

THE Christian Life • 2 Cor 5:14-15

INTRO

1. Though the troubles in the Corinth had mostly settled down, that they'd *been* an issue revealed something unhealthy in the church.
2. Most of 2 Cor addresses that.
3. The problem was their tendency to evaluate things from a purely worldly perspective.
4. They weren't *thinking* like Christians with minds renewed by God's Spirit and Word.
5. They'd missed a key, crucial truth about what it means to **BE** a Christian.
6. So Paul keeps circling back to it.
 - a. We saw it last Wednesday in ch4. He returns to it here in ch5.
 - b. And though we looked at it Wed, because *Paul* brings it up again here, we're looking at it again.
7. It is, without doubt, one of **THE most important truths** of The Gospel.
8. But like the ancient Corinthians, many today don't get it.
9. We begin with v14 -

¹⁴ For the love of Christ compels us,

1. Far from the self-serving ambition Paul's critics accused him of, what moved him was love.
 2. "Compel" means to hold something together in an unbreakable bond.
 - a. I'll never forget my first encounter with Super-glue.
 - b. It came in a tiny tube and claimed to attach almost anything with just a drop, thru the miracle of a "molecular bond."
 - c. The ad showed a guy hanging from a football goalpost, his helmet glued to the bar.
 - d. So I bought some and tried gluing a little broken decoration.
 - e. It didn't fix what was broken, but it worked really well on my fingers.
 - f. Those babies were *compelled* to one another.
 3. What kept Paul **glued** to his calling, **cemented** to The Gospel was the love of Christ.
 4. **Both** Jesus' love for him & his for Jesus.
 5. Paul's love was an **echo** of the love God had shown him.
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6. It all **begins** with God, not us.
 - a. 1 John 4:10 says –

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son for our sins.

- b. Romans 5:8 –

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

7. God loved us long before we cared a whit for Him.
8. His love changed us from enemies to friends.
9. During the American Revolution, Baptist pastor Peter Miller was a friend of George Washington's.
 - a. A man named Michael Wittman had made it his goal in life to make Miller miserable.
 - 1) A spat when they were kids, never went away.
 - 2) Pastor Miller had tried to mend it but Wittman carried his resentment into adulthood.
 - b. He did everything he could to humiliate & disgrace Miller.
 - c. One day, Wittman was arrested for treason & sentenced to die.

- d. Pastor Miller walked 70 miles to plead for Wittman's life.
- e. Gen. Washington said, "No Peter, I cannot grant you the life of your friend."
- f. Miller replied, "Friend! He's my bitterest enemy."
- g. "What?" said Washington, "You walked all this way to save the life of an enemy?
That puts the matter in a different light. I'll grant his pardon."
- h. Miller then took Wittman home, no longer an enemy, but a friend.

1 John 4:19 // We love Him because He first loved us.

- 10. God's love is what everyone is looking for.
 - a. It's the *chief desire*, the *need* of every heart, even those who don't believe.
 - b. As one ancient theologian said "You have made us for Yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee."
- 11. Our core longing, our insatiable hunger, is to be loved, to be **wanted**.
 - a. Not needed → **Wanted**.
 - b. It feels good *at first* to be needed; it's gratifying. We feel *important*.
 - c. But it doesn't take long before we realize we can't satisfy them the need of others.
 - d. Need never ends. They need more than we have to give.
 - e. I've talked with many couples who after a few years of marriage run into trouble.
 - 1) They thought their mate was going to make them happy.
 - 2) They assumed marriage brought satisfaction.
 - 3) But after a couple years happiness didn't arrive. Instead of satisfaction, it's frustration.
 - 4) They feel cheated.
 - 5) Our counsel to such couples is, what you're looking for, no **human** can provide; only God.
 - 6) The longing for love & significance that lies at our core was placed by God in us so we'd seek Him.
- 12. **Need** means some **lack** in the one who needs.
 - a. **Want** speaks of worth **placed in** the one wanted. // So we long to be **wanted**, apart from need.
 - b. Supreme evidence of *being* wanted is **sacrifice & struggle** to obtain us.
To which *every woman* says "YES & Amen!"
 - c. So we love tales of the guy who works hard for years to obtain his bride.
 - 1) Jacob & Rachel.
 - 2) The best romance sees a struggle to win the beloved. The Notebook. Princess Bride. Romeo & Juliet
 - 2) The knight who slays dragons to rescue the maiden.
 - 3) We love those stories because → **We are that maiden**; the damsel in distress.
 - 4) Jesus **is** the courageous hero, our knight in shining armor Who paid the price & slew the dragon to rescue us.
 - d. He doesn't **NEED** us, but He does **WANT** us.
- 13. Hear that: God **wants** you. So much, He went to the cross & paid the ultimate price.
- 14. This love compelled Paul to endure great hardship so others would hear of it.
- 15. God's love for him was so strong it *echoed back* in a life that couldn't stop making it known to others.
- 16. Pluck a guitar string, then hold another guitar close. Without touching, the same string on the other guitar begins to vibrate in a harmonic.
- 17. We are the **harmony** to God's **melody**.

¹⁴ For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus:

- 1. NOW, Paul dives *back* into something he began in ch4 and we looked at Wed.

2. *What* Paul was committed to was The Gospel because it's **HOW** Jesus rescues us.
3. While he'd preached it when he first planted the church in Corinth, they'd lost their grip on it.
4. Proof of that was all the problems they'd had.
5. So Paul repeats it. Here it is ...

... **that if One died for all, then all died;** ¹⁵ **and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.**

1. Those of you who were here Wednesday, forgive the repetition.
2. What **IS** "The Christian Life?"
 - a. What does it mean to follow Jesus?
 - b. We know how to **become** a Christian;
 - 1) By believing in Christ; that He died for our sins
 - 2) And rose from the dead for our justification and new life.
 - c. Then what? After *becoming* a Christian, how do we BE one?
 - d. That is The Christian Life?
3. Many think it's a change of values & priorities from the things of the world to the things of God.
 - a. Before they were saved, they didn't care for the things of God, but now they do.
 - b. So the energy they used to invest in sin, they shift to what they find in here (Bible).
 - c. They do their best. Then, when they need help, they pray and the Holy Spirit gives them just enough to git 'er done.
4. That ISN'T The Gospel. It's not at all what Jesus intends by following Him.
 - a. He didn't die & rise just so you'd have a different set of priorities.
 - b. That's no different from any other philosophy or religion.
 - c. They're all about getting you to *invest yourself*, your time, your energy, in their cause.
 - d. The Christian Life is something else altogether.
5. Here it is → You Die. Christ Lives. // Look at it again ...

¹⁴ **For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.**

Baptism a Picture

1. There's a reason *baptism* is the ritual by which people profess their faith in Christ.
2. We go under the water, signifying our death with Christ.
3. Then come out of the water, demonstrating our rising to new life thru His resurrection.
4. Listen as Paul explains this in Romans 6

³ **Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**

5. Question: Who's life?
 - a. Well, whose death becomes ours? Jesus'
 - b. So, His life does as well.

⁵ **For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection,** ⁶ **knowing this, that our old man [our sin nature, who and what we were before coming to faith in Christ; that--] was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be**

slaves of sin. ⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

6. No one who gets baptized expects just *half* the ceremony.
 - a. “Put me under the water because I died with Christ.”
 - b. The power of the Gospel lies in the complete work of Christ. → He died **& ROSE!**
 - c. So we don’t leave people under the water. We’d be very few if we did.
 - d. No. They go under, identifying with Christ’s death, so they can come forth, identifying with His Life.
7. But don’t miss what that identification really means. Look again →

⁸ Now if we died with Christ,

- a. His death is ours.

we believe that we shall also live with Him,

- b. If His death is ours, then His life is too.

⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

¹⁰ For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God.

- c. Jesus’ Rose to a Life disconnected from death. → He, will *never*, die.
 - d. Christian! That’s the life *we have* in Christ.
 - e. It’s why Jesus said to Mary at Lazarus’ tomb, “Whoever believes in Me shall never die.”¹
8. So, Paul concludes →

¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

9. That connects to what he wrote the Corinthians in 2Cor.
10. Being a Christian isn’t us obeying God by trying real hard.
 - a. It isn’t **us** doing anything other than getting out of the way so Jesus can live in and thru us.
 - b. We have ONE CHOICE to make, ONE! >> Die!
 - c. All other choices follow-on & flow from that.

Reckon

¹¹ Likewise you also, RECKON yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. **Reckon** it so. Count on it as fact. Put it front & center in your thinking.
2. The old, sin-stuck you is dead.
3. What we inherited from Adam is done.
4. Our faith in Christ links us to Him so that when He died, the old-me was nailed to the cross.
5. Then, when Jesus rose, power was released to utterly transform us into what God created us to be.
6. Jesus rose to live in us by His Spirit.

John 14:16–18 // ¹⁶ I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

7. Hear this Christian: Jesus is IN you. >> LET HIM OUT!

¹ John 11:26

8. The Christian Life isn't you trying real hard to be good.
 - a. There's only One who can live the Christian Life = Christ!
 - b. All we can do is get out of the way; by reckoning ourselves dead, but alive in and through Jesus.
9. I wish I could tell you HOW to do that. I can't. No one can.
 - a. It defies description because it isn't a formula.
 - b. It's intensely personal and intimate, flowing from our unique relationship with God.
 - c. I know what dying to self means for me, but not for you.
 - d. All I can do is set the truth before you. What you do with it is between you and God.
10. We do have another passage that helps step into it. = **Gal 2:20**
 - a. I urge you to take note of it and make it something to meditate on over the next week.
 - b. Ponder it prayerfully phrase by phrase.
 - c. I believe as you do, untold treasure will spill into your soul.

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

CONCLUSION

1. The Spirit of God has been all over me the last couple weeks on this all important truth.
2. No doubt because it's a repeated emphasis of Paul in 2 Cor.
3. But I've also come to believe it's gone missing from the too many pulpits.
4. It's hard calling people to die. It's not a popular message.
 - a. It doesn't sell books or get invitations to speak at conferences.
 - b. But it **IS** The Gospel. It is **THE** Christian Life; the *only one* Jesus died and rose for.
 - c. It's also His invitation → Luke 9:23

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."