

## 2 Cor 5:11-15 Motivations for Ministry, part 2

2 Cor 5:11-15 is all about Paul's motivation for ministry. He faced a good bit of criticism from the people at Corinth, and in this section of the book, Paul is describing what motivated him to continue to serve God in spite of opposition and disapproval.

If you are engaged in ministry, you know that it can be difficult to keep on serving. The temptation always exists to just quit, especially when you encounter opposition or criticism. In order to keep on serving in spite of the obstacles, we must be highly motivated. We need to keep in mind why we are serving. That's what Paul is talking about here—motivations for ministry.

Last week we looked at this passage and discovered three motivations for ministry: The fear of God (the JSOX), the desire to be understood by others, and ministry to others motivate us.

A fourth motivating factor, and probably the strongest one to keep in mind, is...

I. .14-15 The love of Christ motivates us to live for him.

Paul now comes to a compelling source of motivation, a high purpose for godly living. Christ's love for us should motivate us to serve him and live for him.

A. Christ loved us.

1. "the love of Christ" -- Is he talking about Christ's love for us, or our love for him? The highest motivation would be Christ's love for us. His love for us is beyond measure. Our love for him may be fairly weak and small. When we consider Christ's love for us, and what he did to save us, we should find that highly motivating.

2. How did Christ demonstrate his love for us?

*John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*

*Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

3. In response to Christ's great love for us, our *self*-centeredness must give way to *Christ*-centeredness. The love of God motivates us, not the love of self.

B. .14b Christ died for all.

1. The central truth of the Christian Gospel is that Jesus died for us and rose again. His death and resurrection have monumental significance for us. It provides both salvation and motivation for obedience and service. Because Jesus died for us, we should respond by living for him.

**Quote:** The mainspring of all energy in the Christian ministry is the love of Christ as evidenced by the death of Christ for all men.<sup>1</sup>

2. .14c “for all” (ὕπὲρ πάντων) means “on behalf of all, instead of all, as a substitute for all.” Jesus is both representative and substitute for all in his death.

1 John 2:2 *And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

3. And notice that the word “all” is used three times. It must refer to the same group—One died for all, all died, he died for all. “All” is the same group; Christ’s death pertains to all; it was for all, on behalf of all, as a substitute for all.

4. This seems to be a strong direct statement regarding the extent of the atonement—for whom did Christ die? We must affirm that, in some sense, Jesus died for everyone.

You may be aware that there is significant controversy within Christianity regarding the extent/scope of the atonement. Did Jesus die for everyone, or did Jesus die only for believers? Is the atonement limited only to believers?

5. Here it says quite clearly, “he died for all.” Christ’s death has significance for all of humanity. Every single person, theoretically, could be saved because of Jesus’ death and resurrection. All humanity stands to benefit from Jesus’ death—male and female, Jew and Gentile, slave and free. The value of Jesus’ death is infinite; it could be applied to everyone.

6. .15 “those who live” -- Out of that group who were all dead, some “live.” All died, but only some live. Although Jesus died for all, *not* all will “live.” Some will live, but some will remain in death. Those who refuse the gift of eternal life will not enjoy spiritual life; they remain dead in trespasses and sins; they remain under God’s condemnation and wrath.

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<sup>1</sup> Lenski, 1028.

7. The merits of Jesus' death apply only to a select group—those who accept the gift of eternal life. Jesus' death was *sufficient* for all, but *efficient* only for believers.

There is a difference between what is *available* through Jesus' death and what is *applied*. The application of Jesus' death is where we find the limitation; the saving value of Jesus' death applies only to believers. There is no limit in the value of Jesus' death; it could apply to all. But it's only believers who have received the gift of eternal life that Jesus purchased through his death on the cross.

**Quote:** There is universalism in the scope of redemption, since no man is excluded from God's offer of salvation; but there is a [limitation] in the application of redemption, since [only believers] appropriate the benefits afforded by this universally offered salvation.<sup>2</sup>

We affirm that Jesus died “for all,” and we also affirm that the benefits of his sacrificial death apply savingly only to believers in Jesus.

- C. .14a Christ's love compels us. Now we see how this motivates us.
  1. The word “compels” (συνέχει) means “to hold tight, to hold together, to keep control over something, to constrain or restrain.”
  2. The love of Christ urges us or motivates us to obey him and serve him. We are “hemmed in” or limited by Christ's love for us; it motivates us to serve God and to serve God's people.

**App:** Christ's love for us and our love for him should be life-dominating. It should compel us, constrain us, and hold us tight. Since we love Christ and since he loves us, we have no other option than to live for him, serve him, and obey him. The love of Christ motivates us and controls us.

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<sup>2</sup> Murray J. Harris, “2 Corinthians,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 352.

**App:** People today do not want to be controlled/restrained by anything outside of themselves. They want to be free to do whatever they feel like doing. Cf. Ps 2—“let us cast away their cords from us.” People today want unrestrained, unencumbered, unlimited freedom to do whatever their depraved hearts incline them to do; they demand freedom to indulge their wicked appetites. And society today promotes and encourages people to throw off all restraints.

Christians are restrained/controlled by the love of Christ. His love dominates us; it gives us no other option than to call him Lord and do what he tells us to do. The love of Christ hems us in so that our highest goal is to serve God and obey his word.

Next time you are tempted to quit, just ask yourself, “What is motivating that feeling?” Is it the love of Christ or the love of self?

D. .15b Christ’s love motivates self-denial.

1. Notice the purpose statement here: “that those who live...” Christ’s death has an intended purpose/result. Christ died so that believers would no longer live for themselves.

Unbelievers characteristically live for themselves. Slavery to self – self-indulgence — is a mark of the unsaved person. For an unsaved person, the highest concern is self. His ultimate aim is self-centered. This is especially true of those who don’t believe in God—they often become a god unto themselves.

2. Believers in Christ are no longer slaves to themselves. They have the capacity *not* to put themselves at the center of the universe.

Notice the words “no longer” (15b). We used to be slaves to self, but no longer. After conversion, we have a higher motivation than self, a higher purpose than satisfying our own appetites. Christ’s love for us motivates us more strongly than love for self or the love of pleasure.

3. The love of self and the love of pleasure are very strong motivators, very strong appetites. How can we overcome them? There must be a stronger motivation, a stronger reason that causes us to deny ourselves. What is that stronger motivation? It’s the love of Christ.

4. Christians should not be self-centered. We do not live for ourselves. Salvation frees us from a self-centered existence. We are no longer slaves to sin and to self.

**App:** I wonder if you can honestly say that you are not living for yourself. Do you have a higher goal than merely satisfying your own desires and appetites? If you are a Christian, you no longer live for yourself. The love of Christ motivates us to no longer live for ourselves.

E. .15c Christ's love motivates Christ-centered living.

“[We live] for him who died for [us] and rose again.” Dying with Christ naturally results in living for Christ.

**Quote:** In societies given to self-promotion, self-fulfillment, and self-indulgence, Christians will stand out as distinctively different. They live only for Christ and give up their own rights for the good of others and do not insist on having their own way.<sup>3</sup>

1. Being saved is not merely a change of spiritual condition. Being saved changes the way we think and the way we live. We are no longer slaves to self; we cannot be self-centered. We die to self and live for God and for others.
2. We owe a large debt to Christ for his sacrificial death on our behalf, and we should serve him and obey him because of what he did for us. We take up our cross daily and follow him—that's what it means to be a disciple. We live for him because he died for us.

### Living for Jesus

Refrain:

O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,  
For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me;  
I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne;  
My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.

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<sup>3</sup> David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 280–281.

3. Denying self and living for the glory of God is one of the greatest challenges to the Christian faith. People are not naturally interested in denying themselves, taking up the cross, and following Jesus. We are naturally self-centered, not God-centered. We seek benefits for ourselves, not for others. So living for Christ is difficult. Salvation is a free gift, but being a disciple of Jesus is costly; it costs your entire life. That's why many people reject Jesus—it's too costly, too constraining, too limiting.

Cf. the story of the Rich Young Ruler (Lk 18:18f)

4. For Christians, living for self is not an option. Christ died for me, so now I'm obligated to live for him and not for myself. I'm obligated to serve others humbly, not put myself first.

**Quote:** The outcome of Christian self-denial is a Christ-centered life filled with concern for others.<sup>4</sup>

**App:** All of us should be striving to put Christ and his will at the center of our lives. The strongest motivation—the love of Christ—should compel us to deny ourselves and live for him.

5. And notice the end of vs. 15 “and rose again.” Jesus died for us and rose again for us—that is, for our benefit, on our behalf. The Gospel message includes both the death and resurrection of Jesus. Without the resurrection, we'd have a dead savior and an empty faith. We would be of all men most miserable if Jesus did not rise from the dead (1 Cor 15). But Jesus “rose again,” and his resurrection verified his claims to be the Messiah.
6. We died with Christ, and we also live with him. His resurrection guarantees our future resurrection.

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<sup>4</sup> Murray J. Harris, “2 Corinthians,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 352.

Today's portion of the text reveals the strongest motivation for Christians: the love of Christ. His love for us, which he demonstrated by dying on the cross for us and rising again, should motivate us to do two things: 1) deny ourselves, 2) live for Christ. Our goal is to live for him who died for us. He gave everything for our benefit. Now we are obligated to serve him and his people.

You can't live for Jesus until you are saved. I wonder if you have appropriated the value of Jesus' death and resurrection for yourself. Are you one of "those who live" (.15)? Jesus' death is *sufficient* to pay for your sins, but it's not applied to you until you repent of your sin and trust in Jesus to save you from your sins. If you've never done that, I urge you to do so today.

If you have been saved, but are not living for Christ, I urge you to repent of your self-centeredness and renew your commitment to dying to self and living for him.