

## LifeGroups 2.2—Compelled by Love 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

### Introduction

- [Slide #1] Instead of the long, slow climb up the ladder to the 10 meter diving platform, this morning I want to climb the ladder to the 1 meter board and cannonball right into things. Two weeks ago we looked at Jesus' life and talked about how the mission Jesus launched is different than “church.” Jesus was about building a kingdom. And because Jesus had a kingdom mission there is this thing called church; the kingdom of God births the church in its wake. But the two, church and Jesus' mission, are not the same.
- I know for some of you, understanding this difference was a huge. You now realize that “doing church” in the sense of going to a building and singing and listening to someone speak is not the same thing as Jesus' mission. And more than anything you want to be on that mission with Jesus.
- So last week we looked at how to break out of the bubble of church to be on the mission Jesus is on. We talked about how God broke out of his bubble; the bubble of heaven. He did it by love. God loved us so much he sent his son. God modeled for us the way out of the bubble. If we are to move from “church” to mission it will happen as we learn to love. Just as the father sent Jesus to love, we are sent into the world to love.
- But last week I didn't say anything to you about the quality or the nature of this love. I never explained what this love is like. And that's what I want to do this morning. Here's why...[Slide #2]

### Big Idea

- **The more you know and experience the love of God, God's love for you, the more serious you'll be about Jesus' mission**
- The relationship between the two, the love God has for us and the mission Jesus launched, it's like the old time carnival game where you swing the hammer in order to drive the slide up the pole toward the bell at the top. The more you're hammered by God's love, for lack of a better term, the father up, the farther out, the farther into the mission you'll be driven.
- If you have a small experience of God's love, the resulting mission will be little, small, inconsequential. Conversely, if you have a large experience of God's love, the resulting mission will be large, serious, consequential.

### Transition

So let's talk about the love of God. By way of clarification, when I say love of God I'm not talking about our love for God. This morning, whenever I use the phrase the “love of God,” I mean the love God has for us. Big difference. Turn to **2 Corinthians 5:14-15** and listen to what the Apostle Paul says about the result of God's love for us through Christ. This is the way we are to live beyond the bubble.

- Paul writes, *For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for*

*all, and therefore all died. 15 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.*

- He says Christ's love compels him. That word, that verb compel "implies the pressure which confines as well as controls."<sup>1</sup> The love Christ had for Paul gave shape, pressured, controlled the way Paul lived out his life. The love of Christ controlled him, compelled him to certain actions, certain practices. We know from most of the letters in the New Testament Paul was a man serious about Jesus' mission.
- But it wasn't always like that. **Acts 9:1** gives us a picture of the tone and tenor of Paul's life before experiencing the love of Christ. Luke, the writer of Acts records that *Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples.* And then what happens? You know the story. *Saul went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."*
- The hammer of love drops and with that one experience of the love of Christ Paul is transformed from murderer of those following the Way, those on mission with Jesus, to being on that mission himself.
- Back to **2 Corinthians**. Years after that experience Paul writes, *For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 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. The more you know and experience the love of God, God's love for you, the more serious you'll be about Jesus mission.* If you have a small experience of God's love, the resulting mission will be little, small, inconsequential. Conversely, if you have a big experience of God's love, you will be compelled by that love, serious about the mission.
- Paul says specifically, the love Christ had for him was the reason he stopped living for himself to instead live for him who died for him and was raised again. And I want to suggest to you that if there is a lack of seriousness about the mission Jesus launched, if the mission is something optional in your mind, or has become unimportant, or if you know you're not on that mission, it's because you've either forgotten about or you don't quite understand or you haven't actually experienced the love of God, the love God has for you.
- In another one of Paul's letters, in **Ephesians 5:1-2** Paul says that we are to *be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* Being on Jesus' mission means living a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. Jesus' mission is a mission of self-sacrifice, selfless giving for others so that they too might know that incredible love. That's the nature, the kind,

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<sup>1</sup> Fritz Reinecker and Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the New Testament*, p. 469.

the quality, of the love we are to imitate. That's the kind of love that compelled Paul beyond the bubble.

- And this love, God's love for us, is so remarkably different than all the other kinds of love we know and experience that if we haven't experienced this unique love deep within, if it hasn't hammered us at the very core of our being, it will be absolutely impossible to reproduce Jesus' mission now, here. **The more you know and experience the love of God, God's love for you, the more serious you'll be about Jesus mission.**
- So here's what I want to do with the rest of the time we have this morning. I want to remind you of the quality, the nature of God's love for you. My prayer is the same as the one Paul prayed for the followers of the Way in Ephesus when he says, *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge.* It is a love that surpasses knowledge, you have to experience it.
- Elsewhere in the New Testament, **1 John 4:16**, it says that *God is love*. God's very nature is to love. To say that *God is love* is to say that at the very core of God's being is this action called love. In other words, all that God does, all his actions are motivated by love. "All His activity is loving activity. If [God] creates, He creates in love; if He rules, He rules in love; if He judges, He judges in love. (If he punishes, he punishes in love. If he allows something in your life he allows it out of love.) All that God does is the expression of His nature, which is—to love."<sup>2</sup> Everything God does, he does because of love.
- And the greatest example of God's love for us is the death of Christ on a cross. **Romans 5:8**, right? *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
- Those of you who like to cut wood, and even if you don't, try to think of the visible demonstration of the love of God like this. Think of a freshly felled tree. "The rings which appear on the cut face of that log are visible cross-sections of lines that run right up the trunk, hidden from view by the bark. In the same way, the cross of Jesus is the visible appearance in this world of love that stretches back beyond our vision into the depths of eternity."<sup>3</sup> To look upon the cross of Christ is to look into the very heart of God and see his love for us.
- The question then comes, how in the world, in what way is the brutal death of an innocent man on a cross, why, how is that an expression of love? And once you ask that question, you are one step closer to understanding the love God has for us. Because, more specifically, the love God has for us is a love for the unlovely. **Romans 5:8** also says *while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*. God doesn't love us at our best. He loves us when we're at our worst.
- God's standard is perfection. And the measuring rod of God's perfection for all

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<sup>2</sup> Dodd, *The Johanne Epistles*. Moffatt New Testament Commentary Series. New York: Harper and Row, 1946, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> H. Waddell, *Peter Abelard*, London, 1933, p. 290.

people, all cultures, all time, is his Law—summarized in the Old Testament by the 10 Commandments. According to that standard, last I checked, none of us measure up. None of us have completely and fully, 24/7, every day of our life, flawlessly kept God's Law. Don't believe me? Read [Exodus 20](#). All of us have fallen short of God's standard in some way. We are off the mark. Missing God's mark is what God calls sin.

- And God has to do something about sin. Because of his perfection and holiness, He has to punish it. And the sentence God gives for sin is death. The death sentence isn't a case of the punishment not fitting the crime. The punishment does fit the crime. If we cringe at God's sentence for sin it's because we don't fully understand the seriousness of sin.
- But even worse than the punishment of death is the effect sin has on how we relate to God while alive. Because God's holiness prohibits him from relating to anything unholy, the relational connection humanity enjoyed with God prior to sin is severed and destroyed. Sin brings physical death but it also brings death to our spirits so that we cannot relate to God who is himself Spirit. Physical death and spiritual death. It's a double whammy. That's our condition. Part of understanding God's love for us requires an agreement of this assessment of reality—the graveness of our condition. If you can't agree with God's assessment of our condition, you'll never understand His love.
- That's our condition. So what does God do? Remember, everything God does is motivated, shaped and formed by love. God doesn't want his creation, the creation he loves, to remain in this condition of spiritual death awaiting physical death. So what does God do? God makes a covenant, a binding, lasting and loving agreement to deal with the effects of sin. Part of the terms of this covenant, this agreement is a sacrificial system, the death of bulls and goats and pigeons, etc., whereby God is able to justly punish sin by pouring out his punishment for that sin on an acceptable sacrifice instead of on the people he longs to be in relationship with. If you've spent any time reading the first 39 books of the bible you'll have read about this sacrificial system.
- So instead of punishment, and because of the sacrifice, God's people receive forgiveness and they can have a relationship with God. Pretty good deal, incredibly loving deal, except for one thing. This first, old covenant fixes the relationship problem but it doesn't adequately deal with the death problem. The forgiveness that came to God's people through the sacrifice meant that God was free to relate to his people but his people still died.
- So early on, even while the first agreement was in full swing, God conceived a plan to fix that problem too. He began telling his people about a new agreement, a second covenant which would make up for the shortcomings of the first one. [Jeremiah 31:31](#) speaks of this. *"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."*
- We learn from God's Word that this new agreement would be similar to the old in that it too would be based on the concept of sacrifice. Like the first, the second would be a binding, lasting and loving agreement to deal with the effects of sin. The

sacrifice in this new covenant would accomplish what the bulls and goats accomplished under the first agreement, the forgiveness of sins, with one significant difference. This sacrifice in this second agreement destroys death too.

- And lo and behold, surprise of all surprises, this is where things get start to get freaky amazing. In order for death to be defeated, in order for the infinite problem of sin to never again plague God's creation, the sacrifice in this second, new agreement must infinitely large, infinitely perfect. And the only one who can fit that bill is God himself. Because the infinite problem of sin God sends Christ, an infinitely perfect sacrifice, to be our sacrifice for sin, to end the need for future and repeated sacrifices. God makes a new, a second covenant with us through the death of his son Christ. Which is why **Hebrews 9:15** says that *Christ is the mediator of a new covenant*.
- The story of God's love for us is that *while we were still sinners*, while we were still under the penalty and effects of sin, Christ became an acceptable sacrifice for sin in our place. Compelled by love, and sent by God, Christ lived the perfect life you and I are unable to live, he fulfilled all the demands of God's Law, and then because of love, he offered up his life as a sacrifice to God to pay our debt to sin. And in this binding, lasting, loving and permanent agreement between God and his creation God agrees to punish his son Christ with death, God justly deals with the problem of sin. And instead of the punishment we deserve, the punishment which has instead been placed on Christ, we receive forgiveness and the legal status of being not guilty in God's sight.
- Fast-forward to back to **2 Corinthians 5:21**. In this one verse you'll find no better summary of the love of God for us. *God made him [Christ] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him [in Christ] we might become the righteousness of God*.
- At its deepest level then, the love of God, the love God has for us, is God's loving act of forgiving our sins and remembering them no more through the sacrifice, death and resurrection of Christ. That is love. It is sacrifice. It is selfless. It is giving without expectation of being paid back. It is unconditional—love without conditions, without strings attached. It is free. And it is undeserved—it is given to those who are in every sense of the word unworthy, undeserving of this love. This is love in its purest sense.
- Love defined differently than this, an experience of love less than this, won't sufficiently motivate a person, won't cause a person to say what Paul says in **2 Corinthians 5:14-15**. *For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 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*.
- Paul's conviction is this. To receive God's love, to experience God' love is to be convinced, to believe, to trust, that through Christ's death we too have died to effects and consequences of sin. *Because we are convinced that one died for all, he says and therefore all died*. And that this "dying" with Christ, Christ death is our death, this dying with Christ, necessarily produces a transformed life, a new life that leads to "living for Christ." *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*.

- It is this love and this love only; this voluntary, selfless, sacrificial giving of Christ's life on our behalf to deal with the problem of sin that compels Paul to live an equally selfless sacrificial life. The mission Jesus launched becomes a reality for Paul because he personally experienced this inexplicable love God had for him through Jesus.
- Again, what Paul seems to be saying in these two verses is that "the recipients of such love have no choice as to their response. Their sins have been taken away by this gracious act of God. He has loved them in such a way as to arouse adoring wonder at the magnitude of his sacrificial giving. They cannot do anything else but show love for other people."<sup>4</sup>
- See, not all loves are the same. Most love is conditional. The kind of love we know and are used to has strings attached. If the right words aren't said, if the right actions aren't performed love is withheld. That kind of love is a sham and a mockery of the kind of love that God offers. But if that's the kind of love you think God gives, conditional, strings attached, performance based love you'll never break the bubble, you'll never get beyond the bubble.
- In order for to go from LifeGroups 2.1 to 2.2, in order for you to break out of the bubble of church to be on the mission Jesus launched, it will require a deep personal conviction that this radical sacrificial nature of God's love is for you. **The more you know and experience the love of God, God's love for you, the more serious you'll be about Jesus mission.** A person cannot come into a real relationship with a loving God without being transformed into a loving person.

## Conclusion

- From my experience, the one thing that keeps most people from this large, expansive transformational experience of God's love, the kind of experience that compels a person onto the mission Jesus launched, is pride. We think we're good enough; the extreme, death of God on the cross kind of love is a bit overkill. Nice story for someone else, for all those religious people who need a crutch, but not needed here. And if that's where you're at, God will never force his love onto you. He will wait, and wait, and wait, he will keep on loving, until you come to see the cross of Christ for what it is, the supreme expression of God's deep and passionate and longing love for you.

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<sup>4</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Expositors Bible Commentary*.

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**Ephesians 5:1-2.** *Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* no longer live for the advantage of self. **Salvador Dali**, the Spanish surrealist painter once said this, “Those who do not want to imitate anything, produce nothing.”

### Transition

Let me briefly try to unpack what being compelled by love entails. Paul says in verses 16-21 that there are

### Organizational Sentence

– **Two changes to life when we are truly compelled by love God has for us**

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### Transition

The **first change** comes in how we view people. [Slide #3] **Being compelled by love necessitates a different view people.** V.16-19a

### Main Points

– Being compelled by love is the difference between viewing people with a worldly point of view or through the eyes of Christ.

### Transition

I need you to see something else. In stage #2 the mission moves from Father sending son to the Son sending the Spirit. [Slide #4] Stage two is **being compelled by love means we are committed to a specific message.** V.19b-21

- Content of what we say as we are compelled by the love of Christ.
- We are ambassadors.
- Message of reconciliation. V. 21 is the fullness of this message of reconciliation. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Allusion to day of atonement.
- Passport illustration.
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<sup>5</sup> Marshall, p. 212.

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<sup>6</sup> Reinecker, p. 469.

## **Wallace Greek Grammar**

- The genitive of verse 14, love of Christ, is both subjective and objective. In other words, "the love from Christ produces our love for Christ-and this whole package constrains us." Wallace, p. 120.

## **Doriani Putting the Truth to Work**

- "United to Christ, we are a new creation. We who died with Christ rose with him to a new life. Reconciled to God by him, we become the righteousness of God in him. This is no legal fiction but a divine decision that is both judicial and mystical." Doriani, p. 136.

## **Reinecker**

- Constrains--to hold together, to press together, to constrain. "The verb implies the pressure which confines as well as controls." Reinecker, p. 469.
- Wherefore of v.16. Word is used to draw a conclusion. First, regard no one according to the flesh. Fleshly knowledge Paul repudiates.
- Though we once regarded Christ this way. 'The basic meaning is that Paul had a new, fuller understanding of the whole Christ by the Spirit and by faith; and he sees others in a new way according to their standing with him, in the new creation." Reinecker, p. 469.
- V. 17--second wherefore. Second conclusion. "the one who is in Christ and has experienced the new birth is part of the new creation."
- V.18--reconciliation means that Christ's death removed God's enmity against man.
- V.19 reconciling--not counting men's sins against them--the commercial sense of not putting down to one's account. NO TAB WITH GOD. GOD PAYS THE TAB.
- Ambassador--the regular word in the greek for the emperor's legate. Reinecker, p. 470.
- Righteousness of God--"This is the righteousness both that God requires and that he provides in justification." Reinecker, p. 471.

## **Expositors Murray Harris**

- V.14-15 The first was that since one man died on behalf of and in the place of all men, all had undergone death (v. 14b). Which death? Either the death deservedly theirs because of sin (R.V.G. Tasker) or the death to sin and self that is involved in Christian living (C.K. Barrett). In neither case was the death a physical death like Christ's (notice the subsequent phrase "those who live"). Paul's second conviction was this: "Dying" with Christ should lead, to "living for Christ" (v. 15). Paul is not speaking of all men without exception but of "those who live" in union with the resurrected

Christ.

- V.16 Since his conversion ("from now on"), when he gained the twofold conviction about his own "death" (v. 14) and life (v. 15), Paul had ceased to make superficial personal judgments (= regarding men "from a worldly point of view") based on external appearances (v. 12). It was now his custom to view men, not primarily in terms of nationality but in terms of spiritual status.
- And v. 16 indicates that the principal area of change is that of attitude toward Christ and other people. Knowledge "from a worldly point of view" has given place to knowledge in the light of the cross (cf. Gal 6:15).
- Similarly, his sincere yet superficial preconversion estimate of Jesus as a misguided messianic pretender whose followers must be extirpated (Acts 9:1, 2, 26:9-11) he now repudiated as being totally erroneous, for he had come to recognize him as the divinely appointed Messiah whose death had brought life (vv. 14, 15).
- **17** Paul next states the second outcome of the death and resurrection of Christ (vv. 14, 15). Whenever a person comes to be part of the body of Christ by faith, there is a new act of creation on God's part.
- **18,19** "All this is from God" looks back to the new attitudes of v. 16 and the new creation of v. 17. God is as surely the author of the second creation as he was of the first (cf. 4:6).
- At this point Paul passes from the subjective to the objective aspects of the atonement as he states the fact of reconciliation. Elsewhere he shows that reconciliation is the divine act by which, on the basis of the death of Christ, God's holy displeasure against sinful man was appeased, the enmity between God and man was removed, and man was restored to proper relations with God. (See Rom 5:10, 11; Col 1:20-22, where the cosmic implications of reconciliation are expounded.) Reconciliation is not some polite ignoring or reduction of hostility but rather its total and objective removal.
- **20** As proclaimers of the "gospel of peace" (Eph 6:15), which was the good tidings about reconciliation, the apostles were acting on Christ's behalf as messengers and representatives duly appointed by him. Not only so. It was as if God were issuing a personal and direct invitation through them to their hearers to enter into the benefits of the reconciliation already achieved by Christ. "We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" may be a summary of the "message of reconciliation" (there is no "you" in the Greek) or else specifically Paul's entreaty to the unregenerate at Corinth.
- This appeal issued in Christ's name, this message of reconciliation, is the God-designed link between the objective work of reconciliation and its subjective appropriation by the sinner. From this viewpoint reconciliation is a continuing process as well as an accomplished fact. Yet there is a real sense in which reconciliation was effected before its results are subjectively felt. Paul speaks of receiving reconciliation (Rom 5:11), which would imply both an offer and something to offer.

- V.21 Treated as if he were a sinner, Christ became the object of God's wrath and bore the penalty and guilt of sin.
- The glorious purpose of the Father's act in making Christ "to be sin" was that believers should "become the righteousness of God" in Christ. This is a bold restatement of the nature of justification. Not only does the believer receive from God a right standing before him on the basis of faith in Jesus (Philippians 3:9), but here Paul says that "in Christ" the believer in some sense actually shares the righteousness that characterizes God himself (cf. 1Cor 1:30).