

“Controlled by Christ’s Love!”

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Intro. – The 1967 NFL Championship game was between the Green Bay Packers and the Dallas Cowboys. It was played at Lambeau Field, Green Bay Wisconsin, December 31st. The weather was terrible. This game is known as “The Ice Bowl” and is the coldest football championship ever played to date. The windchill factor was as low as -70 below zero... Snow covered the field/stands; yet, in spite of this, the crowd was SRO. Minutes just before the opening kick-off, a lady slipped and fell. Immediately she knew she had broken her leg, but being the ardent fan she was, there was no way she was going to let them take her to the hospital until the game was finished.

Let me introduce another ardent fan. His name is Saul of Tarsus a.k.a. the Apostle Paul. Often he was faced with reproach and criticism for his fervor for Christ. The classic example of this is found in Acts 26 where Festus simply said, “*Paul, you are out of your mind. Your great learning is driving you mad.*” Now, was Paul really insane? NO, but I assure you he was a fanatic! You heard me right. The term fanatic is the term from which we get our modern day term *fan*. Paul really was a *fan* in the proper sense – a *fan* for Christ and His Church! Why? The love of Christ controlled him!

Brethren, from what source do we derive our zeal for Christ and His Church? Are we constrained to live for Him Who died for us? Is our primary motive for being zealous in His work stem from the fact that He loves us and we love Him?!

The phenomenal growth of the First Century Church came about because the early saints were *controlled*, So *controlled* by the love of Christ were they, that among other matters they were seeking the lost!

Purpose: to see the love of Christ controls us to seek the lost

The love of Christ ought to control us in all aspects of life, but through this message our focus will be on the idea of the love of Christ controls us to seek the lost! According to our text, we are His *ambassadors*, instruments through whom man can be reconciled once again with God. Thus, the love of Christ controls us to:

I REARRANGE Our Priorities

- Illus. – a tragic example of how messed up people get their priorities took place years ago in East St. Louis, IL. A mother with eleven children and the twelfth on the way, had left all eleven kids unattended while she and her live-in boyfriend went out for a night on the town. While they were gone a fire broke out and all eleven children were killed.
- those *in Christ* are constrained/controlled to get their priorities in order:

A. Christ Set the Example

1. At the age of 12, while in the temple He said, “*I must be about My Father’s business!*”
2. During His ministry more than once did He make clear His priority was not about fame and fortune; instead, He came to *seek and to save that which was lost*.
3. At the end of His ministry
 - a. willingly died (not a martyr’s death), but as a perfect sacrifice... One Who fulfilled the Law.
 - b. rose bodily from the dead leaving a living hope
 - c. He left giving a mission – all familiar with Matthew 28:18-20... John 20:21 “*...as the Father has sent me, even so send I you.*”

B. The Early Church Paved the Way

1. Christ died for the Church and it was the Church He gave the commission to go “*make disciples*”
2. Book of Acts records the Church did just that:
 - a. they grew... numbers referred to in Acts...
 - b. though persecuted and told not to preach in Jesus’ name they went everywhere preaching and teaching the Gospel...

3. The first Century Church had her priorities right – *controlled* by the love of Christ, there was NOTHING more important than letting people know Christ died for them too!

C. We Need to Follow Through

1. Because of her love for Him, the early Church was controlled to rearrange her priorities:
 - a. no longer living unto self...
 - b. no longer ignore the lostness of sinful men...
2. Because of His love for us, Christ first of all provided redemption, then an example to follow!
3. All of which teaches our need to grow in our understanding of Christ’s love for us:
 - a. our inhibitions in talking to friends and family will be broken...
 - b. our apathy toward our lost neighbor will be turned to urgency...
 - c. our desire and joy will be to see people young and older brought to Christ...
 - d. in short, our priorities as individuals, families and as a church will be rearranged!

I’m telling you, the love of Christ controls us to rearrange our priorities!!

II REKINDLE Our Passions

- basically speaking man is stuck on himself...
- the love of Christ controls us to rekindle proper passions... more specifically a passion for those outside of Christ, those who are LOST:

A. Christ Set the Example

1. Christ with children – He bid them to come to Him...
2. Christ with people – “...*as sheep without a shepherd.*”
3. Christ viewing Jerusalem weeping because of their impending destruction...
4. Christ throughout His ministry demonstrated His passion was for lost mankind!

B. The Early Church Paved the Way

1. They went out themselves to seek the lost... even during the times of persecution...
2. They sent missionaries to the lost:
 - a. financially supporting those who could be where they could not...
 - b. praying and asking for prayers that doors would be opened...
3. Is there any question as to whether the early church had a passion for the LOST?!

C. We Need to Follow Through

1. Do we have a passion for the LOST?...
2. Are we convinced those outside of Christ are truly lost?...
3. Are we convinced the Lord means what He says concerning the *wages of sin being death*?
4. If so, we can’t help but have a passion for the LOST!
 - Illus. – song entitled: “A Passion for Souls”

Give me a passion for souls dear Lord,
 A passion to save the lost.
 O that Thy love were by all adored,
 And welcomed at any cost.
 Chorus: Jesus, I long, I long to be winning,
 Men who are lost and constantly sinning.
 O, may this hour be one of beginning.
 The story of pardon to tell!

The love of Christ constrains us to rekindle our passions!

III REVOLUTIONIZE Our Programs

- again, Jesus set the example, early church paved the way, we must follow through:

A. Christ Set the Example

1. He came teaching as one with authority and not a scribes... His “program” was different...
 2. Christ’s “program” was well planned – even before creation...
 3. Christ’s “program” met/meets man’s greatest need = redemption/forgiveness...
- B. The Early Church Paved the Way
- controlled by Christ’s love they took His “program” and had success...
- C. We Need to Follow Through
- i.e. we need to evaluate our “program” plans here at Christ’s Church in Eaton:
1. Is our worship assembly manifesting to each other and our visitors our love/devotion to Christ? If not it is time to revolutionize our “program” to His “program”...
 2. Is your preacher faithfully and effectively proclaiming the whole counsel of God? If not, it time to revolutionize our “program”...
 3. Are our Bible Classes, youth programs, Bible Studies etc. giving *meat* to our youth/older ones?
 - Illus. – nowhere in the Bible is it recorded that early church attracted people with parties, games, fun, leagues etc...! Now, don’t misunderstand me, I’m in no way against having a good time and doing these things... as a matter of fact it is most important... But when these things are put in place of SOLID Biblical teaching/training, unenthusiased and uncommitted people result. How you win people is how you retain them...
 4. In short, are all our “programs” motivated by the love of Christ? How we need to love Him more and better understand His love for us!

Conclusion: A basketball game took place in Roxboro, North Carolina. Hillside High School took the opening tip off and quickly got a basket. But then the other team, the Pearson Rockets, went into a stall. They decided to hang on to the ball and shoot only once at the end of each quarter. Hillside High in turn went to a zone defense, allowing the Rockets to “freeze” the ball. The game went on like this to the final buzzer. Who won? Hillside High. The Pearson Rockets, the team so effective in killing the clock missed all four of their shots. The game ended with a score of 2 to 0.

The Pearson Rockets serve as a perfect example of those individuals, families, and churches that are not controlled by the love of Christ. Too many Christians are content to go into a “stall” when it comes to winning the lost or serving the Lord in general... Thus, may the love of Christ control you and me to: 1) REARRANGE our priorities; 2) REKINDLE our passions...; 3) REVOLUTIONIZE our Programs...