

## “For The Love Of Christ ...”

“... constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:14f).

Paul has already sounded warning that all are to appear before the judgment seat of Christ and because we will, in view of the fear of the Lord, he persuaded men. In that passage (v. 11) he did not state specifically what he persuaded men to do but that is set forth clearly in v. 20: “We beseech you in behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.”

Verses 14-15 also are part of the reason why Paul persuaded men. “For the love of Christ constraineth us ...” The word “constrain” signifies “to hold together, confine, secure, to hold fast” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words, Vol. 1, p. 231). The thought is that the love of Christ was a compelling force to do the things he did, which in this case, was to persuade men to be reconciled to God.

The phrase “the love of Christ” can be constructed to mean “the love I have for Christ” or “the love Christ had for me”. In the passage at hand clearly it was the love that Christ had for Paul and for all men that moved him to persuade men. It is a fearful thing to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and the one thing that will make it possible to stand there uncondemned is the love Christ had for us. How great was that love! Jesus said, “Greater love hath no man than this than that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn. 15:13). In his Roman epistle Paul wrote, “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man someone would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:7-8). The great love of Jesus for man was a compelling reason for preaching the gospel and for spreading it everywhere, even now.

The conclusion Paul wrote from the constraining love of Christ was to “judge that one died for all therefore all died.” Because Christ paid the price for our redemption, men also die. The death thus spoken of is a death to the guilt of sin. Man must first die to the love of sin; then by obedience, being baptized into Christ’s death, men died to the guilt of sin (Rm. 6:3-4). Finally, man must die to the practice of sin. This latter is expressed when it is said that “we rise to walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

Notice in 2 Cor. 5:14-15 the word “all” is found three times. Christ died for ALL; therefore ALL DIED; AND HE DIED FOR all that they that live should no longer live unto themselves. Who are the “all” Jesus died for? Is his salvation universally offered; can all men be saved? John Calvin limited the “all” of this verse to the “elect” — those who (according to his teaching) were selected personally by God before the world was.

Without dispute, “all” may sometimes be limited. Joel prophesied that God would pour out His Spirit upon “all flesh” (Joel 2:28) but the flesh under consideration is human flesh, not animals. But even upon men God’s Spirit was not universally poured out and I know of none who so affirm. Yet “all” sometimes is all inclusive: “God made the world

and all things therein” (Acts 17:24). So “all” in this instance includes God as the Maker of every created thing. John wrote of Jesus, “And without him was not anything made that hath been made” (Jn. 1:3).

When one believes that man cannot act in salvation he is forced to either conclude “universal salvation” or “limited atonement”. But when one understands that man can and must act in his salvation, the difficulty is removed. Paul wrote that God would “have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” and that he “is the Savior of all men, especially them that believe” (1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10). These passages show that Christ is prospectively the Savior of all men because He died for all; He is in reality the Savior of only those who believe. The Hebrew write puts it this way: “He became the author of eternal salvation to all them who obey him” (Heb. 5:9).

It is a truth that all one needs to do to prove a statement false is to produce an example of that which one has affirmed cannot be. For example, the doctrine of “salvation by faith only” is proven false by John 12:42: “Nevertheless of the chief rulers many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they would not confess it lest they be put out of the synagogue for they loved the praise of men man than the praise of God.” Jesus said if a man will not confess He, that He will deny that person (Mt. 10:32-33). Thus we see some believers will be lost.

To the point of Christ dying only for the elect consider both Rom. 14:15 and 1 Cor. 8:11: “Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died.” Both these verses affirm that a brother, one for whom Christ died, could perish. Thus, one for whom Christ died, perished. Christ died for all, without exception but not all that Christ died for will be saved. When Paul wrote that the “grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men” (Titus 2:11), he meant all, without exception.

Christ died “for all that they that live” (been raised from spiritual death by being baptized into Christ’s death, Rom. 6:3-4) should not live unto themselves but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again.” Because Jesus bought me, I am His and His will must be my will. Let us live for Jesus.

Jim McDonald