

COMPELLED: A People of Full Devotion

2 Corinthians 5:11-15

MPS: God's redeeming love fills a Christ-follower to live COMPELLED.

OBJ: Christians live COMPELLED by four motivations.

INTRO

The last couple of weeks we've looked at the full devotion of the Christian life. God is fully devoted, faithful in every way and at all times. When we live in God's redeeming love, he grows a full devotion to Jesus that compels our lives. Today I want to culminate what it means to be a people of full devotion that live compelled as we seek to discern and follow the Lord's leading for LifePoint Church. The sermon provides a Biblical and Theological foundation for a life COMPELLED by God's love.

READ 2 Cor 5:11-15

*Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. ¹²We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. ¹³For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴For the love of Christ **compels** (controls) us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. 2 Cor 5:11-15*

Paul begins Second Corinthians five by reminding of the hope we have in God's eternal promise. This world is not our home and it doesn't hold our eternal hope. Because our hope is anchored with Jesus, we can take courage for life here on earth. He reminds us of three certainties that we must never forget. We walk by faith, not by sight in this life. We live to please the Lord in all things. And, we will give an account to Him for how we lived in this world.

The remainder of 2 Corinthians 5 directs Christ-followers how to live faithfully and fully devoted to Jesus. This direction addresses a much larger issue as well, a question we all ask of our lives. At some point we all ask, because life demands we pursue it, "**what is the purpose for my life?**" Paul uses one critical word to provide our direction, "*Therefore*". "*Therefore*" in scripture always tethers what follows with that which preceded it. The Christian's hope, joy, purpose and strength for life is sourced from the Lord of all creation. The way we live in the world prepares us for eternity with Jesus. "*Therefore*", in 2 Corinthians 5, tethers a Christian's faithful living to God's full devotion. Christ-followers live fully devoted to the Lord out of the overflow of God's love that fills our life.

God's redeeming love fills a Christ-follower to live COMPELLED.

What does it mean to be COMPELLED, and WHY is it important?

The Greek word for compel, *synecho* [συνέχει – root: συνέχω] (v15), holds a spectrum of meaning that helps us understand God's love at work. The word's root has a primary essence of 'to hold together'. It has a confining sense to its meaning that English translations interpret as seize, constrain, and control with a sense of urging force. When we consider this meaning, we recognize these as what we call motivation. These definitions help us understand how Paul climaxes these verses to state that we are compelled by God's love. **God's love engages all of life at the center to become an internal force that moves us to corresponding, external action.**

Understanding this word is important for several reasons. The work of God is never disconnected from, but accomplished through the power of God's love. When we strive to live for God without remembering our source of motivation and sustaining strength, ¹we serve (live) out of a strength that is rooted in self, ²we suppress the value of the work for our own sanctification (God's work in us), ³we sabotage the aim of our mission by only "accomplishing a goal" above "exalting Jesus' name", and ⁴we subvert God's purpose of "glory-covered creation" (Hab 2:4) by celebrating lesser accomplishments that will

not last. Every false attempt to live drives our life. We will either be driven to live for something, or compelled to live out of our overflow. **Christ-followers live compelled because our life sources from God's redeeming love.**

TRANS I want these meanings to show us how God's love fills us to compel our lives. Until we are with God eternally in Heaven we live in the "here and now", identified by the "Therefore-s" of this passage, that reveal a right motivation to engage God's right work in the world.

OBJ: God's love compels us by **four motivations that compel us**, each one demonstrating a level of what it means to live COMPELLED.

First, God's love "seizes us" in worship.

The first motivation that compels us is Worship, because we know the Lord.

"knowing the fear of the Lord," 5:11a

Verse 11 begins with the sobering reality, that every person will answer to God for their life. (.10) No one escapes this reality. And because of that, Paul says that the way we live faithfully now is determined by this first, defining motivation. **Christians live seized in worship because we know the Lord.**

You may not think of God's love affecting you in this way, but let's be very clear. The fact that God has come to us is the demonstration of His love. ^{John 3:16} And, lest we fall prey to the norms of our day to think that worship is some sort of emotional rush or self-centered experience, we must never forget that we will give an account for our life, all of it. **Worship is never measured by what we experience, but by how God is rightly glorified.**

People who reject any sense of fear or awe of God can only do so by denying the work of His love. This demonstrates that they really know little to nothing of God. When we downplay our attitudes, actions and words, and how God sees them, we're denying the trust of our relationship with Him and choosing to live under law, believing our good will outweigh our bad, and God will overlook it. The gospel reminds us that God doesn't weigh our bad deeds against our good deeds. Both are equally damnable before Him. So, we should never believe that He works that way. **Manipulating God as a cosmic comforter may justify our sinfulness in our mind, but it never sets us right with God.**

ILLUS In all my rebellion, one thing kept me grounded at all times, the expectation of my parents to obey. Though I didn't always act on the "weight" of the reality of that expectation, it was never absent from my life. It always weighed on my conscience. And, I knew better than to think, "my parents love me too much to worry about my rebellion." My parents loved me too much to ignore my rebellion. **Friend, God loves you too much to ignore any hint of rebellion that tempts you to stray from Him.**

We are seized in worship because there is no other like God! Worship brings us into the presence of God's holiness. We never consider this lightly or flippantly because we never arrive nor remain there on our own merit. The more you worship and remind yourself of WHO He is, the more you know Him, the more worthy He becomes of our worship. You can't out-worship God's worthiness. **Our greatest worship is always out-gloried by God's displays of power, beauty and might.**

Fear is only considered a negative impulse for those who have little or no regard for the One to whom we will give an account. For those who love the Lord and live in relationship with Him, the 'pulse of fear' steers us into humble worship that seizes us with the reality that the holy God of all creation would welcome us in His presence. **The Christian life is seized by God's love first with a defining awe of fear that we will give an account for how we live.**

Miss this and you miss everything else. "Therefore" means we know the God we worship gives a hope that transcends this world because this world. The only way the problems of this world will ultimately be solved is by a Savior that transcends this world who comes to rescue us! **God's glorious display of love in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross seizes our heart and life in worship because we know what He has done.**

Second, God's love holds us together.

The second motivation that compels us is Identity, because God knows us.

"But what we are is known to God," 5:11b

Our identity is predominantly determined by two things, what we love and those that know us. Paul says this in the Scriptures. First Corinthians 8:3 states, "But if anyone loves God, he is known by God."¹Cor8:3 And when speaking of our salvation he states, "But now that you have come...to be known by God."^{Gal4:9} **Loving God leads us to be known by God, which identifies us.**

One author that writes exclusively on how our loves define us explains, "What do you want?'...is the most incisive, piercing question Jesus can ask of us precisely because we are what we want. Our wants and longings and desires are at the core of our identity, the wellspring from which our actions and behavior flow."¹ Christianity is never only about knowing God, but being known by God. And the way we come to be known by God is to love Him in response to His love to us. **Identity flows out of our worship because it reveals what we love and determines that which we are most known by.**

ILLUS **The Velveteen Rabbit**, by Margery Williams, is a children's book written that makes this very point, that what we love and that from which we pursue love, acceptance and validation, is the very thing that defines and identifies us.

Knowing God is about so much more than intellect. God's love impacts us powerfully because He holds that which we most desperately long for in life, perfect love and acceptance.

TRANS Think about how love impacts you most powerfully in your life.

ILLUS The best teachers are not the ones that teach you the most, but those who instill a love for what you are taught. The marriages we most admire are not those who can tell us the most about marriage, but those who are most in love.

Love determines who you are and who you become known by. The way you open up your life, to become vulnerable and grow in intimacy with others, is all determined by love. **Until you get honest about what you really love you can't even know who you really are.**

Christian, we are God's because He has loved us with a redeeming, life-transforming love! We are new; the old is no more. God knows us perfectly, better than we understand ourselves. We struggle to forget, forgive and move forward from our past. We must learn to root our life in God's love. Sin drives us to determine our identity, so we can find worth, value and acceptance. God's love fills us, satisfying our deepest longing for love, worth, value and acceptance. He sets us free from the mad and insane pursuit of finding ourselves in this world, and releases us to live out of the overflow of His love. And this we learn as we live by faith, "for we walk by faith, not by sight."²Cor5:7 **God's love holds life together when we remember, "I am NOT what my sin says about me, but what God has said OF me because of what He did FOR me."**

Christian, you are God's. He created you and purchased you for Himself. God knows you better than you know you because he made the you and remade the new you. **We come to know our true identity as we open our lives completely to live fully in God's love.**

APPL **Is your life 'held together' by God's love?**

When you know that "what you are" is known to God, you stop living with worry about what everyone else thinks because the reality of WHO we are because of Jesus leads us to live distinctly in light of our new identity. **God's love holds our life together by reminding us of our new identity in Christ.**

Third, God's love constrains us.

¹ Smith, James, K. A. You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit. (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016), Loc 91/3541.

The third motivation that compels us is priority of relationship, because we live to serve the Lord.

*We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. ¹³For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. **2 Cor 5:12-13***

Paul tells the Corinthians that the purpose of his ministry is not to impress them, but provide an opportunity to explain to others why they live the way they do, because Jesus is Lord. Christians do not pre-occupy themselves with putting on airs to impress others, but living first in all things to make sure their lives reflect Jesus' Lordship.

When we allow relationships to wrongly define us, we live to please others. When we rest our identity in the Lord Jesus, we become intentional to how relationships constrain us. When we live under Jesus' Lordship, our pre-occupation with outward, superficial appearances ceases, and a focus on faithfully serving Him prevails. What others think of us does nothing to define or deter us. [The priority of our relationship to Jesus as King rules the Christian life.](#)

ILLUS Marriage is a relationship that constrains when rightly prioritized. How I relate to others is first and foremost determined by the priority of my marriage. I would never want anyone to think anything other than, Christ is his first priority. [Marriage is a constraining relationship when we live to honor the Lord and our spouse through it.](#)

Constraining means what it keeps you from doing as well as what it leads you to do. Every aspect of our life is filtered through the single priority of, what best and most displays Jesus as Lord in my life. People called Paul a religious fanatic, Paul responded, "Maybe so, but if so then only for Jesus' glory." One commentator states, "Christ's love is a compulsive force in the life of believers, a dominating power that effectively eradicates choice in that it leaves them no option but to live for God and Christ."² [Christian, can it be said that your life is so filled by God's love in Jesus Christ that it dominates you?](#)

Paul explains God's constraining love at work within him that focuses his life in Philippians 1.

*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²²If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. **Phil 1:21-24***

Paul says that because of his love for Jesus his whole life is consumed with faithfulness to Him. He is "hard pressed" by these two realities, that death into the presence of Christ is his greatest hope, but as long as he lives faithfulness consumes him. Some people, if not most, dismiss this as radical, but the Bible says it is to be typical, normal for the Christian life.

APPL [Christian, are you dismissing the Biblical standard of the Christian life by labeling it as radical so you have no expectation of that level of love from your own life?](#)

The way we live may seem crazy to the world, but the only thing that matters is whether it is distinctive to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Faithfulness to Jesus often makes no sense to the watching world, but it always testifies to them of His power in us. [When God's love fills us, we prioritize our relationship to Jesus as Lord to make sure our whole life serves Him first.](#)

Fourth, God's love urges us.

The fourth motivation that compels us is Conviction, because what we hold to be true of Him determines how we live for Him.

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. **2 Cor 5:14-15**

Here we see, finally, how the love of God that seizes us, holds us together and constrains us also controls us. THIS is the point at which God's work in us becomes God's work through us, where all that is going on within takes on a tangible expression! A redeeming love that compels is never rightly reflected by a comfort-driven mindset, complacency-ruled inaction, or a consumer-pleasured purpose. [The Christian life is fueled from the conviction of Christ's atoning sacrifice.](#)

² Murray J. Harris, [The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Milton Keynes, UK: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.; Paternoster Press, 2005), 419.

ILLUS Centrifugal force. The concept of centrifugal force reminds us that the stronger the center the more powerful the outward force (rotation).

A gospel that cannot and has not moved you is a gospel that does not seize you, hold you or control you. The motivating force that fuels the Christian lives leads forth in this world toward our eternal dwelling. [The deeper our conviction of what God's Word says about Christ's sacrifice FOR us, the more powerful the compelling work of God's love will become IN us.](#)

[Compelled means that the way we live reflects the One by whom we've been loved.](#)

LifePoint is a people that exists because of the God of full devotion. Anything offered to God in response that is less than full isn't worthy to be received by Him. Christ gave His all. He is worthy of our all. Christ has led us to today, and He is compelling us forward.

TODAY begins Vision Meetings for our COMPELLED Campaign. COMPELLED is an intentional strategy to strengthen and expand the ministries and maximize the missional influence of LifePoint Church for the Kingdom of God. LifePoint remains committed to *lead people to be real Christ-followers in life...together*. Every day of following Jesus for every person requires His power at work within us. What this campaign produces for our church will be determined by how this campaign engages the heart and life of every person in the church. As LifePoint, the people of God, grow and mature in following Jesus, LifePoint Church will advance in His Kingdom mission.

If you have received an invitation to one of these meetings, please RSVP and join us.

If you have not received an invitation and would like to come, please let us know and we will invite you.

ILLUS I read a quote recently from a college graduate who is pursuing a career as a young-adult fiction novelist. She stated, "We don't have to accept the way things are. We can make something more of it, and better stories build a better world."³ IF a young-adult fiction novelist believes this about the ability to write what is NOT true, HOW Much More should we hold deep conviction about the life-changing power of truth that transcends time!

CLOSE

Everything else in life that motivates you does so by a driving force, that drives you to seek out or strive after something not yet attained. God's love is NOT like this, for His love compels us from within. He fills us with the all of Himself, and commands us to live out of the overflow. When we live compelled by God's love, we live out of the abundance of the eternal life that God has brought within us. [NOW is the time for the church to live in our "Therefore" to fulfill the purpose of what God has left us here for! We are COMPELLED by a full devotion to live SENT.](#)

[God's redeeming love fills a Christ-follower to live COMPELLED.](#)

³ Lindsay Smith (Tulsa University, BS '05).