

“The Love of God as a Motivation”

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Read 2 Corinthians 5:12-15

What motivates you? What keeps you going when times get tough? What gets you out of bed in the morning? Some might be motivated by the desire for more money, others might be motivated by the fear of being fired from their job should they choose not to show up. Everyone is motivated by something or someone. Children will typically obey their parents initially out of fear of punishment or an expression of disappointment. As parents, we are always desirous of seeing them move from obeying out of fear to obeying out of love.

The verse that contains our idea of love being a motivator is 2 Corinthians 5:14. It speaks of the love of Christ controlling us. What is it about the love of God that controls us?

The word “control” means “to hold together.” It carries the idea of “compressing” as one would their ears (Acts 7:57) or to “siege” a city (Luke 19:43) or “arresting” a prisoner (Luke 22:63). It comes to imply a preoccupation with. Those who had been taken with various diseases and torments are described as being under their control (Matt. 4:24). When someone is being controlled by “a great fever” (Luke 4:38), or with “great fear” (Luke 8:37), they are under the control of something else. With this thought in mind, Paul’s statement concerning the love of God controlling him strongly suggests that Paul found the love of God to be that which “pressed” him. God’s love held him in siege. He was arrested like a prisoner by the love of God. It is this love that held him captive. It became something that preoccupied his waking moments. As we continue to think about the love of God, there are four aspects of this love of which we are the recipients.

First, the love of God controls us because it is without condition. What exactly does the thought of “without condition” mean? For something to be unconditional it means it is without outside motivation. The action is not determined or influenced by someone or something else outside of the person carrying out the action. When we understand that God’s love for us is unconditional we will be freed from ever serving God out of fear, merit, or in bondage. The unconditional love of God frees us to serve Him because we get to, not because we have to.

Second, the love of God controls us because it is without requirement. “Without requirement” means God’s love for us does not demand a response from us. There is nothing mandated by God from us for Him to love us. Our inability to measure up to the statements of the New Testament does not restrict God from loving us. There is nothing He needs from us in order for Him to love us. God is not waiting for us to reach the next level or advance to the next base in order for Him to love us. He loves us unconditionally and without requirement. Because I know He loves me without requirement, I am free to love Him without guilt.

Third, the love of God controls us because it is without limit. Because the source of His love is rooted in who He is, it is a love that depends only on itself for its existence and

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preservation. The love of God for His people is infinite in its magnitude. There is never a time or place where the love of God is not operative and directed toward His people. His love is constantly overflowing our man-made limitations and boundaries. It is always bubbling over and gushing out.

Finally, the love of God controls us because it is without reward. God will be glorified because of who He is and what He has done. It is impossible for God not to receive the glory that is His. God's love for us is never contingent on our love for Him. It is His love for us that makes possible our love for Him. The lavish outpouring of God's love for us is often overlooked and unconfirmed. If God waited for our expressions of gratitude before He graced us with His unconditional love, then we would be spiritual paupers.

It is the grace of God that liberates His people and it is the love of God that controls His people. We no longer have to serve God out of fear or favor, but out of love. Love is the greatest motivation for any selfless act.

If this is true, then how should we now live?

First, who is it that you do not love unconditionally?

Perhaps there is someone in your immediate family who has wronged you and now your love for them has been stunted. Perhaps someone at work has done something to you that have alienated them from you. Now is the time to put aside your differences and love that individual unconditionally.

Second, what standards have you erected/built that must be met before you love?

This is seen nowhere more than in marriage and parenting. As spouses, we have a tendency to give out love only as it is merited. As parents, we expect our children to conform to our personal standards and preferences, and unless that conformity is forthcoming, we withhold acceptance. This is tragic and will only lead to heartache and misery. We are to love without requirement.

Third, is your love given only when met with a similar expression in response to it?

Friend, we love because God first loved us. His love for us is not waiting for a response from us and our love for others must be similarly driven.

Finally, where do you draw the line in loving others?

Because God loves us there is no one who falls outside of our ability to love them. Everyone, everywhere at all times is loveable. Who is it that you cannot love? That is the person you must pray for and move toward in gestures of unconditional love.

May we be known as a fellowship of Christ-exalting, neighbor-loving people.