

# A constraining love (Quality: Good)

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Date: 11 October 2020

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[ 0 : 00 ] As the Lord may be graciously pleased to help us, I would direct your prayerful attention at this time to the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 14.

The second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 14. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead.

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What a marvelous change took place in the heart and life of the Apostle Paul.

Once he was an enemy to the cross of Jesus Christ, hailing men and women and casting them into prison.

[ 1 : 18 ] And as he himself says, injurious to the church of Jesus Christ. But the Lord Jesus Christ found him in the way.

For he was designed as a vessel of mercy. And an immediate change was wrought in his heart.

And this is one of the clearest evidence we have in the whole word of God of that new birth, that change from one direction to another direction.

Naturally speaking, the Apostle Paul, both in his unregeneracy and when he was regenerated, had a zeal.

We see that zeal in awful effect when he was unconverted. But we see that same zeal and even greater zeal when he became a follower of his Lord and Saviour.

[ 2 : 45 ] But remember what God said to him, that he must suffer many things for Christ and for the gospel's sake.

And this is why I read to you this evening from the fourth chapter and from verse 8, where he says these things.

We are troubled on every side. The enmity that was stirred up against the Apostle was remarkable.

Not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles. There was and there still is a hatred unto the gospel of Christ.

And so he had these troubles throughout all his days, from the day of his conversion onwards.

[ 3 : 56 ] But he says we are not distressed. Then he says we are perplexed. How often we come into situations we do not understand the reason why.

And how many times have we heard people say, I do not know why God is dealing with me in such a way as this.

But his answer is, but not in despair. He doesn't despair of God's help. He doesn't despair of God's help.

He doesn't despair of God's help. Persecuted. Persecuted. And again, the Apostle knew much of this pathway of persecution. Being cast into a Roman prison.

- And there held in chains. And seemingly all against him. But not forsaken.
- [ 5 : 02 ] Not like his Lord and Savior. Who could say, all have gone away. Even his beloved disciples turned their backs upon the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Because he had to tread that final pathway alone. But Paul, like his master, could say that all men have forsook me.
- But the Lord did not forsake him. And this was his great comfort. His great encouragement. He was not forsaken.
- Even if he was forsaken of others. He was not forsaken of God. Cast down. Like the psalmist of old.
- Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou so disquieted within me? And you know, I believe most children of God.
- [ 6 : 11 ] At some times in their experience. Come into this state. Where they are cast down. Cast down because of the roughness of the way.
- Cast down because of the oppositions that they meet with. Cast down because of the pains and sorrows that they have to bear.
- And yet again. Not destroyed. Not destroyed. Their life is still in them.
- Always bearing about in the body. The dying of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mighty enemies without.
- Much mightier within. That the life also of Jesus. Might be made manifest.
- [ 7 : 09 ] In our body. For we which live. Are always delivered unto death. For. Jesus sake.
- That the life also of Jesus. Might be made manifest. In our mortal flesh. So then. Death. Worketh in us.
- And to the church here. That he's writing to. Death in us. But life. For you.
- How then. Did the apostle. Bear. All these things. For we know. That he was.
- A man. Like unto us. Yes. The grace of God. Was given him. In great measure. He was an appointed.
- [ 8 : 09 ] An apostle. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was given powers. Which are not existent. In our day. He had many blessings.
- Rest him upon him. But he was still. Yet. A natural man. The answer. Is given.
- In our text. You know we have. Three questions. Set before us here.
- For we command. Not ourselves. Again. Unto you. But give you. Occasion. To glory.
- On our behalf. That we may have. Somewhat. To answer them. Which glory. In appearance. And not. In heart. How much.
- [ 9 : 05 ] Of that. Is existent. In the day. In which we live. That many. Go for. Appearance. That they look.
- The part. But they have nothing. In their hearts. No. Love to Christ. Christ. Then he says. Whether. We. Be beside.
- Ourselves. Or whether. We be sober. The world. May think us mad. As they thought.
- Christ mad. As they thought. The apostles mad. As they think. All that hold fast. To the doctrine.
- Of God's word. Are mad. For whether. We be beside. Ourselves. It is. To God. It is.
- [ 9 : 58 ] To the glory. Of God. It is. His glory. That is. Uppermost. In the heart. Of Paul. And in the heart. Of all God's servants. And in God's people.

That he should have. The glory. And we glorify. God. When we. Keep. And obey. His commandments. Whether.

We be sober. Not. Jestng. Not. Going out. To. These. Places.

Where. Sobriety. Is lost. And gaiety. Is found. The sobriety. Of the apostle. Was for the cause.

Of the church. That they may see. In his life. How. How. A Christian. Ought. To be. But here.

[ 10 : 53 ] Is a reason. That sustained. And maintained. And upheld. The apostle. Through all. That he passed through. Through life.

And in death. For the love. Of Christ. Constraineth. Us. Now. I want you to notice. One or two things.

Here. By way of introduction. It is. The love. Of Christ. Now. In some places. In the word.

Of God. Where we read. Of the love. Of Christ. It's. Our love. Toward. The Lord. The Lord. Jesus Christ. Those who have been.

Truly converted. Love. The Lord. Jesus Christ. In sincerity. And in truth. But. In this place. As it is.

[ 11 : 48 ] Confirmed. In the latter. Verses. It is. The love. Of Christ. Toward. Us. We.

Love him. On the grounds. That he. First. Loved us. Well. When did that love. Begin. When was the love.

Of God. The love of Christ. Toward. Us. If we are. His. People. Well.

That love. Began. In eternity. Past. Before. Ever. The world. Began. When Christ.

Was in the. Bosom. Of the father. Daily. His. Delight. There was. Never. A time. When the father.

[ 12 : 45 ] Did not. Love. The son. And there. Never. Was a time. When Christ. Did not. Love. His people. People. Yay.

He. He. He. Loved. The people. And he. Loved them. With. An. Ever. Lasting. Life. And there.

A people. A people. A people. Set aside. For. The love of Christ. To be. Manifested. In their lives.

A people. Chosen. Before. The world. Began. A people. That were on. The son of God's. Heart.

Heart. From all. Eternity. That love. Which moved him. Under the instruction. Of the father.

[ 13 : 46 ] To deliver. Those whom he knew. Would be sold. Under sin. And we see.

How that Adam. Walked in union. And communion. And communion. With God. Now let us understand.

That all things. Were. Through Christ. He is the one mediator. Between God. And man. All things then.

Are attributed. Unto him. When the world. Was made. Christ says. I. Was there. I was there.

Conducting. Orchestrating. Bringing this world. Into. Being. Setting. Everything.

[ 14 : 45 ] Upon the face. Of the earth. According. To divine. Purpose. God. And there. Adam. Walked.

In. Union. With the Lord. Having. A time. Of fellowship. Having. A time.

- Of. Love. Having. A time. Of peace. As Adam. Had full. Access. Unto God.  
 God. Are. But Adam. By. Transgression. Foul. And sin. Entered. Into the world.  
 And death. Through. Sin. And how. Solemn. Are. To know. That we. Every.
- [ 15 : 40 ] Single. One. That is born. Into this world. By natural birth. Are. Born. In sin. We are.  
 Sinners. From. The womb. And so. Because. Of this. We are. Enemies. Of God.  
 Now. Remember. Immediately. After. Adam. Has sinned. He. Hid. Himself. He. Would not.  
 Be seen. Because.
- His eyes. Were then. Enlightened. And he saw. That he was naked. Ashamed. Of his  
 nakedness. Ashamed.
- To appear. Before. Almighty God. You know. A child. A young child. When it has done.
- [ 16 : 35 ] Wrong. It hides. This is. This is. A natural. Instinct. Of a child. And those. That. Grow  
 older. Who disobey. Their parents.
- They set. Their mind. Upon. Other things. To try. And forget. That they have. Brought.  
 Anger. Into the hearts.
- Of their fathers. They have. Then. Disgraced. Themselves. And. Brought.
- That distance. Between them. And. Their father. Now. This is exactly. What sin. Has done.  
 In the lives.
- Of God's people. It has brought about. A separation. And. You can see it. Today. As  
 doubtless. It has been true.
- [ 17 : 31 ] In. Every age. That man. Because of sin. Denies God. Denies. That he's a transgressor.  
 Denies. That he should. Live. According to God's word. And therefore. In sinful. Rebellion.  
 In hardness. Of heart. In unbelief. He. Plies himself. To all the errors. And sins.
- Of this world. He's taken up. With the lust. Of money. The lust. Of the flesh. The lust. Of  
 pride.
- And all these things. He engages in. Because he hates God. Because he hates God. And  
 let's us be abundantly clear.
- [ 18 : 31 ] We all. By nature. Hate. God. God. Now. There may be some of you. Who are. Listening  
 to me. At this time.
- Who will. Say. But we. Do not hate God. We come to the services. We sometimes read  
 our Bible. We sometimes try and pray.
- But you know. Whoever you are. At enmity toward God. Is in your possession. You have  
 no real love to God.
- You love yourselves. You love your pleasures. You love your comforts. You love your  
 privileges. And you love. To gain.
- If it were possible. The whole world. God. Now then. Let us suggest. One. In this state.  
 And condition.
- [ 19 : 30 ] Says. I'm going to turn to God. And let's make no mistake. There are. Those. Who. Try.  
 And reform their lives.
- Try and live better. And it is a great blessing. For society. When they do this. When they  
 live.
- A more reformed. A more conservative life. They may then. Attend. A place of worship.  
 With pleasure. They may.
- Engage. In. Church fellowship. They may lustily sing. The praises of God. And they may.

Outwardly. Seem. To be. In a. State. Of blessedness. But what is in their hearts. What change.

[ 20 : 27 ] Has been wrought. Well. We have to acknowledge. That there is. A man. Made. Change. A person. Has changed.

Themselves. Or. Perhaps. Someone. Has convinced. Them. And changed. Their mind. But God. Hasn't. Changed. Them. And.

Unless. And until. That takes place. They are still. Haters. Of God. Read. Your Bibles. Read.

The accounts. And you will soon see. If you're honest. In your reading. That. That. That. That. That. That. The natural man. Is at. Enmity. Toward.

God. That the. Natural man. Receiveth not. The things. Of the spirit. Of God. Neither. Indeed. Can he. He doesn't. Have the ability.

[ 21 : 21 ] He doesn't. Have the real. Desire. He doesn't. Have that longing. After. Christ. but then here is mercy and here is an encouragement perhaps for some that do attend the place of worship some who come perhaps longing in their hearts that that change which they know must take place if they are to be saved will take place they know that they need christ to shed abroad his love in their hearts by the holy spirit now i may be speaking to some who were once rebellious to the things of god turn their backs upon the house of god and the people of god because you desire to have it all your own way but then something happened perhaps after a few years perhaps after many years god is sovereign again in his dealings with his people but something constrained you to return what was it was it a natural desire was there something about the building uh that attracted you was there something about the people that attracted you was there something about the order of worship that attracted you well these things may attract and may for a season bring you back but they won't hold you and uh ere long and we've witnessed this in a practical sense in some of our churches uh that they've turned their backs again never to return now the reason that those come back or the reason for those that come in is the love of christ the love of christ toward them it is a constraining love you know there were in earlier times a preachers which were described as how fire preachers they sought to frighten the people to describe in uh picturesque language the fire of hell and eternal misery but that will never bring a person to the lord jesus christ it will never change their hearts it will never cause them to consider that there is any hope for their salvation the only thing that will bring a person to god is the love of christ constraining them and notice that word the love of christ constraineth us now the apostle could say as he looks back to that time when the lord jesus christ met him that the love of christ constrained me and that of course would be abundantly true or a person may look forward and say i trust the time will come when the love of christ will constrain me but that is not what the apostle says here

this is much more comforting to those who are seeking after christ to those who know christ and perhaps even to those who have backslidden from christ the love of christ constraineth us and so it's put in the present tense it did constrain me it does constrain me it will constrain me and what a mercy to know that this love of christ in our hearts is a constraining love unto him now how are we to understand how the love of christ can constrain us who are rebels those hearts are hardened through sin who are full of unbelief how can the love of christ constrain us when we see and understand and are brought to believe what christ has done for us it was the love of christ as i said at the beginning that brought him from heaven to earth our saviour contracted to a span found in the womb of a young woman what humility he humbled himself he made himself of no reputation he wasn't born in a palace he wasn't born in some nobleman's house he was born in a stable no more humble than that could it be although the king of kings and lord of lords although the eternal glorious son of the eternal father yet nevertheless he was made lowly he lived in his early days a life of obscurity he was unknown to the world apart from one brief appearance in the temple of god when he discussed with the learned men i say apart from that until at the age of 30 when he began in the ministry and how did it begin by being taken into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil now again make no mistake these were real temptations the devil wouldn't have come to christ if he felt he had no hope of tempting him to his own way and so these things came upon him but the lord jesus christ stood firm because he had a commitment a commitment he had made to his father and a commitment also that he had made unto his people he was committed to redeem them and if he followed the devil then his cause was lost and so he began and he found opposition nearly everywhere he went the chief priests and the priests

the pharisees the sadducees the scribes and the lawyers were all set against him they hated him without a cause and everywhere he was persecuted everywhere he was received not apart from the few and in relative terms it was but a few that recognized him for who he was and then at last as he was arrested in the garden and taken to the chief priest's house where he was physically abused and then to Pilate's Hall where this mock judgment came upon him where the whips of the soldiers cut into his back the crown of thorns into his head and there he was mocked mocked by those who ought to have seen who he was through the scriptures that have been given unto them but the

God of this world have blinded their eyes that they could not see now if anyone should have had a free will religion it was those Jews because they had the word of God they had studied it thoroughly they understood the messages in it and yet they were ignorant of the very foundation of those scriptures Christ in all the scriptures now then considering these things what think ye of Christ and again I say by nature we have no love to the Lord Jesus Christ until we are visited by the God of our salvation when our hearts are changed a new heart also will

I give unto you then our lives are changed we live in newness of life we become new creatures in Christ Jesus and the one we opposed with such venom now we follow with great delight because we recognize that we were sinners that we were sold under sin that sin had defiled us through and through that we were in a lost condition that we were under God's judgment that we were liable to be cast into hell and we had nothing to pay the price of our remission nothing we could do to deliver our souls from death and fearing of that judgment to come upon our heads we cried out in our extremity like the

[ 33 : 16 ] Philippian jailer like the man who hung upon the cross next to the Lord Jesus what must I do to be saved Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom faith was given faith to believe who Christ was who he claimed to be was the truth and that we began to see Christ as being everything to us as being that one essential one that one thing needful without him we must perish without Christ we must die and so our hearts were changed and now we felt a drawing love unto the

Lord Jesus Christ that he might be our all and in all for the love of Christ can strain with us now one thing that I feel I need to bring forth at this time the apostle Paul seems to have such zeal for the Lord Jesus Christ we perhaps lift him up as being one greatly above us and in some senses of course he was but as I said before he was a man of the same nature as us now did the apostle have his doubts and fears did the apostle still have sin and whoever I speak to at this time can you deny that you do not sin that you do sin can you say

I do not sin that I no longer sin how sad our condition is by nature that old nature that still lies within us we sin we sin against heaven and before God we are unworthy creatures we are still unworthy creatures then where will these doubts and fears lead us how solemn if we feel that we've lost God's presence if he has hidden his face if our prayers are stunted and our worship is dead and where can we be can we have any hope that our love to the

Lord Jesus Christ is still real but let us consider this it's not our love to the Lord Jesus Christ that is being spoken of here but the apostle is speaking of Christ's love to us if he loved us once he will love us always because he knew us who we are he knew us from the beginning to the end of our days he knew all that we would have to pass through he knew our failings he knew our down sitting and our uprising he knew us all together exactly as we are now did these things did our sin did our shortcomings did our unbelief did our hardness of heart turn

Christ away how does a parent gain the heart of a rebellious child and the greatest way I believe is that the parent chose a greater love and you know it's hard to fight against love and if the Lord Jesus Christ should reveal himself as a lover of our souls then our hearts are melted in love toward him our rebellions are real our sins are real shall I continue in sin that grace may abound says the apostle God forbid how can we any longer continue in sin when the love of

[ 38 : 43 ] Christ is shed abroad in our hearts when we feel that kindly love that loving kindness of the Lord toward us for the love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge that if one died for all then we're all dead because we thus judge because God has given us a certain gift of discernment he has given us understanding as we said before of what we are we've had a glimpse into our dark benighted hearts we've seen ourselves in that foul condition we've seen ourselves and recognised ourselves that we were dead and what can the dead do the dead can do nothing but then understanding the gospel looking into the scriptures that if one died for all if one died for all of course the

Arminian will take hold of this and say there you are Christ died for everyone it says so but all how ignorant man is we might speak of it in this sense that if one died for all if one died for all his people or if all that were dead Christ died for that is his own his elect people those that were chosen in him if he died for them then we were all dead and if we were all dead then the necessary conclusion is that we have been revived that God's work has been found in our hearts he's revived us again he's delivered us from the grave he has set our feet upon the eternal rock of ages he has been our shield and our hiding place he has become our

Lord and our all if one died for all all God's people without exception needed salvation salvation and without Christ dying they could not be saved this was the work that Christ came to do there was no other way whereby people could be saved no other way in which they could come out of condemnation but the apostle affirms there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus to those who are the called according to his purpose that condemnation has been taken away we owed a great debt unto our

God a mountain of debt that we could not even begin to pay but nevertheless Christ remitted that price and what an awful sum it was the blood of the eternal son of God the Lord Jesus Christ it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to this end to save sinners and the way of salvation was to take away the wrath of God against sin as we said all the way through we are sinners we cannot deny it the proof is there the law is against us judgment is upon us how then can we be saved because

Christ has made atonement for our sins he paid that awful sum he took upon himself not only the wrath of man but also the wrath of God but the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins but rose again for our justification yes he remained in the grave for three days and three nights but at the end of that appointed time he rose triumphant from the dead and after a brief period in assuring his disciples in comforting his people he ascended into heaven this same Lord

[ 44 : 52 ] Jesus now reigns in heaven above and what does he do does he neglect his people on earth has he forsaken and forgotten them never let it be said no he ever lives and he ever lives as their great high priest interceding on their behalf then we are alive unto God death cannot take hold upon us yes it's true that the body must rest a while in the body of the earth but as Christ died and rose again so we also will rise again and it's a wonderful thing to consider as the apostle shows us now this

I say brethren that the flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God neither doth corruption inherit incorruption behold behold look and see I show you a mystery we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed O death where is thy sting O grave where is thy victory the sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ the love of

Christ constrains us let me say again shall we continue in sin that grace may abound God forgive all that we may know more of that constraining love of the Lord Jesus Christ to separate us from this world of sin and sorrow to live after the example of the Lord Jesus Christ himself after the example of his faithful apostle Paul after the example of the apostles and disciples the reformers the martyrs and those that have held fast to a profession of faith let us follow their example and not the example of this sinful world which leads to destruction well we must ask ourselves what do we personally know it's not what others may say or others may feel that may be a blessing to us but it comes down to this does the love of Christ constrain you and me does it constrain us to serve him all the days of our lives to follow him in all his ways to abide by his people and to show unto this world that we are not ashamed of his gospel but oh may we give all the glory to

God may we sing praises to God and our King may we bless the Father's name who sent his only beloved son into the world to save sinners may we praise the Holy Spirit who reveals these things in us and to us that we may be found the children of God inheritors of the kingdom of heaven and to know that when our days on earth are ended we have a home which the Lord Jesus Christ himself has gone to prepare for us and if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also 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 may the

Lord bless his own word of truth to us for his dear name's sake amen let us sing together hymn 1066 to the tune Leicester 171 do not I love thee dearest Lord behold my heart and see and cast each hated idol down that dares to rival thee is not thy name melodious still to my attentive ear do I not in thy word delight the saviour's voice to hear in 1066 the tune

[ 51 : 11 ] Leicester 171