

The Love of Christ constrainteth us!

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[0:00] I greet you in the name of Jesus this morning.! It is good to be here.!

We've read these verses the last while, several times probably. This morning I want to go further. The love of Christ constraineth us. The love of Christ constrains us because we thus judge that if one died for all, then we're all dead.

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.

Verse 14 and 15. You know, we've read these several times, I believe, the last while. But today I want to look at a couple things.

[1:25] We'll start with the love of God. The love of Christ constrains us. God, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

God so loved us. And so he sent his son. And so now the apostle writes here, he says, the love of Christ constrains us.

The love of Christ because he loved us so much that he gave his life for us. You know, what less can we do but to live for him?

The apostle, I believe, here as he writes this, he is saying that God's love for him and his love for God was a dominating force in his life.

Is it the dominating force in our life? Do we make our decisions? Do we live our life according to this thought, according to the love of God?

[2:49] That word constraineth, it controls, it urges, it impels us.

It impels us to serve him. It impels us to love him. And we will go on from here.

But God loved this world so much that he sent Jesus. You know, he didn't have to. But why did he do it? You know, our God wants a relationship with men.

He wants a relationship with each one of us. And as we look at this, we will see that this is the ultimate, this is the most important thing in our walk with the Lord is our relationship with him.

You know, Jesus, Jesus warned, and we might look at this further later, but he warned about the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

[4:07] And as I was preparing for this, the thought came that, you know, the Pharisees, they had everything right. Jesus said, do what they say, but don't do what they do.

So they had everything right. They were very religious, but there was no love of God in their hearts. Jesus said, inside, you're full of dead men's bones. They had the outward right, but the inside was rotten. God wants that relationship with us.

They didn't have one. I'm going to read in Matthew 22.

When Jesus was asked, what is the great commandment? Jesus answered, Matthew 22, verse 37, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind.

[5:29] This is a first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. You know, in Romans, it says Jesus didn't come to take away the law, but he came to fulfill the law.

And the royal law is what? It is a law of love. It is a law of love. And as we accept the love of God for us, and we're born again, and we come into a relationship with him, then the natural thing is for us to have a love for God, and a love for our Lord Jesus.

Do we love him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind? Do we? Or have we grown cold?

You know, Jesus warned in Matthew 24. He said here in verse 12 and 13, He said, And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

[7:05] You know, in order for a love to wax cold, that means it was hot at one time. There was a true love, but it waxed cold. Why? He says, Because iniquity shall abound, because lawlessness will be rampant across the land, and not just out in the world, but it will be creeping into the churches.

Lawlessness and iniquity, people following after self instead of after God. And he says, Because of this, the love of many shall wax cold.

I believe we see this in our day. And I believe the reason, one of the reasons we see it is because, you know, there's, the world has been creeping into the church, and there's, you know, things are gray instead of black and white.

And so, people just make excuses for all, for however they want to live. And as a result, they live for self instead of for God.

But Jesus said, But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. You know, it's not, you know, it's not the one that begins the race, but it's the one that finishes.

[8:33] It's the one that finishes. Jesus said, If we endure unto the end, we will be saved. Now let's turn to the Gospel of John.

John 15. Verse 9.

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you. Continue ye in my love. You know, here we have Jesus talking to his disciples.

And he says, The Father loves me, and as the Father has loved me, I have loved you with that same love. And then he says, You continue in that love.

You continue in that love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love. Even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

[10:01] Verse 13. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Now in chapter 14. And verse 15. If ye love me, keep my commandments. If ye love me, keep my commandments.

You know, do we love him? I'm sure all of us would say we love Jesus. All of us would say we love God. We are so thankful for what he has done for us.

And we love him. But do we love him with all of our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our mind, with all our being, with our whole life?

Do we love him? Is he number one in our life? Verse 23. If a man love me, he will keep my words.

[11:03] And my Father will love him. And we will come unto him. And make our abode with him. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings.

And the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you, but the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name.

He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. You know, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

He's given, I believe it's in Acts, says he is given to those that obey him. So if we love him, we will obey him.

And then the Holy Ghost will come. And he will abide in our heart. He will abide in our heart. And he will lead us. He will teach us. He will direct us.

[12:16] And we can have that relationship with him. And he will direct us. He will speak to us.

He will direct our path if we will allow him. If we will allow him, he will lead us every day of our life.

But it starts with us accepting the love of God and then loving him.

But do we love him? Do we obey him? Do we know him? Do we know him? The love of God.

True love yields to Jesus. True love yields to his spirit.

Love, do we love him in this way? You know, if you have a relationship with another person, you know, and you love them, you will do things for them that maybe you don't necessarily like, maybe you don't necessarily want to, but you will do it because you love them.

[13:33] If we do that in the natural, can we love Jesus that we will lay down ourself in order to live with him, walk with him, live for him?

The love of Christ constraineth me. Does it constrain you? Does it, does it, is there something in your heart that just says yes to whatever he is saying, to whatever the word of God says? We are forever indebted to our Lord. Yes. Yes. The love on the inside will govern our actions on the outside.

We could also say the lack of love on the inside will lack to govern our actions on the outside. Do we keep his sayings? Do we love him? The comforter is given to those who obey him. If we love him, we will show it by our obedience.

[15 : 11] Jesus said, you know, they came, they told Jesus, there's people, your family is here looking for you.

And what did Jesus say? He said, whosoever shall do the will of my father is my brother, my sister, my mother. You know, and I believe what he's saying is, you know, we, when we're family, we have a relationship.

And so if we do his will, if we do the will of the father, then we are in relationship with our Lord Jesus.

I believe that's what he's saying. Whosoever will do the will of my father is my brother, my sister, my mother. Walk in love.

Let's turn to, yeah, there's a lot of places we could go to here. Let's go to Galatians.

[16 : 26] Galatians chapter 5. The end of verse 6 says, but faith which worketh by love.

He says, circumcision doesn't avail anything nor uncircumcision, but what does avail? Faith which worketh by love.

You know, we heard about faith. And though we would have faith to move mountains, if we do not have love, it availeth us nothing.

And here he says, faith which worketh by love. Ye did run well. Who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

You know, if we're not walking in truth, what is the hindrance? What is the hindrance? Verse 9.

[17 : 23] A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Let's jump down to verse 13. But brethren, ye have been called unto liberty.

Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word.

Even this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye abide and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

This I say then, walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. By love serve one another.

Brethren, ye have been called to liberty. You know, isn't this something that we see today is people using the liberty or using this word liberty as an occasion to serve the flesh and to go after their own fulfillment, their own fleshly fulfillment, after the lust of the flesh, after the lust of this world and what the world has to offer rather than crucifying the flesh and serving our Lord Jesus.

[18 : 49] Galatians 2.20 I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

I do not frustrate the grace of God. If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

You know, crucified with Christ.

Have we, have we, are we daily taking up our cross and yielding our life to our Lord Jesus and walking, walking in what he directs, in what he would have.

He says, the life I now live, even now in the flesh, the life I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Jesus gave himself for us, and now we love him and we live for him. Now I want to go, I want to go to Revelation in chapter 2.

[20 : 16] Here we have, here we have a church. Jesus said they left their first love.

The angel of the church of Ephesus write, these things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

And the verse before this says that the seven candlesticks, they are the seven churches. And Jesus said, he holds these in his hand.

He holds these stars in his hand. And he walks in the midst of the churches. Do you realize that Jesus is walking in our midst and he's looking at your heart and he knows what's in your heart.

He knows whether you love him more than the things of this world. He knows whether you love him more than self. He says, I know thy works.

[21 : 38] He knows our works. He knows who we are. He knows what we live for. And thy labor and thy patience and how thou canst not bear them which are evil.

And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not and has found them liars and has borne and has patience and for my name's sake has labored and has not fainted.

You know, he sees a lot of good in the church. He sees a lot of good, but then he comes along in verse four. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee because thou has left thy first love.

You know, you all know that the love you had for Jesus when you were born again and those early days and those you would read the word and you just couldn't lay it down.

You just wanted to read more and it just fed you so much. And you just loved Jesus and you just wanted to live for him.

[22 : 52] Do you still have that first love? Verse five, remember therefore from whence thou art fallen.

You know, even after all the good that he saw there in this church, he says they're fallen. Why are they fallen?

Because they left their first love. And repent and do the first works. Do the first works.

Come back to Jesus and live for him with all your heart in the simplicity of a newborn believer. Or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place except thou repent.

But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

[24 : 06] To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. You know, the Nicolaitans, this Nicholas, he was a heretic.

And this doctrine was a doctrine of promiscuity. And they would just allow anything and immorality. And they were bringing it into the church.

But Jesus said he hates it. Yes, the church in Ephesians also hated it. But hating what is wrong is not good enough.

Jesus wants a relationship with you and with me. He wants that relationship. He knows our works. And here he tells this church, I want you to repent and to do the first works.

Come back to me. Come back and love me. Come back into this relationship that we used to have. Yes, that's what he's saying.

[25 : 23] You know, we read in the book of John how if we love him, Jesus said if we love him, we will keep his commandments.

We will do the things that he says. We will live for him. And we will walk with him. And we'll look at more of that later. But, you know, my mind went to Saul in the Old Testament.

He was given a command to go and to destroy the Amalekites. And so he went. He took his army and he went. And what are a few of the things that stick out to you in that whole account?

You know, maybe I will turn to it. It's in 1 Samuel 15. You know, they went and they destroyed the Amalekites.

However, he took the king. He saved the king. And then they came back. Well, it says here, 1 Samuel 15.

[26 : 55] He destroyed all the people with the edge of the... So, verse 9. But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fatlings and the lambs and all that was good and would not utterly destroy them, but everything that was vile and refused, that they destroyed.

Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king. For he is turned back from following me and hath not performed my commandments.

And it grieved Samuel and he cried unto the Lord all night. Verse 13.

And Samuel came to Saul and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What meaneth then the bleeding of the sheep in mine ears and the lowing of the cattle of the oxen which I hear?

And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites. The people spared the best to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

[28:19] You know, Saul said, I have performed the commandment of the Lord. Saul said that. You know, how many times do people today, we say, we have performed the commandment of the Lord, but we only followed the Lord part way.

We were only obedient part way. And then when it didn't feel good to the flesh, we drew back. We weren't willing to make that sacrifice to follow him all the way.

Well, these people, they even, they saved the best for a good purpose, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God. Surely the Lord will accept that, right?

Right? No. God does not accept anything that comes of ourself and of our flesh.

The Lord sent thee, well, let's just read, let's just continue reading here, verse 17. When thou was little in thine own sight, was thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel?

[29:52] And the Lord anointed thee king over Israel. And then the Lord sent you on a journey to destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and to fight against them until they be consumed.

Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil and didst evil in the sight of the Lord. And again, Saul said, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord and have gone the way which the Lord sent me and have brought Agag and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people, they took the spoil, the sheep and the oxen and all those things. The people did this. And then Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burned offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and a hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

Because thou has rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected thee from being king. To obey is better than sacrifice.

[31:20] Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. And how is that? You know, when a man rebels against the commandment of God, what happens?

He is withdrawing himself from the authority of God. And he's now standing under the authority of something else, which is the prince of the power of the air.

And so, any power that is not under the power of God is witchcraft. And so, we see the whole world lieth in wickedness.

It is under the power of the evil one. And when we rebel against the commandment of God, we fall into witchcraft.

Stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. You know, when we reject the word of the Lord, when we push him away, when we, when we quench the spirit of God, it's idolatry.

[32:45] It's self-worship. Rebellion, I won't do it.

It's stubbornness. I'll do it, but my way. Stubbornness makes idols of our own opinions. Isn't that true?

Idols of our own opinions. Rebellion sets aside God-ordained authority. It rejects it.

And when we reject the authority of God, we come under the authority of the evil one. Now, I want to look a little further down.

We won't take time to read through this. Verse 29, the strength of Israel will not lie nor repent, for he is not a man that he should repent.

[33:45] Then Saul said, I have sinned, yet honor me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people and before Israel and turn again with me that I may worship the Lord thy God.

So Samuel turned again after Saul and Saul worshiped the Lord. Notice here, verse 30. He's, even after all of this, you know, he admits that he sinned, but he did not really truly repent.

But he was so concerned with how this looked to the elders. And he asked Samuel to come with him and that he would be able to worship the Lord.

He was more concerned with how it looked on the outside than he was with the rebellion of his heart. Looking good in the sight of the people was more important than peace with God.

You know, and then the next chapter we would read where the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and God sent an evil spirit upon him.

[35:04] Why? Because he did not wholly follow the Lord. He did not follow our God with all his heart.

Are we following God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind? Or are we more concerned about the outward appearance than the inward heart appearance?

Jesus? You know, in Matthew 23, we'll just read a little bit here about the Pharisees and what Jesus said.

Matthew 23, we'll start in verse 25. Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye may clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness.

[36:39] Even so, ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. You know, very simply, let me just say what I think this is saying is it is religion without love, without the love of God.

When a man loses his first love and he goes back into self-worship and serving self and self on the throne, you know, we have a choice when we do that.

The one is to just let loose and to run and to, like Jude says, making provision for the flesh.

That's not in Jude, but I can't get that verse in Jude. We might look at it later. But opening up the way to just use this for the fulfillment of the flesh or then to maintain a religious look.

And and to look right on the outside, but inside I've lost my first love.

[38:06] These Pharisees, he says, they indeed look beautiful on the outside.

They look right. They appear righteous unto men. You know, that was Saul's concern was that he would appear righteous before the men, before the elders of Israel.

He wasn't that concerned about his heart. He was just concerned how it looked to the people. And and here are the Pharisees.

They're the same way. They want to appear righteous before men. But Jesus knew their heart. You know, most of the people did not.

They didn't know who these Pharisees were or what lives they lived. But Jesus did. And he knew that they are within.

[39:07] They were full of dead men's bones. Within they're full of hypocrisy and iniquity, lawlessness, with just a show of religion.

I believe that's where people go when they lose their first love is one ditch or the other. You will not, without a relationship with Jesus, you will not stay on the straight and narrow.

Thou has left thy first love, you have deserted me. It's what Jesus told the Ephesian church. You know, we read the epistle there, Ephesians, and it is such a wonderful book.

And how could it be that that church actually lost its first love? That's what he says. So the Pharisees, I would say they were religious without love, without the love of God in their hearts.

Is your love for Christ greater than your love for self? You know, I believe that's a question we have to answer on a continual basis as we go on through life.

[40:50] You know, are we putting him first? Are we putting the kingdom of God first? Are we walking in obedience? Are we walking in the way we are because we love him and he is directing us?

The Pharisees, they were only concerned about looking right. They didn't care about the inside. They may clean the outside, but inside is full of uncleanness.

You know, in 2nd Corinthians, just a couple of verses before the verses we started with, it says, talks about people that glory in appearance and not in heart.

People that glory in appearance and not in heart. I believe that's a people that have lost their first love and now all they have is the appearance of right, the appearance of being holy, the appearance on the outside, but their works deny, their works show who they really are.

Even though they try to make a show, God knows the heart. God knows the heart. So now let's let me get a few verses in 1st John and then we'll go to Ephesians.

[42:35] In 1st John 3:16. Hereby perceive we the love of God because he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

But whoso hath this world's good and seeth his brother have need and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him. How dwelleth the love of God in him?

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. You know, faith without works is dead.

So let us not love in word, but in deed and in truth. You know, words are cheap. We can make a lot of words, we can say a lot of things, but are we backing it up with our life?

That's what he challenges us for here. Are we, are we showing love to our brothers?

[43 : 56] Verse 14, we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

Let us not love in word only, but in deed and in truth. Ephesians.

There's so much here we could go into yet. Chapter 5, be ye therefore followers of God as dear children and walk in love as Christ also has loved us and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.

Walk in love. You know, Christ loved us and he gave himself for us. Now let's, let's walk in this love and give ourselves to him and to humanity to the brothers and sisters.

Let us live our life, a life of love. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

[45 : 36] You know, Jesus ultimately laid down his life. But are we willing to sacrifice for our fellow man? Are we willing, you know, when we help someone in need?

You know, it takes away from us. But are we willing to do that? I believe that's what he's talking about, is to love in deed and in truth. You know, when we see a brother in need and we could, we have the means to help, but we don't, how dwelleth the love of God in us.

Now, let's look at chapter 3.

Ephesians chapter 3. verse 17, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love, that we might be rooted and grounded.

What's that, what's that mean? Being rooted and grounded. You know, when, I believe, when the, when the love of God abides in our heart, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, he's in our heart and he dwells there and we, we have this relationship with him, he will put roots down and, and, and, and, you know, we will be rooted and grounded in him, rooted and grounded in love.

[47 : 47] And we may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ.

He's telling us that, that, that, that this should be, this is his prayer for us and it should be our desire. It should be our prayer for ourselves and for each other.

That we would know the love of Christ and this love, this love of Christ, it passes knowledge. It's more than we can comprehend.

It is more than we can understand. that he, he might be filled with all the fullness of God. What did Jesus say in the book of John?

That when we walk in obedience, when we obey his commands, he will come and he will make his abode with us and he will dwell within us, the comforter, the Holy Ghost.

[48 : 51] He will fill us, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God. Oh, hallelujah. There's nothing in this life greater than this, to be full of the Spirit of God.

Is it your goal in life to be full of the Holy Ghost, to be emptied of self and to be full of the Spirit of God? That we might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.

Amen. If Christ dwells in your heart as you walk in obedience and you grow in him, oh, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Listen, if we have noticed that we're growing cold and we're growing indifferent and we're starting to walk a walk of hypocrisy, let us repent and come back to that first love and walk in the love of Jesus.

[50 : 34] You know, as we accept his love and we have this relationship with him, his love will grow in us. It will take root and it will come out through us.

Yes, his spirit, it will work through us and the love of God will flow out to meet the needs of humanity around about us.

Oh, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God. I will answer every need, it will answer every question, it will meet all the needs around about us, is when we are filled with the fullness of God, that river of life flowing through us, it will meet the needs of humanity, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man, that

we can be strengthened.

Strengthened by what? Strengthened by the spirit of God. Our effectiveness in the kingdom of God rests on this one thing, in our ability to be led by the spirit of God.

That is only as we submit to him and as we allow him to work in us and cleanse us and set us free and then to empower us and to use us.

[52 : 29] Hallelujah. Hallelujah. That we might be filled with all the fullness of God. what an awesome, awesome reality that is available to all of us.

Hopefully we're walking in this, but are we? Are we really? Are we drawing cold? Are we slowly cooling off? Are we slowly allowing things and following things that are not true, that are not right? are we allowing things that are not true in our life? Are we putting out a pretense? Are we trying to make a show to prove to others that we are okay when in reality we're full of iniquity and idolatry? Amen. are we making clean the outside but leaving the inside full of uncleanness?

Or are we allowing him to cleanse the inside and then the outward will take care of itself and it will also be cleansed?

[53 : 58] now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us.

unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages world without end amen are we are we surrendered to him are we living for him the grace of God you know there's a verse in Titus there's a verse in Titus I I think I'll read it so I don't quote it wrong but he says here the grace of God that bring us salvation teaches us that denying ungodliness in worldly lusts we should live soberly righteously and godly in this present world looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our

Savior Jesus Christ who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works Jesus again here we have it again Jesus gave himself for us that he might redeem us that he might redeem us from what from all iniquity and purify us unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works remember our Lord Jesus he wants a relationship he wants a relationship with you and with me the church at Ephesus they had grown cold they drifted away and when we drift away and we lose our first love then the relationships suffers and we no longer we no longer walk in obedience we no longer sacrifice we're not willing to sacrifice our own way and our own will for our

Lord Jesus but when we love him with all our heart with all our soul with all our strength and our neighbor as ourself oh hallelujah that's what he's looking for amen amen may the Lord bless may the