals in new clothing trying to see if we can walk the straight and narrow; rather, we are like toddlers learning to walk in a new life.

- So when we stumble, we get back up in the full hope and expectation of the power of His resurrection to walk in this new life, rather than sinking further into shame because we are convinced the tomb is sealed and we will never be able to walk again or prove who we are to ourselves and others.

BE CAREFUL - This is For You!

And before we close, please!!!

As always, if your heart is hoping **someone else** in this room has heard these things, please trust the Holy Spirit of God in them, and don't grieve the Holy Spirit in you!

- NO heart in this place is above reproach in these things.
- Do not use the word of God as a stone you throw at another child of God.
- We all have fallen short of the love we have received.
- I know we all want to declare to our own flesh and to others that we have arrived, but may we all repent and believe in Jesus, the ONLY righteous one, who died on the cross we deserved, but also was raised from the tomb we were sealed in.

Summary Statement

Transition:

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Conclusion

We began this morning with a group of parents committing to bring up their children in the ways of the Lord.

- To teach them and show them the goodness of Christ Jesus!

And in a moment we will close with a celebration of His goodness made manifest.

Those who step into the waters of baptism are not simply saying that they have been united with Christ in death; they have also, by His grace, been united with Him in the new life!

- A new creation in the midst of the old creation.

In this act of baptism, we are celebrating the power of the Gospel in the lives of His people.

In all this, we echo Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14–21

That says, and I paraphrase:

- That according to the riches of God's beauty and worth, may we be strengthened by the Spirit of God that Christ may dwell in us through faith.
- That we would be rooted and grounded in love!
- And have the Spirit-enabled strength to comprehend the width, length, height, and depth in KNOWING, that is in relationship with, the love of Christ!
- May we then stop regarding our lives by what we are able to do in our flesh, and instead say:
- We KNOW that He is able to do far more than we could even ask or think, according to HIS POWER at work in us!
- And so…to Him alone be ALL the glory in this place throughout all generations forever and ever, amen!

Pray

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