

# 2 Corinthians 5:14-16 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

2 CORINTHIANS - PAUL'S MINISTRY IN THE LIGHT OF THE INDESCRIBABLE GIFT  
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## Overview of Second Corinthians

2Co 1:1-7:16	2Co 8:1-9:15	2Co 10:1-12:21
Character of Paul	Collection for the Saints	Credentials of Paul
Testimonial & Didactic	Practical	Apologetic
Past: Misunderstanding & Explanation	Present: Practical Project	Future: Anxieties
Apostle's Conciliation, Ministry & Exhortations	Apostle's Solicitation for Judean Saints	Apostle's Vindication of Himself
Forgiveness, Reconciliation Gratitude	Confidence	Vindication
Ephesus to Macedonia: Change of Itinerary Explained	Macedonia: Preparation for Visit to Corinth	To Corinth: Certainty and Imminence of the Visit
2Co 1:1-7:16	2Co 8:1-9:15	2Co 10:1-12:21

[2Corinthians written ~ 56-57AD - see Chronological Table of Paul's Life and Ministry](#)

Adapted & modified from [Jensen's Survey of the New Testament \(Highly Recommended Resource\)](#) & [Wilkinson's Talk Thru the Bible](#)

**2 Corinthians 5:14** For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [e gar agape tou Christou sunechei](#) (3SPA) [emas, krinantas](#) (AAPMPA) [touto, hoti eis huper panton apethanen](#); (3SAA) [ara oi pantes apethanon](#); (3PAAI)

**Amplified:** For the love of Christ controls and urges and impels us, because we are of the opinion and conviction that [if] One died for all, then all died; ([Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** For it is the love of Christ which controls us, because we have come to this conclusion that one died for all, and that the inevitable conclusion is that all died.

([Westminster Press](#))

**ESV:** For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ([ESV](#))

**HCSB:** For Christ's love compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: if One died for all, then all died. ([Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study notes available online free](#))

**KJV:** For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

**MH:** for the example of Christ's love controls our actions and leaves us no choice but to serve God and you. The conclusion we reached long ago was this: That one person died for all, and therefore in one sense all died — his death was their death. (Murray Harris' expanded paraphrase of 2Corinthians).

**Moffatt:** For I am controlled by the love of Christ, convinced that as One has died for all, then all have died

**NEB:** For the love of Christ leaves us no choice, when once we have reached the conclusion that one man died for all and therefore all mankind has died. ([New English Bible - Oxford Press](#))

**NET:** For the love of Christ controls us, since we have concluded this, that Christ died for all; therefore all have died. ([NET Bible](#))

**NIV:** For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

**NLT:** Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** The very spring of our actions is the love of Christ. We look at it like this: if one died for all men then, in a sense, they all died, ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Weymouth:** For the love of Christ overmasters us, the conclusion at which we have arrived being this—that One having died for all, His death was their death,

**Wuest:** For the love which Christ has [for me] presses on me from all sides, holding me to one end and prohibiting me from considering any other, wrapping itself around me in tenderness, giving me an impelling motive, having brought me to this conclusion, namely, that One died on behalf of all, therefore all died,

**Young's Literal:** for the love of the Christ doth constrain us, having judged thus: that if one for all died, then the whole died,

## FOR THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONTROLS US: e gar agape tou Christou sunechei (3SPA1) hemas

- **the love:** 2Co 8:8,9 Song 1:4 8:6,7 Mt 10:37,38 Lk 7:42-47 Jn 14:21-23 Jn 21:15-17 1Co 16:22 Eph 3:18,19 6:24 Heb 6:10 1Pe 1:8
- **Controls:** Job 32:18 Lk 24:29 Ac 4:19,20
- [2 Corinthians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See also "shorter version" of commentary](#) on 2 Corinthians 5:14

## A PROFOUND & EMPOWERING TRUTH

**For (gar)** is a **term of explanation**. Always stop and ask "*What is being explained?*" (Or "*Why* is it being explained?" or "*When... ?*" or "*To whom... ?*", in other words, interrogate the "**for**" with the 5W/H questions). Let's keep the **context** in mind and remember that Paul is defending his apostleship against false apostles and false teaching. Recall that Paul has just described being beside himself (2Co 5:13), which is another way of saying that the impression he gave many was that he had "lost his marbles" and was out of his mind. Mark records that Paul was in good company for Jesus' own family thought the same thing about Him...

And He came home, and the multitude gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. And when His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "**He has lost His senses (existemi).**" (Mk 3:20, 21)

**Paul Barnett** says that "The explanatory "**For**" relates back to Paul's selflessness in ministry, as in v. 13. If he has been "beside himself," it has been for God; and if he has been "self-controlled," it has been for the Corinthians. Nothing was for Paul. It is, he asserts, a life controlled by Christ's own love. (Barnett adds the technical note that "love of Christ" is capable of being interpreted either as an objective genitive ("love for Christ") or as a subjective genitive ("Christ's love [for us]" {**Ed: NIV** translates it as subjective genitive = "Christ's love for us"}), a love that was directed to both Paul and the Corinthians (cf. 2Co 4:11). The context indicates that the latter is uppermost in the writer's mind, and most grammarians and commentators take it as a subjective genitive (e.g., A. T. Robertson, Grammar, 539; Plummer, 173; but cf. Héring, 41-42). (See [The Second Epistle to the Corinthians - Volume 47 - Page 287](#))

**A W Tozer** described genuine followers (disciples, believers) of Christ as somewhat "out of step" ("out of their minds") with the rest of the world writing that...

**A real Christian** is an odd number anyway. He feels supreme love for One Whom he has never seen. Talks familiarly every day to Someone he cannot see. He expects to go to heaven on the virtue of Another, empties himself in order that he might be full, admits he is wrong so he can be declared right, and goes down in order to get up. He is strongest when he is weakest, richest when he is poorest, and is happiest when he feels worst. He dies so he can live, forsakes in order to have, and gives away so he can keep. He sees the invisible, hears the inaudible, and knows that which passes knowledge.

[G. Campbell Morgan](#) told about a Christian woman who was struggling with being "beside herself" for Jesus.

The woman said to Morgan, "I know I will have to do all the things I most dislike, but I am determined to be a real Christian." A year later, Morgan was visiting in her town and spoke with her again. "Do you recall," she inquired, "What I said to you when I dedicated my life to Christ?" He told her he did. As she looked at him, the light of God appeared to be on her face. She exclaimed, "But it's been so different, Dr. Morgan! I began to follow Christ, feeling that I would have to do all the things that were contrary to my desires, but now I do what I want every day because God has made me pleased with the things that please Him!"

**KJV Bible Commentary**...

Whether Paul appeared to be out of control or under control, Christ's love for Paul held him in such a grip, that it constituted the compelling force in everything he did. (Online - [KJV Bible Commentary](#))

**New American Bible** translation note says that...

These verses echo 2Cor 4:14 and resume the treatment of "life despite death" from 2Cor 4:7-5:10.

**Chafin** writes...

In verses 14 and 15 he opens his heart and reveals the secret that drove him to spend his life the way he did. These six words, "**the love of Christ constrains us**" (v. 14), say it all. This was the truth, and this was what above all else Paul wanted the Corinthians to believe about him. The primary focus was on Christ's love for us and not our love for him. The belief that on the Cross Christ acted on behalf of the whole human race became the foundation of Paul's thinking and action. When the implication of the statement, "He died for all" (v. 15), began to get hold of Paul, it changed permanently his feeling about every person in the world. The fact that every person he met was the object of God's eternal love and was one for whom Christ died defined the nature of his ministry. This is why Paul's evangelism never exploited or manipulated people. He had come to love them the way Christ did. ([Chafin, K. L. Vol. 30: The Preacher's Commentary Series, 1, 2 Corinthians. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Spurgeon** on the love of Christ not as that which *ought*, but which *must* compel us...

The Gospel to the Christian is a thing of power. What is it that makes the young man devote himself as a missionary to the cause of God, to leave father and mother and go into distant lands? It is a thing of power that does it—the Gospel. What is it that constrains the minister in the midst of cholera to climb up that creaking staircase and stand by the bed of some dying creature who has that dire disease? It must be a thing of power which leads him to venture his life. It is love of the cross of Christ which bids him to do it. (**Ed:** Christ's love for us manifest on the Cross is the constraining power.) With some people, when they give Christ anything or do anything for Him, it is dreadfully forced work. They say, "The love of Christ *ought* to constrain us." I do not know that there is any such text in the Bible. I do remember one that runs thus: "The love of Christ *constrains* us." If it does not *constrain* us, it is because it is not in us. It is not merely a thing which *ought* to be; it *must* be. (**Ed: Oh God, let it be true in my life and in the life of all who read these notes - constrained only by the love of Christ. Amen**)

## **WHOSE LOVE COMPELS YOUR LIFE CHOICES?**

Here is a short insight into the incredible power of the **compelling love of Christ** on **Henry Martyn**, Christ's ambassador to India in the early 1800's ([Glimpse](#)) ([Wikipedia](#))...

Though several attractive, lucrative vocations were open to him, he said, "Here I am, Lord: send me to the ends of the earth. Send me even to death itself if it but be in Thy service and in Thy kingdom!" When he fell deeply in love with a girl named Lydia, he told her of his call from God to live and minister in India. Was this agreeable to her? he asked, and pleaded that it might be. But it was not. If he would stay in England, he could have her as his bride; if he went to India, he must do without her. The question came

like a drumbeat in his brain—India or Lydia? Lydia or India? Henry Martyn was a mastered man...**constrained** by the love of Christ. The mastery was his in a crisis involving a crucial choice. 'My dear Lydia and my duty call me different ways, yet God has not forsaken me. I am born for God only, and Christ is nearer to me than father or mother or sister.' So he went to India to 'burn out for God.' " ([2400 Scripture Outlines, Anecdotes, Notes and Quotes Archibald Naismith](#))

**Love of Christ** - The Greek text would allow this to be interpreted as either the love we have for Christ (so called "objective genitive") or the love that Christ has for us ("subjective genitive"), but without doubt the context favors the latter. Remember that **context** is always "**king**" when it comes to accurate **interpretation**. What is it in context which favors this phrase as referring to the love of Christ as His love for us? Note that in context Paul says "**one died for all**" which clearly speaks of the Cross, the supreme manifestation of Christ's (and the Father's) love for sinners. God so loved us that He gave Christ, His only begotten Son, to die in our place, to die the death we deserved to die (Jn 3:16). There is no higher love for Jesus said...

Greater **love** has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. (Jn 15:13)

The apostle John adds that...

We know **love** by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1Jn 3:16)... We love, because He first loved us. (1Jn 4:19)

**Comment:** Notice that in 1Jn 3:16 Christ's love for us serves as a "constraining" or "motivating" influence to urge us onward as His followers to imitate Him and to demonstrate to others His love for us. Christ loving others through us is the beautiful picture, the incredible privilege for His followers!

**James Denney** (commenting on Ro 8:7): The reason why the mind of the flesh terminates so fatally: it is hostility to God, the Fountain of life. Alienation from Him is necessarily fatal. It is the **flesh** which does not (for indeed it cannot) submit itself to God; as the seat of indwelling sin it is in permanent revolt.

And so we see that God demonstrated His love to us and for us even when we were sinners, men and women created in His image and yet now because of indwelling sin, having become those who hate Him, are hostile to Him and do not want to have any relationship with Him (Ro 5:8+, Ro 5:10+, Col 1:21+, Ro 8:7+). And then in 2Co 5:15, Paul again emphasizes Christ's death for us.

**Stephen Olford** writes that...

it is not our love to Christ that is in view here, but rather it is the love of Christ working in us—mastering, driving, and compelling us. It is the love of God "poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Ro 5:5). Such compelling love never flags, never falters, never fails. It is "[the expulsive power of a new affection \(click for sermon\)](#)." (Anointed Expository Preaching)

**COMMENT** - Here is a quote from a sermon by **Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones** in which he is describing how believers are to put on the new and put off the old. He writes "**Indeed, as I have already said, you cannot truly deal with the negative unless you are at the same time doing the positive.** (AMEN TO THAT - NOTICE THE ORDER - Col 3:1-4+ MUST BE "PUT ON" BEFORE YOU CAN EFFECTIVELY KILL SIN in Col 3:5+. IN Gal 5:16+ YOU ARE TO FIRST WALK BY THE SPIRIT AND THEN AND ONLY THEN WILL YOU BE ENABLED TO NOT CARRY OUT THE DEEDS OF THE FLESH! OUR FALLEN FLESH TRIES TO INVERT THE ORDER AND THE RESULT IS INVARIABLY FAILURE TO KILL SIN! IN Ro 8:13+ IT IS BY THE SPIRIT YOU PUT TO DEATH THE DEEDS OF THE BODY!) **The way to get rid of the defects is to cultivate the virtues.** To use a well-known phrase of Thomas Chalmers, what we need is to apply the "[The Expulsive Power of a New Affection](#)". I use a simple illustration. The way the dead leaves of winter are removed from some trees is not that people go around plucking them off; no, it is the new life, the shoot that comes and pushes off the dead in order to make room for itself. In the same way the Christian gets rid of all such things as bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil speaking and all malice. The new qualities develop and the others simply have no room; they are pushed out and they are pushed off.

**F B Meyer** has an interesting thought on the **love of Christ** noting that...

As the sunlight strikes the moon, and is reflected from her to the earth, so the love we have to Christ, or to man, is the reflection of His love to us. All love in our cold and loveless hearts is the emanation and reflection of the Love which began in Him, was mediated to us in Calvary, and is reflected from us, as sunlight from a mirror (or the moon). (cp 1Jn 4:19, 2Co 2:14, 15, 2Co 3:1,2,3+)

In his letter to the saints at Ephesus **Paul offers one of the great prayers of the Bible** (Ep 3:14, 15+, Ep 3:16, 17+) asking that

the saints might know this incredible **love** that **Christ** has for us asking God to make us...

able (**exischuo** = to be fully able = the strongest Greek word available to indicate strength or ability!) to comprehend (**katalambano** = to take eagerly, to seize, to possess and then to perceive, apprehend, in short to make this great truth --**the love of Christ**-- one's very own possession!) with all the **saints** what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know (ginosko = know by having experienced this truth!) the **love of Christ** which surpasses (**huperballo** = Literally = throw beyond the usual mark, describes a degree which exceeds extraordinary. In the present tense = that it might continually surpass) knowledge, that (purpose) you may be filled up (pleroo = completely filled, filled to the "brim") to all the fullness (pleroma = abundance) of God. (Eph 3:18, 19-+)

**Comment by A W Pink:** We do not agree with those who say that phrase is a paradox: rather it is a plain statement of fact. We may, we can, we do, know **the love of Christ** in the sense explained above (See **Pink's notes page 241 on Ep 3:14-16; Ep 3:17**). We believe it, we experience it, we enjoy it as a blessed and glorious reality. Yet our knowledge is inadequate and imperfect, for the infinite **love of Christ** can never be entirely compassed, explored, or exhausted by us. As Pierce pointed out, "All that is known of the **love of Christ** in and by all the saints on earth: all that is known and enjoyed of the **love of Christ** by all the saints in heaven, is far below what is contained in the person and **love of Christ**, as considered in His own heart towards us. I have under this view of the subject often said we shall never know anything of the love wherewith Christ hath loved us, either in time or eternity, but by its fruits and effects...The **love of Christ** surpasses the whole of His sufferings, as much as they surpass all our guilt and sin. His love was the cause, and His sufferings the effect of it." As the cause excels the effect, as the tree is greater than its fruit, so the fountain of Christ's love exceeds all the streams which flow from it to us.

The angels never can enter fully into the **love of Christ** for His Church and people. Also, the finite-minded saints can never fully understand the fullness of Christ's love. Nevertheless it is important that the saint should make it his paramount concern to be more and more absorbed with the love of Christ, exercising his mind thereon, feeding his soul therefrom, delighting his heart therein, praying earnestly that he may more fully understand the love of God. He should attentively consider the revelation given of it in the Word of truth, meditating on its ineffable characteristics, contemplating its wondrous manifestations, and realizing that Christ's love to His own is eternal, infinite, and unalterable—not only without cessation but without the least diminution. Such a subject is worthy of the saint's best attention and constant pursuit. It will amply repay his best efforts and greatly enrich his spiritual life. Nothing will so much excite gratitude in his heart as a contemplation of the **love of Christ** to such an unlovely creature as he. Nothing will prompt so effectually to a life of self-denial. Nothing will make so pleasant and easy a walk of obedience to God. Nothing will so deaden the saint to the world. Nothing else can so fill him with peace, yes, and with joy, in a season of affliction or bereavement. ([Prayer for Comprehension of God's Love - scroll down to Knowledge of the Love of Christ](#))

**Puritan John Bunyan's** booklet on [The Saint's Knowledge of Christ's Love](#)

[Christ's Love - NetHymnal - over 100 hymns - all midis](#)

The only other use of the phrase **love of Christ** in the **NAS** is in Romans where Paul asks a rhetorical (for effect) question...

Who will separate us from the **love of Christ**? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (Ro 8:35-+)

**Comment:** The answer to Paul's rhetorical question is of course "Absolutely no one and no thing shall separate us from the **love of Christ**!" So not only is Christ's love "constraining" but it is also "retaining"! The love of Christ urges us and assures us. It helps us and holds us. It compels us and keeps us.

The love of Christ doth me constrain  
To seek the wandering souls of men;  
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,  
To snatch them from the gaping grave.

[\(Shall I, for Fear of Feeble Man\)](#)

**Love** (noun) (26) (**agape**) is unconditional, sacrificial love and Biblically refers to a love that God is (1Jn 4:8,16), that God shows (Jn 3:16, 1Jn 4:9) and that God enables in His children (see note on fruit of the Spirit - Gal 5:22-+).

**Agape** - 23x in Corinthians - 1Cor 4:21; 8:1; 13:1 2 3 4 (3x), 1Co 13:8, 13 (2x); 1Co 14:1; 16:14, 24; 2Cor 2:4, 8; 5:14; 6:6; 8:7 8,

It is not surprising that Greek literature throws little light on its distinctive NT meaning. Biblical **agape love** is the love of choice, the love of serving with humility, the highest kind of love, the noblest kind of devotion, the love of the will (intentional, a conscious choice) and not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction, or sentimental relationship. **Agape** is not based on pleasant emotions or good feelings that might result from a physical attraction or a familial bond. **Agape** chooses as an act of self-sacrifice to serve the recipient. From all of the descriptions of **agape** love, it is clear that true **agape** love is a sure mark of salvation.

**Agape** is volitional

**Phileo** is emotional

**Agape** love does not depend on the world's criteria for love, such as attractiveness, emotions, or sentimentality. Believers can easily fall into the trap of blindly following the world's demand that a lover **feel** positive toward the beloved. This is not **agape** love, but is a love based on impulse. **Impulsive love** characterizes the spouse who announces to the other spouse that they are planning to divorce their mate. Why? They reason "I can't help it. I fell in love with another person!" Christians must understand that this type of impulsive love is completely contrary to God's **decisive love**, which is decisive because He is in control and has a purpose in mind. There are many reasons a proper understanding of the truth of God's word (and of the world's lie) is critical and one of the foremost is Jesus' declaration that

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have **love** (agape) for one another. (John 13:35).

My message as from God receive;

Ye all may come to Christ and live.

O let His love your hearts constrain,

Nor permit Him to die in vain.

[\(Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast\)](#)

**John MacArthur** explains that

**Agape love** is the greatest virtue of the Christian life. Yet that type of love was rare in pagan Greek literature. That's because the traits agape portrays—unselfishness, self-giving, willful devotion, concern for the welfare of others—were mostly disdained in ancient Greek culture as signs of weakness. However, the New Testament declares agape to be the character trait around which all others revolve. The apostle John writes, "God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1John 4:16)". (See [The Power of Integrity: Building a Life Without Compromise - Page 133](#)) (Bolding added)

[May the Mind of Christ, My Savior](#)

**May the mind of Christ, my Savior,**

**Live in me from day to day,**

**By His love and power controlling**

**All I do and say.**

May the Word of God dwell richly

In my heart from hour to hour,

So that all may see I triumph

Only through His power.

May the peace of God my Father

Rule my life in everything,

That I may be calm to comfort

Sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me

As the waters fill the sea;

Him exalting, self abasing,

This is victory.

May I run the race before me,

Strong and brave to face the foe,

Looking only unto Jesus

As I onward go.

May His beauty rest upon me,  
As I seek the lost to win,  
And may they forget the channel,  
Seeing only Him.

**Hughes** writes that...

The great compelling motive force in his life since conversion is that of love; not, however, love originating, far less ending, in himself, but the love which originates and ends with God in Christ. His conduct, however it be judged, is dictated by the love of Christ (not so much his love for Christ—though that inevitably is involved—as Christ's love for him, which is prior to and the explanation of his love for Christ, and which is supremely manifested, as is clear from what immediately follows, in Christ's atoning sacrifice of Himself...

It is this love (agape) and none other, that shuts him in, confines him as between two walls **Ed: A good word picture of sunecho/synecho**) to one purpose which may be summed up in the terms of the preceding verse as being to live selflessly "unto God" and, within the framework of that supreme allegiance, to his fellow-men ("unto you" - 2Co 5:13)... The constraining power of the divine love of Christ is the explanation of another famous statement of Paul's: "To me to live is Christ" (Php 1:21-+). (The constraining power of the divine love of Christ) is the logic which demands his willingness to suffer the loss of all things for Christ's sake and it is the reason for his overmastering ambition to win Christ, to be found in Christ, and to know Christ (Php 3:7, 8-+, Php 3:9, 10-+). ([Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians: The English Text ... - Page 192](#))

**In Christ, Paul's Redeemer and Lord,  
lay the deep springs of all his conduct.**

**Christ** (5547) (**Christos** from **chrío** = to anoint, rub with oil, consecrate to an office) is the Anointed One, the Messiah, Christos being the Greek equivalent of the transliterated Hebrew word Messiah. In the OT the word "anointed" was closely linked with two offices-- king and high priest. It was prophesied that Jesus, from David's kingly line, would one day hold ultimate authority in our world. (As high priest, Jesus offered himself up for us and lives today to make intercession for us. In Jesus' day, then, the Christ was thought of as Israel's deliverer. God's Anointed would redeem Israel, rule as king over the restored kingdom, and answer all mankind's questions about God's plans and purposes. And this Redeemer would be the very Son of the Blessed One.

In the Gospels the Christ is not a personal name but an official designation for the expected Messiah (see Mt 2:4, Lk 3:15). As by faith the human Jesus was recognized and accepted as the personal Messiah, the definite article ("the") was dropped and the designation "Christ" came to be used as a personal name. The name "Christ" speaks of His Messianic dignity and emphasizes that He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises concerning the coming Messiah.

The Jewish people yearned for their deliverer. They focused on the political impact of setting up his kingdom. But the Samaritan woman suggests another aspect: "He will explain [anangelo] everything to us." The Greek word here implies announcement--a fresh revelation of divine truth. In a sense, the Epistles are devoted to that revelation. They show how Christ Jesus, the God-Man, unveils truth that was previously hidden and explains what had been revealed. In Christ, God's eternal plans, purposes, and love are shown with unmistakable clarity. Every aspect of God's eternal plan is brought into focus in Christ. He is the central figure, the focus of history, the climax of the sacred drama, the one through whom all things are at last explained (Col 1:15-20).

Jesus, may Thy love constrain us,  
That from sin we may refrain us,  
In Thy griefs may deeply grieve;  
Thee our best affections giving,  
To Thy glory ever living,  
May we in Thy glory live.  
(Near the Cross Was Mary Weeping)

**Controls** (4912) (**sunecho/synecho** from **sun** = with + **echo** = hold) literally means hold together (as a unit, metaphorically to sustain). To press together. To close by holding together (stop, shut) - ears = refuse to listen (Acts 7:57), mouth (Is 52:15), heaven (Dt 11:17). To press hard, to crowd (Lk 8:45). To hold in custody (Lk 22:63). Sunecho means to be held or gripped by difficult circumstances (various diseases - Mt 4:24, fever - Lk 4:38, fever & dysentery - Acts 28:8, fear - Lk 8:37). In Acts 18:5 the idea is "to occupy someone's attention intensely" (BDAG).

**J B Phillips** offers a picturesque paraphrase

The very spring of our actions is the love of Christ.

**Murray Harris** paraphrases it...

the example of Christ's love controls our actions and leaves us no choice but to serve God and you.

**Sunecho/synecho** is translated by different Bible versions with several interesting closely related words which are outlined below with the English definitions - ponder these nuances as you meditate on what it means to you personally to have the "love of Christ" controlling, constraining, compelling or impelling you!

**Constrains** (KJV) (from Latin **constringere** = to constrict, constrain from **con** = with + **stringere** = to draw tight) means to force by imposed stricture, restriction, or limitation. To restrict the motion to a particular mode, to clasp tightly, to secure as if by bonds, to force in an unnatural manner. To make someone yield. The noun "constraint" describes the state of being checked to avoid or to perform some action. Think of what these meanings might imply in terms of your spiritual life as it relates to an increasing awareness and heart understanding of the "love of Christ".

**Compels** (Holman Christian Standard Bible) suggests overcoming of resistance or unwillingness by an irresistible force.

**Impels** (New American Bible) - (from Latin **impellere** from **in-** = 'towards' + **pellere** = 'to drive') To drive or urge forward; to press on; to excite to action or to move forward, by the application of physical force, or moral suasion (act of influencing) or necessity. A ball is impelled by the force of powder; a ship is impelled by wind; a man may be impelled by hunger or a regard to his safety; motives of policy or of safety impel nations to confederate.

**Barnett** writes that **sunecho**

implies that which confines and restricts (Luke 8:45; 12:50; 19:43; Acts 18:5; "hold in custody," BAGD), rather than that which "compels" (NIV). "Christ's self-sacrificing love restrains Paul from self-seeking" (so Thrall, 1.408, reflecting on 2Co 5:14 in the context of 2Co 5:11-13). Christ's love controls the direction of the apostle's ministry.") (See [The Second Epistle to the Corinthians - Volume 47 - Page 287](#))

**Murray Harris** explains **sunecho** this way...

Ever since his conversion, Paul had felt "**hemmed in**" or without an option; he must expend himself in the service of others for Christ's sake (2Cor 4:11, 12; 12:15).

**Sunecho** means to be hemmed in on both sides and was used of a traveler in a narrow passage or gorge, with a wall of rock on either hand, unable to turn aside and able only to go straight on. The picture is that of a man pressed on both sides. The idea is not urging or driving, but shutting up to one line and purpose, as in a narrow, walled road. Literally Paul is saying "I am held together, so that I cannot incline either way". There is an equal pressure being exerted from both sides, from the desire for continued life and from the desire for death & to be with Christ. Paul was perplexed, held in, kept back from decision. There was a strong pressure bearing upon him from both sides, keeping him erect and motionless. Hard pressed means to be required to make a difficult decision between two possibilities—that of going home to heaven or that of remaining on earth as an apostle of Christ Jesus.

**TLNT** addresses the meaning of **sunecho** in the common Greek usages...

**I.—“Hold together, maintain,”** is said of fabric that is held together and stitched and quite early becomes a technical term for the holding together of the universe in unity; with the Stoics, it refers to the divine link that holds the world together. Philo calls God “the One who created all, who unites and sustains earth and heaven, sea and air,” in accord with Wis 1:7 (“The Spirit of the Lord fills the universe and **contains** [Lxx = **sunecho**] all things”) or Job 3:23 (God **hedges** [Lxx = **sunecho**] man in on all sides). A Roman inscription from 370 describes Attis thus: “To you, Attis, the Most High, **holding** all things **together.**” This cosmic meaning is unknown in the NT as is the following meaning.

**II.—From the meaning “to assemble”** derives that of being an associate or co-participant in a matter: “Nikon, with whom Penenteris is associated”; and the meaning “administrate together,” the object being some property or other. In a marriage contract from ad 127 between Sarapion and Taïs, the services and profits of the slave Callityche will be shared together...

From the third century BC, **sunecho** is used for someone who is obliged to stay somewhere longer than he wishes: “I am **detained** here”; “Our brother, **having been detained** by business in the metropolis since the 28th” (2nd century BC); irrigation waters must not be held up more than five days. In AD 16: money **kept** in the



bank...

The passive *synechomai* means “be taken, held,” as on the horns of a dilemma (Php 1:23) or under a compulsion that cannot be avoided. Hence the medical meaning: “be taken” by a fever, an illness, a pain, as was Peter’s mother-in-law (Luke 4:38) or the father of Publius (Acts 28:8; cf. Mt 4:24). Two fourth-century physicians, delivering a medical certificate, state that they have seen the patient in bed, **taken** by a light fever. Similarly, on the psychological level, a person can be **taken** by great fear, as were the Gerasenes (Lk 8:37) or as was Christ Who was oppressed or constrained until His baptism was completed.

When surrounded by a dense crowd or by encircling enemies, (*sunecho* is used to mean) one is both “pressed” and “detained.” This nuance of constraint is the most emphasized connotation in the papyri. In 20–50AD, a woman who was beaten, robbed, and abandoned by her husband asks the *archidikastēs* (Chief judicial authority) to make him appear before him and **compel** him to return her dowry... **Synechō** is the ordinary term for the power behind the execution of a judicial verdict: the accused are **compelled** to pay a certain sum to their victims (*synechomenous apodounai autois*, P.Ryl. 65, 11; from 67 bc). Sometimes this verb is used for the “seizure” of a commodity, an impounding. In 236 BC an imprisoned debtor asks the tax farmer to place an embargo on the produce of his vineyards. Much more commonly it is a matter of physical constraint used against a recalcitrant debtor... police chiefs order the “**seizure**” (*synecho*) of the guilty party. *Synechō* is even used for impounding by private citizens themselves. In the second century bc, however, a series of amnesty orders (by Ptolemy IV Philometor or Ptolemy V Epiphanes) forbids “confining free men in their houses or anywhere else”. These usages shed light on Lk 22:63, which is usually translated “the men who were guarding him (Jesus)”; they were “holding him prisoner.”...

### THE CONSTRAINING LOVE OF CHRIST

All of the meanings discussed above have a part in the **love of Christ** that **constrains** us. This love suggests the Lord’s seizing us to hold us and maintain us in His sovereign and exclusive possession. It takes possession of us so forcefully that it compels us to love in return (cf. the persistence in Mic 7:18; Ps 77:9) and wraps up our whole being. More than pressure, it is an compulsion that orients our whole life and all our conduct. The fervor of this agape, which is suggestive of a fire (Mt 24:12), can be compared to a burning fever (cf. Heb 10:24—*paroxysmos agapēs*) and thus implies intense emotion, the giving of one’s heart. Finally, since according to Paul the agape of Christ is essentially linked to the Cross, this love in a way oppresses the disciple, just as Christ was in anguish at the prospect of his passion; it judges him and convinces (*krino*) him to die with his Savior. He is forced to it, as it were. ([Theological Lexicon of the New Testament](#))

TDNT adds that in the classic Greek...

1. This word means first “to hold together,” e.g., law upholding the state, or deity the cosmos, or virtues the world.
2. Then we find the meaning “to enclose” or “to lock up,” e.g., an army behind walls, or a prisoner, and once for holding one’s breath.
3. Another sense is “to oppress,” “to overpower,” “to rule,” e.g., of afflictions, illnesses, emotions, or impulses. (Borrow [Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament : abridged in one volume](#))

Thayer (modified)

1. **to hold together**; any whole, lest it fall to pieces or something fall away from it, the Deity as holding all things together, cp Ge 8:2
2. **to hold together with constraint, to compress**, i. e.
  - a. to press together with the hand: to stop the **ears** = Acts 7:57; the **mouth** = Is 52:15; the **heavens** = to shut so that it may not rain = Dt 11:17; 1Ki 8:35
  - b. to press on every side: Lk. 8:45; of a besieged city, Lk 19:43.
3. **to hold completely, i.e.**
  - a. to hold fast: a prisoner, Lk 22:63metaphorically in passive voice = to be held by, closely occupied with, any business (Wis 17:20);

The Word = teaching the word = Acts 18:5 [KJV = Paul was pressed in the spirit and testified to the Jews].

b. to constrain, oppress, of ills laying hold of one and distressing him

pass. to be held with = afflicted with, suffering from: (held with disease) = Mt. 4:24; (held with high fever) = Lk. 4:38; (held with fever and dysentery) = Acts 28:8;

of affections of the mind: (held with fear) = Lk. 8:37

c. to urge, impel: 2Co 5:14; distressed = Lk. 12:50; Acts 18:5 I am hard pressed on both sides, my mind is impelled or disturbed from each side [I am in a strait betwixt the two] Phil. 1:23.

**Sunecho** - 12x in 12v in the **NAS** - Rendered - afflicted(1), controls(1), covered(1), crowding(1), devoting... completely(1), distressed(1), gripped(1), hard-pressed(1), hem(1), holding... in custody(1), suffering(2).

Matthew 4:24 The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those **suffering** with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

Luke 4:38 Then He got up and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother-in-law was **suffering** from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her.

Luke 8:37 And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were **gripped** with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned.

**Comment:** The virtual antithesis of one who is "gripped" with or by the love of Christ. Indeed, is this (the love of Christ) not the all sufficient "antidote" for the fears that so often assail our mind and heart!

Luke 8:45 And Jesus said, "Who is the one who touched Me?" And while they were all denying it, Peter said, "Master, the people are **crowding** and pressing in on You."

Luke 12:50 "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how **distressed** (KJV = straitened - means to make narrow, to confine, to make tense or tight, to distress, to press with necessity) I am until it is accomplished!

**Comment:** Here we see Jesus use **sunecho** ("straitened" in the KJV) to denote His "*being confined within the limits* of a certain course of action. It is a *straitening* that never allows us to deviate from the one set purpose. This is how the **love of God** motivated and activated the life of the Lord Jesus; and this is how the **love of Christ** must motivate and activate our lives. For Him it meant the path of the cross, even unto death, that He might be raised to the glory of God the Father, and so fulfill heaven's redemptive purpose. For us also it must mean the path of the cross unto death, that we might die indeed unto sin and live unto God alone. Paul declares that the only reasonable interpretation of the love of Christ, as seen at Calvary, is that when He died at Calvary we also died with Him unto sin—once and for all; and that when He rose from the dead, we also rose to live only unto Him. This is the pathway to which the love of Christ confines us (2Co 5:14, 15). What an impact such a motivation of love should have on our daily ministry! It should compel us to do nothing but the work of God, and confine us to do nothing but the will of God. To be driven by this motivation we need a new vision of Calvary, a deeper understanding of the cross, and a holy baptism of redemptive love." (Olford)

Luke 19:43 "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and **hem** you in on every side,

Luke 22:63 Now the men who were **holding** Jesus **in custody** were mocking Him and beating Him,

Acts 7:57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and **covered** their ears and rushed at him with one impulse.

Acts 18:5 But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began **devoting** himself **completely** to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

**Comment:** A beautiful picture of a man so in love with the God of the Word that His Word constrains and compels and impels and motivates him to solemnly speak it forth in power (cp his statement in 1Co 9:16). Might God so work in all of our hearts that we, like Paul, would be "constrained" by the Word of God, and thus would be impelled to give solemn testimony to the truth of that Word, of Jesus, the living Word, the long awaited Messiah and the soon to return King of kings, Who John even designates at His Second Coming as the **Word of God** (Rev 19:13-+, cp Jn 1:1, 1Jn 1:1, Rev 1:2)! Amen

**TLNT:** The sense (here is to) "devote oneself to, take care of," as in this epitaph from Thermion in the imperial period: "*I shall take care of* (sunecho) *her as of one of my own children*";... Paul at Corinth **devotes** himself **entirely** to preaching—he is absorbed, completely wrapped up in this ministry.

**Stephen Olford** draws an application from Paul's constrain to preach the Word: In like manner, we should be compelled by the **love of Christ**. If our reading of Scripture, as illumined and applied by the Spirit, does not release the compelling **love of Christ** in us and through us, then our hearts are not right with God, and our service constitutes nothing more than ashes upon a rusty altar! ([Anointed Expository Preaching](#))

Acts 28:8 And it happened that the father of Publius was lying in bed **afflicted** with recurrent fever and dysentery; and Paul went in to see him and after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him.

**Comment:** Fascinating picture for me as a physician who subspecialized in infectious diseases to see Dr Luke picture recurrent fever and dysentery as "constraining" Publius.

2Corinthians 5:14 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;

Philippians 1:23 But I am **hard-pressed** from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;

**Sunecho** - 41x in the **Septuagint (Lxx)** - Ge 8:2; Ex 26:3; 28:7; 36:11, 28; Dt 11:17; 1Sa 14:6; 21:8; 23:8; 2Sa 20:3; 24:21, 25; 1Kgs 6:10, 15; 8:35; 20:21; 2Kgs 9:8; 14:26; 1Chr 12:1; 2Chr 6:26; 7:13; Neh 6:10; Ps 68:16; 76:10; Pr 5:20; Job 2:9; 3:24; 7:11; 10:1; 20:13; 31:23; 34:14; 36:8; 38:2; 41:9; Mic 7:18; Isa 52:15; Jer 2:13; 23:9; Ezek 33:22; 43:8

**Sunecho** - 8x in the Apocrypha - 1Macc 13:15; 2Macc 9:2; 10:10; 4Macc 15:32; Wis 1:7; 17:10, 19; Ps Sol. 17:19;

Genesis 8:2 Also the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was **restrained**; (Hebrew = kala = to shut up, withhold; Lxx = sunecho)

Exodus 26:3 "Five curtains shall be joined to one another, and the other five curtains shall **be joined** (Hebrew = chabar = to unite; Lxx = sunecho) to one another.

Deuteronomy 11:17 "Or the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He will **shut up** (Hebrew = atsar = to restrain; Lxx = sunecho - similar use in 1Ki 8:35, 2Chr 6:26) the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.

2 Samuel 24:21 (also in 2Sa 24:25,) Then Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" And David said, "To buy the threshing floor from you, in order to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague **may be held back** (Hebrew = atsar = to restrain; Lxx = sunecho) from the people."

2 Chronicles 7:13 "If I **shut up** (Hebrew = atsar = to restrain; Lxx = sunecho) the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people,

Micah 7:18 Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not **retain** (Hebrew = chazaq; Lxx = sunecho) His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love.

Isaiah 52:15 Thus He will sprinkle many nations, Kings will **shut** (Hebrew = qaphats = draw together; Lxx = sunecho) their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see, And what they had not heard they will understand.

Jeremiah 2:13 (cp Jer 17:13) "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can **hold** (Hebrew = kul = contain, clasping or holding in something; Lxx = sunecho) no water.

**Comment:** "Broken cisterns" birth broken people! These "cisterns" offer no soul satisfying living water! (cp Zec 14:8, Jn 4:10, 11, 13, 14, Jn 7:38) A sad, sad description, one I fear might be true of many churches in our age, for so many have jettisoned the pure milk of the Word of God (1Pe 2:2-+), substituting words of men, stories about men (contrast Paul's goal - 2Co 4:5+) in a desire to "make" the Word of Truth more relevant or authentic! Beloved, the Word of Life is preeminently and forever the most relevant and authentic Word sinful hearts will ever hear and by them be healed (Ps 107:19, 20-+). May God's Spirit cause us to repent and return to the ancient paths, that our sins may be wiped away and that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. Amen (Jer 6:16, Jer 18:15 - you must read those two passages, Acts 3:19)

**Matthew Henry** says Paul's testimony that the **love of Christ** compelled his ministry indicates that he was

under the sweetest and strongest constraints to do what (he) did. Love has a constraining virtue to excite ministers and private Christians in their duty... Christ's love to us, which was manifested in this great instance of his dying for us, will have this effect upon us, if it be duly considered and rightly judged of.

Norman Geisler writes that...

Salvation... is an act of God's grace, and grace, by its very nature, tends to soften the heart and change the actions of the one receiving it. This softening change causes us to be more favorably disposed—grateful and responsive—to the Gracious One. "**The goodness of God leads you to repentance**" (Ro. 2:4NKJV), and "**the love of Christ controls us**" (2Co 5:14); our Lord said that those who are forgiven much will love much, "**but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little**" (Luke 7:47NKJV). It follows, then, that the intrinsic nature of salvation as a gracious and loving act of God tends naturally to produce (**Ed: cp *compel, impel***) good works in the lives of those who receive it (cf. Titus 1:11, 12, 13)...

In recognizing God's grace, which declares one righteous apart from any merit, a believer is most highly energized for service. The love of Christ "controls us" (2 Cor. 5:14 NASB), and "we love him because [we realize that] He first loved us" (1 John 4:19 NKJV); the grace of God not only brings us salvation (Titus 2:11) but also "teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions (Titus 2:12). Keeping laws to obtain grace only brings one into further bondage (cf. Col. 2:22; Ro 8:2, 3; Gal. 4:3, 4, [Ed: cp Ro 7:5 for effect of the law on the flesh]). In the words of the chorus, those who recognize they are saved only by grace can sing

How can I do less  
than give Him my best  
and live for Him completely  
after all He's done for me.  
**"After All He's Done for Me,"**

Betsy Daasvand and Wendell P. Loveless.

Paul alludes to the **love of Christ** constraining the brethren in the area of giving of their finances...

I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. (NLT = *I am not saying you must do it, even though the other churches are eager to do it. This is one way to prove your love is real.*) For (term of explanation = explaining why a disciple of Christ would be motivated to give sacrificially) you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (NLT = *You know how full of love and kindness our Lord Jesus Christ was.*), that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. (2Cor 8:8, 9)

**Comment:** Fools twist God's grace to live as they please. The wise trust God's grace and live as He pleases.

*His love has no limit,  
His grace has no measure,  
His power has no boundary known unto men;  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.*  
-Flint

## 2Corinthians 5:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15

For the love of Christ constrains us (2Corinthians 5:14).

O let Thy love my heart constrain!  
Thy love for every sinner free,  
That every fallen soul of man  
May taste the grace that found out me;  
That all mankind with me may prove  
Thy sovereign everlasting love,  
Thy sovereign everlasting love.  
[\(Would Jesus Have the Sinner Die\)](#)

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**CONSTRAINING LOVE** - The Lord loves us first, and we in turn love Him. Because we do, we should serve Him out of devotion—not duty. This is the law of love. A husband and wife didn't really love each other. The man was very demanding, so much so that he prepared a list of rules and regulations for his wife to follow. He insisted that she read them every day and obey them to the letter. Among other things, his "do's and don'ts" indicated such details as what time she had to get up in the morning, when his breakfast should be served, and how the housework should be done.

A few years after the husband died, the woman fell in love with another man, one who dearly loved her, and they were married. This

husband did everything he could to make his new wife happy, continually showering her with tokens of his appreciation. One day as she was cleaning house, she found tucked away in a drawer the list of commands her first husband had written for her. As she looked it over, she realized that even though her new husband hadn't given her any kind of list, she was doing everything her first husband's list required. She was so devoted to this man that her deepest desire was to please him out of love, not obligation. Doing things for him was her greatest joy.

So it should be with us in our relationship to Christ. Because He loves us, we love Him and want to serve Him. That's the law of love.—R W DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**Serving Christ under law is duty.  
Under love it's delight**

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**THE CONSTRAINING POWER OF CHRIST'S LOVE** - WHEN asked to tell an incident that showed he was different because of his faith in Jesus, a recently converted truck driver replied,

"Well, when somebody tailgates my truck, I no longer drive on the shoulder of the road to kick gravel on him."

That driver's experience illustrates an important truth: Those who are in Christ are indeed new creations. They do things differently because they are not the same as before they trusted Jesus. This doesn't mean they will not fall into sin nor that they become mature overnight. But a miraculous transformation has taken place.

Theologian Lewis Sperry Chafer pointed out several changes that happen at conversion. We are joined with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Ro 6:3+, Ro 6:4, 5+, Ro 6:6+); made alive (Ep 2:1+, Ep 2:5+); made children of God (1Jn 3:1+, 1Jn 3:2+, 1Jn 3:3+); justified before God (Ro 5:1+); forgiven (Col 1:14+); delivered from the powers of darkness (Col 1:13+); loved by God (Eph 2:4+); indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1Co 6:19+); and made the objects of Christ's intercession (Heb 7:25+).

Yes, to know Christ makes us brand new people. How does that difference show in our lives? J D Brannon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**John Owen's discourse on the Love of Christ** - YOU have been minded of, and instructed in, the nature and benefit of our love to God; and I shall take occasion thence a little to mind you of the **love of Christ** unto us, the love, in an especial manner, which he showed in dying for us; which is that we are here gathered together to remember and celebrate; not barely the death of Christ, but that which is the life of that death,—the **love of Christ** in his death. And I would ground it on that which the apostle speaks in

Ro 5:5,—“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.”

This is that which I know you all long for, and prize above life: “The loving-kindness of God is better than life.” Why so? “For,” says he, “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

An apprehension of the love of Christ, as dying for us ungodly creatures, is that which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Do not let your minds go upon uncertainties. When the Holy Ghost gives you a due apprehension of Christ's love in dying for ungodly sinners, as we are, then is this love shed abroad in our hearts. The apostle there proceeds to show how great this love was, in that Christ died. He died, not for good men, and righteous men, and for friends; but he died for the ungodly, for sinners, and for enemies. This was great love, indeed. We are here to remember that love of Christ wherewith he gave himself to death for us when we were enemies, and would have continued so to eternity, had he not loved us, and given himself for us.

Brethren, if we barely remember the love of Christ in the way of an ordinance, and our hearts be not powerfully affected with it, we are in danger of being disadvantaged by our attendance. Pray remember it; you know how plainly I use to speak on these occasions: I say, we have frequent opportunities of remembering the love of Christ in dying for us, in this ordinance representing of it; but if our hearts be not powerfully influenced and affected by it, we shall be losers by the frequency of ordinances.

I will add one word more. According as our hearts are affected with the love of Christ, so will be our love to Christ, and no otherwise. And truly, even that faith which discovers too much selfishness is very dangerous. If we come here to act faith, to look for no other effect of it but what evidence and sense we have of the pardon of our own sins,—how our consciences may be quieted and cleared,—faith ends in self; it is dangerous, lest it should be only a branch from, and commensurate with, convictions. True faith, acting itself on Christ in this ordinance, will work by love unto Christ: I would not say, principally, or in the first place,—I know poor creatures are apt to look after themselves, and their own relief; but it will so work also. And truly, brethren, this it will not do, we shall not have faith working by love towards him, unless we have some sense of the love of Christ on our hearts.

How shall we know whether our hearts are under the powerful influence of the love of Christ in dying for us? Why, the love of Christ in dying for us has three properties with it, which will have an influence on our souls, if we are affected with it:—

### **1. It has a transforming power, property, and efficacy with it.**

They are plain truths I am speaking, but of great concern to our souls, to know whether we are affected with the love of Christ or not. If we are rightly affected with it, I say, it will transform and change our whole souls in some measure into the likeness of Christ. How so? I will tell you in the most familiar manner I am able:—If you are affected with the love of Christ, it lays hold upon and possesses your affections; the affections being possessed, stir up many thoughts; thoughts are the very image of the soul, represent it, to show you what the soul is: and those things concerning which your thoughts do most abound, they carry the frame of the soul. Let a man profess what he will, if his thoughts are generally conversant about earthly and worldly things, he has an earthly and worldly mind; and if [his] thoughts are conversant about sensual things, he has a sensual and carnal mind: for, whatever he may outwardly say, as he thinks, so is he;—there is the image and likeness of the soul.

Now, if we are affected with the love of Christ, it will beget in our souls many thoughts of Christ,—in our lying down and in our rising up, in our beds, in our ways, on our occasions, as well as in ordinances. If, indeed, our hearts are affected with the love of Christ, our thoughts of Christ will abound; and those thoughts will work again on our affections, and conform our souls more and more unto the image of Jesus Christ. That man who thinks much of the earth, because affected with it, his soul is like the earth; and that man who thinks much on the love of Christ, because he is affected with it, his soul is like Christ.

If it has been thus with us, brethren, in our preparation for this ordinance, or at any time, that thoughts of Christ have not abounded, verily there has been a failing in us. Let us strive for the future to amend it, that we may find the love of Christ begetting in us many thoughts of him, working upon our affections, and, with a transforming power, changing the frame of our souls into his own likeness.

Again:

### **2. The love of Christ, if we are affected with it, has an attractive power:**

John 12:32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

I cannot stay to show you the drawing power and efficacy there is in the love of Christ, when dying on the cross; but this I will say, it is that which converted the world of all that did believe. It was the love of Christ, set forth in his death as one crucified for them, that drew all men unto him. "When I am lifted up,—when I have accomplished, manifested, and evidenced the unspeakable love which I have for the sinful sons of men, in being lifted up for them,—I will draw them unto me." If you have a true sense, brethren, of the love of Christ in dying for you, it will draw your souls unto him. Song 1:4, "Draw me, we will run after thee." I do not now speak to you about the first drawing of Christ, which is as unto believing (I hope Christ has so drawn all our souls); but the following efficacy of the love of Christ to draw souls that do believe nearer unto him. Whoever is sensible of this attractive power of the death of Christ, it will have this efficacy upon him,—it will have adherence and delight,—it will cause him more to cleave to Christ. The soul will cleave to Christ with delight, that is affected with the attractive, drawing power of his loving-kindness in his death. There is a great deal in that word, "Cleave unto Christ with love and delight," with the best of our affections and dearest of our valuations; to cleave to him with trust, and to him alone. I do but remind you of what you know, that you may reduce it into practice. Pray, in this ordinance, labour to have such a sense of the drawing power of the love of Christ in his death, that you may resolve to cleave unto him with full purpose of heart, to cleave unto this Christ who has thus loved us.

### **3. Whenever we are affected with the love of Christ, it is accompanied with a constraining power,**

2 Cor. 5:14, "The love of Christ constrains us;" and that constraint is unto obedience: it constrains us to judge that we ought to live to him who died for us. It is a blessed thing, brethren, to walk in our obedience under a sense of the constraining efficacy of the love of Christ. Take but this one word, to discover to you whether you walk in your obedience under a sense of the constraining power of Christ, it comprehends all others, 1 John 5:3, "His commandments are not grievous." When a soul works out of love, what it doth is "not grievous." And the inward and outward commands of Christ will be grievous to all that are not under the constraining power and efficacy of his love.

I have no more to say, but only to tell you that we should labour to have our hearts affected with the love of Christ in this ordinance. I have showed you the danger if it be otherwise; and given you some ways to examine your hearts, whether they are so affected or not. The Lord grant that where they are, it may be increased; and where they are not, that God would renew it by his Spirit in us.

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**F B Meyer's** devotional in Our Daily Walk entitled **LOVE'S CONSTRAINT** "For the love of Christ constrains us... We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us." - 2Cor 5:14-20.

AN AMBASSADOR may live in a foreign country, but he does not belong to it. He is there to represent his own country, and no opportunity of helping forward her interests is allowed to pass. We have to represent Christ to the world. The word "**constrain**" suggests a constant pressure, an urge, as when water is forced down a certain channel. Paul says

I act as I do because I am under the spell of a mighty constraint; I can do no other; I am not master of myself. Do not wonder at what may seem to be unusual and extravagant. Attribute my eccentricity to Christ--His love actuates me, and bears me along.

What is meant by "**the love of Christ**?" Is it His to us, or ours to Him? It is impossible to divide them thus, for they are one **Ed**: This is true, but the cause must ever be Christ's love, for otherwise we would not love Him). As the sunlight strikes the moon, and is reflected from her to the earth, so the love we have to Christ, or to man, is the reflection of His love to us. All love in our cold and loveless hearts is the emanation and reflection of the Love which began in Him, was mediated to us in Calvary, and is reflected from us, as sunlight from a mirror. (**Ed**: So Meyer seems to agree that the first interpretation of love of Christ is His love for us, because without His love, we would be unable to love!)

The love of Christ does not constrain all Christian people, because they do not understand the profound significance of the Cross; but when the soul once appreciates that, and passes through the gate of death into the life of God, then it begins to feel the constraining love of Christ. The pivot of our life must be the Risen Christ: "We no longer live unto ourselves, but unto Him who rose again." We sometimes hear people described as eccentric---out of the centre.

**A man is ex-centric to the world  
when he is concentric with Christ.**

It is thus that we become a new creation (2Co 5:17+). When by faith we are united to Jesus Christ in His Cross and Grave (Ro 6:5-+), the transition is made. We pass over into the Easter life ("resurrection" life). He has reconciled us unto Himself, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation--therefore we are ambassadors. We have to proclaim forgiveness to the sinful, the loosening of their chains to those who sit in prison-houses, and the near approach of salvation to all (Isaiah 52:7, 8, 9, 10).

This empty cup for Thee to fill;  
This trembling heart for Thee to still;  
This yielded life to do Thy will,  
O Lord of Love, I bring Thee.  
AMEN

**HAVING CONCLUDED THIS, THAT ONE DIED FOR ALL, THEREFORE ALL DIED: krinantas (AAPMPA) touto, hoti eis huper panton apethanen; (3SAAI) ara oi pantes apethanon; (3PAAI):**

- **Having concluded:** Ro 2:2 1Co 2:14
- **one:** Isa 53:6 Mt 20:28 Jn 1:29 11:50-52 1Ti 2:6 Heb 2:9 1Jn 2:1,2
- **Therefore:** 2Co 3:7,9 Lk 15:24,32 Jn 5:25 11:25 Ro 5:15 14:7-9 Eph 2:1-5 Col 2:13 1Ti 5:6 Titus 3:3 1Jn 5:19
- [2 Corinthians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See also "shorter version" of commentary](#) on 2 Corinthians 5:14

**Having concluded** (2919) ([krino](#)) primarily means to distinguish, separate or discriminate and then, to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, without necessarily passing an adverse sentence, though this is usually involved. **Krino** pictures one sifting out and analyzing of evidence and then passing judgment or in the present context coming to a conclusion after examining the evidence.

**One died for all** - Christ died on the Cross for those who believe in Him. He is not speaking of Christ's death for all humanity in this context. While there is not total agreement on this interpretation, I feel that the "all" that have died is those who have died with Christ vicariously as explained more fully below.

As noted the phrase "**therefore all died**" has received a variety of interpretations, but I feel **Dr. John MacArthur's** has the best interpretation...

Christ's love controlled Paul because he had concluded in a deep and profound way the reality of his identification with Christ. His confidence was that one died for all, therefore all died. Under the old covenant the deaths of countless thousands of sacrificial animals could not provide full and complete pardon for sin, "for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). There never was any efficacy in the death of an animal. All such deaths incessantly testified to the old covenant's futility as a means of salvation. But in sharp contrast Jesus Christ, "by one offering ... has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (He 10:14; cf. He 9:14, He 9:28; He 10:10, 12, He 10:19; He 13:12; Ro 3:24, 25; Ro 5:9; Ep 1:7; 1Pe 1:18,19; 1Jn 1:7; Rev 1:5). The preposition **huper (for)** could be translated "*in behalf of,*" or "*for the*

*benefit of,*” but the best rendering seems to be “*in the place of.*” It introduces the essential and irreplaceable truth of the **substitutionary atonement**; that is, that

**Christ died in the place of  
all who put their faith in Him.**

By His death He “redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13) because God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2Cor 5:21).

It is crucial to understand the identity of the **all** for whom **Christ died**. The phrase **one died for all**, if it stood alone, could imply that Christ died for every person who ever lived. But Paul clarified his meaning by adding the phrase **therefore all died**. He did not say, “*all were dead*,” which would have described every sinner who ever lived, since all are dead in sin (Ep 2:1-+). He was not talking about a **condition**, however, but an **event**—believers’ union with Christ in His death. Together, the two phrases define the all for whom Christ died as the all who died in Him (cf. Ro 6:1, 2, 3-+, Ro 6:4-+) through faith in Him (Ro 3:24-+, Ro 3:25, 26-+). Just as all who are *in Adam* (the whole race) became sinners because of his sin, so also all who are *in Christ* (those who believe savingly) become righteous because of His death (Ro 5:19-+; 1Cor 15:21, 22).

**Died** (599) (**apothnesko** from **apo** = marker of dissociation implying a rupture from a former association, separation, departure, cessation + **thnesko** = die) literally means to die off and can speak of literal physical death (Ro 6:9+) but in this context speaks figuratively (metaphorically) of a believer’s death with Christ, a death to **Sin (power of sin)** (Ro 6:2-+, Ro 6:7-+, Ro 6:8-+, Col 3:3-+), **self, devil, the law** (Ro 7:6-+, Gal 2:19) and **the world** (Col 2:20-+, cp Gal 6:14-+ - *crucified* used instead of *died*) which was effected when Christ was crucified and when by faith we believed in Him and in God’s reckoning (albeit a “mysterious” teaching) were crucified with Christ (Ro 6:6-+).

It is notable that as life was never meant to be merely existence, death which is the antonym of life does not mean non-existence. The important point is that to die does not mean one is annihilated as some would falsely teach. Everyone who has ever been born will continue to exist, either in the presence of God or to experience conscious existence in separation from God (see 2Th 1:9).

**Apothnesko** - 10x - 1Cor 8:11; 9:15; 15:3, 22, 31, 32, 36; 2Cor 5:14, 15; 6:9

**2 Corinthians 5:15 and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. (NASB: Lockman)**

**Greek:** [kai huper panton apethanen](#) (3SAAI) [hina oi zontes](#) (PAPMPN) [meketi heautois zosin](#) (3PPAS) [alla to huper auton apothanonti](#) (AAPMSD) [kai egerthenti.](#) (APPMSD)

**Amplified:** And He died for all, so that all those who live might live no longer to and for themselves, but to and for Him Who died and was raised again for their sake. ([Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** And he did die for all in order that those who live should no longer live for their own sakes, but for the sake of him who died and was raised again.

([Westminster Press](#))

**ESV:** and 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. ([ESV](#))

**HCSB:** And He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for them and was raised. ([Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study notes available online free](#))

**KJV:** And 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.

**NEB:** His purpose in dying for all was that men, while still in life, should cease to live for themselves, and should live for him who for their sake died and was raised to life. ([New English Bible - Oxford Press](#))

**NET:** And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised. ([NET Bible](#))

**MH:** And the reason for his death for all? He died so that those who enjoy newness of life in him should quit living for themselves and live wholly for the one who himself both died and rose again for them. (Murray Harris'



expanded paraphrase of 2Corinthians).

**NLT:** He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** and his purpose in dying for them is that their lives should now be no longer lived for themselves but for him who died and rose again for them. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Weymouth:** and that He died for all in order that the living may no longer live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again.

**Wuest:** and that He also died on behalf of all in order that those who are living no longer are living for themselves but for the One who died on their behalf and instead of them, and was raised.

**Young's Literal:** and for all he died, that those living, no more to themselves may live, but to him who died for them, and was raised again.

**AND HE DIED FOR ALL, SO THAT THEY WHO LIVE MIGHT NO LONGER LIVE FOR THEMSELVES BUT FOR HIM WHO DIED AND ROSE AGAIN ON THEIR BEHALF: kai huper panton apethanen (3SAAI) hina oi zontes (PAPMPN) meketi heautois zosin (3PPAS) alla to huper auton apothanonti (AAPMSD) kai egerthenti. (APPMSD):**

- **that they:** 2Co 3:6 Eze 16:6 37:9,14 Hab 2:4 Zec 10:9 Jn 3:15,16 5:24 6:57 Ro 6:2,11,12 8:2,6,10 14:7,8 1Co 6:19,20 Ga 2:20 5:25 Eph 5:14 Col 2:12 3:1 1Pe 4:6 1Jn 4:9
- **No longer:** 2Co 5:16 2Ki 5:17 Ro 6:6 Eph 4:17 1Pe 1:14,15 4:2-4
- **live:** Lk 1:74 Ro 6:13 12:1 14:7-9 1Co 6:20 10:33 Ga 2:19 Php 1:20,21 Col 3:17,23 1Th 5:10 Titus 2:14 Heb 13:20,21 Rev 1:18
- [2 Corinthians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See also "shorter version" of commentary](#) on 2 Corinthians 5:15

## CHRIST DIED AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR ALL

**He died for** ([huper](#) - in place of = [substitutionary atonement](#)) **all** (Greek = pas = all without exceptions) - Christ died for all is not saying He died for all mankind, but for the "all" who would believe in Him which is most in keeping with the following phrase (Remember to always keep context "King" in order to arrive at the most accurate interpretation). This next phrase describes those who **no longer live for themselves** which is clearly a reference to those who have been born again and are new creatures in Christ (2Co 5:17) who (indwelt by the Spirit of Christ) now possess a new desire and power (cp Php 2:13NLT+) to live not for themselves but for others (cp Paul's charge to believers in Php 2:3+). Non-believers live for self so the **'all'** that Jesus died for in this passage is "all" who believe in Him. Also note that when Paul says Jesus **died for all**, he is not saying all are saved.

To state it another way, Christ **died for all** who died in Him (with Him on the Cross - while we cannot begin to plumb the depths of the mystery of our co-crucifixion with Christ, every believer can confidently state that when He died on the Cross, "I died with Him."

**Died** ([599](#)) ([apothnesko](#) from **apo** = marker of dissociation implying a rupture from a former association, separation, departure, cessation + **thnesko** = die) is the aorist tense indicating a past completed action (Jesus' death is a historical event), the active voice (Jesus' made the volitional choice or choice of His own will to die for us) and the indicative mood is the mood, the mood of reality (Jesus really did die a physical death!). As in the previous verse, [apothnesko](#) describes His literal physical death (Ro 6:9+) on the Cross.

**So that** ([hina](#)) is a conjunction which serves to introduce the purpose (or result) for a previous action or truth. In this case the purpose for the sinner's death with Christ on the Cross was that he or she would be buried with Him and raised with Him to walk in newness of life, a quality of life in which they **no longer live** just to please **themselves**, but now for Him (cp to please Him in 2Co 5:9+)

*Christ died our death for us  
that we might live His life for Him.*

**Live** ([2198](#)) ([zao](#)) describes natural physical life the quality that distinguishes a vital being from one that is dead. Both uses of the verb [zao](#) are in the **present tense** describing continuous action. The first use of **live** refers more to the literal physical life and the second use of **live** to a believer's "way of live" or manner of conduct. Living in the light of His death for us serves to motivate a daily life for Savior rather than for Self. "Christ died that we might **live** through Him and for Him, and that we might **live** with Him."

(Wiersbe [Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Themselves** (1438) (**heautou**) himself, herself, itself. Webster's (1828) on "Himself" = Himself is used to express the proper character, or natural temper and disposition of a person, after or in opposition to wandering of mind, irregularity, or devious conduct from derangement, passion or extraneous influence. We say, a man has come to himself, after delirious or extravagant behavior. Let the man alone; let him act himself. By himself, alone; unaccompanied; sequestered. He sits or studies by himself.

**Died... died** - Paul encloses his charge to live for Christ in the bookends of Christ's willingness to die for us. That being true, why would we not be willing to live for Him rather than ourselves. In short, why would we want to live for self and time alone when we can live for eternity in this short time called life.

As **Warren Wiersbe** explains Christ's death so that we (believers) might live "is the positive aspect of our identification with Christ: we not only died with Him, but we also were raised with Him that we might "walk in newness of life" (Ro 6:4). Because we have died with Christ, we can overcome sin; and because we live with Christ, we can bear fruit for God's glory (Ro 7:4). He died that we might live through Him: "God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1Jn 4:9). This is our experience of salvation, eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. But He also died that we might live for Him, and not live unto ourselves (2Co 5:15). This is our experience of service. It has well been said, "Christ died our death for us that we might live His life for Him." If a lost sinner has been to the cross and been saved, how can he spend the rest of his life in selfishness? ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**But for Him Who died** - Clearly a reference to Christ's death.

**MacArthur** explains that "in Christ believers experience not only death to sin but also resurrection to righteousness. As a result, they are no longer to live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf (cf. Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24).

**Rose again** (1453) (**egeiro**) means to waken, rouse from sleep, from sitting or lying, from disease, from death, from inactivity, from ruins. It means to lift up, raise up, arise again, stand up. Metaphorically, **egeiro** is used in the NT to describe to awaken from sluggishness or lethargy (Ro 13:11+). Obviously in the present context egeiro refers to Christ's being "awakened up from death", i.e., His resurrection from the dead.

The **resurrection** was confirmation of the Father's acceptance of the Son's substitutionary death (cf. 1Cor 15:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7-notes). It is worth noting that all three persons of the Trinity were active in Christ's resurrection: the Father—Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33, 34, 37; 17:31; the Spirit—Ro 8:11 and the Son—John 2:19, 20, 22; 10:17,18. The resurrection is the grand proof of His divine Sonship and thus Paul writes that Jesus

was established (openly designated, marked out, declared) with (literally "in") power (in a striking, triumphant and miraculous manner) as the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead according to the Spirit of holiness. (see Ro 1:4+)

Christ's **Resurrection** is the guarantee of God's power to carry out the rescue of those who are His and to judge those who are not, for as Luke recorded in Acts...

He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man Whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:31) (+: The Scriptures generally attribute the resurrection of Jesus to the activity of the Father - Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30,31; 10:40,41)

And so the certainty (cp 500 witnesses did not lie in 1Cor 15:6) of His resurrection past carries the promise of His future return! If the one promise was fulfilled literally, the other promise is just as certain. A further proof of the gospel's veracity is its ability to inculcate faith in Jesus Christ, a faith that is so demonstrably total and real that it causes (or should cause) the believer to live their present life in the light of Jesus' return.

**Calvin** writes that Paul...

makes mention here of Christ's resurrection, on which the hope of our resurrection is founded, for death everywhere besets us. Hence, unless we learn to look to Christ, our minds will give way at every turn. By the same consideration, he admonishes them that Christ is to be waited for from heaven, because we will find nothing in the world to bear us up, while there are innumerable trials to overwhelm us. ([1 Thessalonians 1:9-10](#))

**Illustration** - In 1858, **Frances Ridley Havergal** visited Dusseldorf, Germany where she saw a copy of Sternburg's great painting "The Crucifixion" which depicts Christ, wearing His crown of thorns as He stands before Pilate and the mob. A which had a subtitle associated the picture asking...

“All this I did for thee;  
what has thou done for Me?”

Inspired by this probing question, she wrote her famous poem, “I Gave My Life for Thee.” As the story goes Frances was not pleased with the poem but a strong downdraft blew the paper out of the fire and onto the hearth. Feeling that this might have been Providential, she took the slightly-scorched paper, folded it, and sent it to her father in England, who composed a tune to match the words and had it published. Years later by Phillip Bliss wrote the more familiar tune of this now great hymn...

### [I Gave My Life for Thee](#)

I gave My life for thee,  
My precious blood I shed,  
That thou might'st ransomed be,  
And quickened from the dead;  
I gave, I gave My life for thee,  
What hast thou given for Me?

**Kenneth Osbeck** (borrow [Amazing grace](#)) records a slightly different version of the preceding story (which is the true story is uncertain) -- A vivid painting of Christ, wearing His crown of thorns as He stands before Pilate and the mob, is displayed in the art museum of Dusseldorf, Germany. Under the painting by Sternberg are the words, “This have I done for thee; what hast thou done for Me?” When Frances Havergal viewed the painting during a visit to Germany, she was deeply moved. As she gazed at it in tears, she scribbled down the lines of this hymn text on a scrap of paper. After returning to her home in England, she felt the poetry was so poor that she tossed the lines into a stove. The scorched scrap of paper amazingly floated out of the flames and landed on the floor, where it was found by Frances’ father, Rev. William Havergal, an Anglican minister, a noted poet, and a church musician. He encouraged her to preserve the poem by composing the first melody for it. The present tune was composed for this text by the noted American gospel songwriter, Philip P. Bliss, and was first published in 1873. (Amazing Grace : 366 inspiring hymn stories for daily devotions) ([See yet another variation of the story of this hymn](#))

**2 Corinthians 5:16 Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. (NASB: Lockman)**

**Greek:** [Hoste hemeis apo tou nun oudena oidamen \(1PRAI\) kata sarka; ei kai egnokamen \(1PRAI\) kata sarka Christon, alla nun ouketi ginokomen. \(1PPAI\)](#)

**Amplified:** Consequently, from now on we estimate and regard no one from a [purely] human point of view [in terms of natural standards of value]. [No] even though we once did estimate Christ from a human viewpoint and as a man, yet now [we have such knowledge of Him that] we know Him no longer [in terms of the flesh]. ([Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** The result is that from now on we value no man on the world’s standards. There was a time when we applied our human standards to Christ, but now that is no longer the way in which we know him. ([Westminster Press](#))

**ESV:** From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ([ESV](#))

**HCSB:** From now on, then, we do not know anyone in a purely human way. Even if we have known Christ in a purely human way, yet now we no longer know Him like that. ([Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study notes available online free](#))

**KJV:** Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

**NEB:** With us therefore worldly standards have ceased to count in our estimate of any man; even if once they counted in our understanding of Christ, they do so now no longer. ([New English Bible - Oxford Press](#))

**NET:** So then from now on we acknowledge no one from an outward human point of view. Even though we have known Christ from such a human point of view, now we do not know him in that way any longer. ([NET Bible](#))

**MH:** The death and resurrection of Christ have produced two further results. First, for the future, we refuse to estimate anyone by the external standards of the world. Indeed, even if before our conversion we thought of Christ from the standpoint of the world as a mere human being and as a messianic pretender, now we no longer view him that way. (Murray Harris' expanded paraphrase of 2Corinthians).

**Moffatt:** Once convinced of this, then, I estimate no one by what is external; even though I once estimated Christ by what is external, I no longer estimate him thus.

**NLT:** So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** This means that our knowledge of men can no longer be based on their outward lives (indeed, even though we knew Christ as a man we do not know him like that any longer). ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Weymouth:** Therefore for the future we know no one simply as a man. Even if we have known Christ as a man, yet now we do so no longer.

**WBC:** Therefore from now we judge no one from an outward point of view. Though we may have judged Christ from such a viewpoint, now we do so no longer (Ralph Earle - Word Biblical Commentary)

**Wuest:** So that, as for us, from this particular time onward, not even one individual do we know as judged upon the basis of human standards. Even though we [Paul in his unsaved state] have known Christ as judged by human standards, yet now no longer do we know Him as such.

**Young's Literal:** So that we henceforth have known no one according to the flesh, and even if we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him no more;

**THEREFORE FROM NOW ON WE RECOGNIZE NO ONE ACCORDING TO THE FLESH; EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE KNOWN CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, YET NOW WE KNOW HIM IN THIS WAY NO LONGER: Hoste hemeis apo tou nun oudena oidamen (1PRAI) kata sarka; ei kai egnokamen (1PRAI) kata sarka Christon, alla nun ouketi ginokomen. (1PPAI):**

- **know:** Dt 33:9 1Sa 2:29 Mt 10:37 12:48-50 Mk 3:31-35 Jn 2:4 15:14 Ga 2:5,6 5:6 Php 3:7,8 Col 3:11 1Ti 5:21,22 Jas 2:1-4 3:17
- **yet:** Jn 6:63
- [2 Corinthians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See also "shorter version" of commentary](#) on 2 Corinthians 5:16

## **A RESPECTER OF JESUS NO LONGER RESPECTER OF PERSONS!**

**Disclaimer:** This is a difficult verse and has been subjected to a variety of interpretations which will not be addressed in these notes. Be a Berean even as you read these notes for they are not infallible! One author says that 2Co 5:16 "*has prompted numerous scholarly articles, all of them seeking to unpack Paul's compressed language.*"

**Therefore (5620) (hoste)** usually means so that, and serves as a marker of result, thus Barclay begins his sentence with the phrase "the result is that." In other words, in view of the death and resurrection of Christ, Paul says "we" (see below) no longer estimate or regard or judge or evaluate anyone by the world's standards, from a purely human point of view, from external standards or based on their outward lives. Stated another way, because of the radical effect that the **love of Christ** has had on him, Paul has ceased making superficial personal judgments on people based on their external appearance (including ethnicity, sex, social status, etc)

**Mattoon** writes that "God's grip on Paul changed his outlook on life and his view of men. The word "wherefore" points back to 2Cor 5:14, 15, which describe salvation. ([2 Corinthians - Treasures from 2 Corinthians 1-7](#))

**We** - Throughout this section Paul has used plural pronoun, which I interpret as an "editorial we", but some feel this refers to Paul and his companions and others feel it refers to all Christians.

**John MacArthur** explains 2Co 5:16, 17 - These two verses define when Paul's burden for the lost began. The conjunction *hōste* (**therefore**) points back to 2Co 5:14, 15, which describe salvation. After his conversion, the way Paul viewed people changed radically. From then on, he did not recognize (*oida*; lit. "know," or "perceive") anyone according to the flesh; he no longer evaluated people based on external, worldly standards, as the false teachers did (cf. 2Co 5:12; Gal. 6:12). The proud Pharisee, who once scorned Gentiles, and even those Jews outside of his group (cf. Jn 7:49), now looked beyond mere outward appearances. His

prejudice and hatred gave way to a love for all, including "Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman" (Col 3:11). (See [2 Corinthians MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 195](#))

**From now on** - "Since the great event, the Death of Christ." (Alford) "From the time that we gained this view of Christ's death for us." (A T Robertson) "From the time that the love of Christ has engaged [has pre-occupied] our minds." (Bengel) For Paul the truth of the death and resurrection of Christ has forever obliterated all human distinctions. Now that he sees everyone with "Jesus vision" so to speak, with eyes fixed on eternity, that future time which will separate every soul either into the presence of God or away from His glorious presence (2Th 1:7, 8, 9).

**Garland** explains that "What Paul finds crucially important in this section is what Christ's death means for how he must evaluate others and how they should evaluate him. As others now misread Paul, so he once misread Christ...The phrase "**from now on**" however, has eschatological overtones and therefore refers to something beyond the point of Paul's conversion when he surrendered all his evaluations and decisions to the wisdom of the cross. Christ's death is the turning of the ages. It reveals that this world is passing away and shows that all attachments to it are unimportant and vain. (Garland, D. E. Vol. 29: 2 Corinthians The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers - [2 Corinthians](#))

**Recognize** (1492)(**eido**) means in general to know by perception and is often distinguished from **ginosko** (epiginosko, epignosis - the other major NT word group for knowing) because **ginosko** generally refers to knowledge obtained by experience or "experiential knowledge". On the other hand, **eido/oida** often refers more to an intuitive knowledge, although this distinction is not always clear cut. **Eido/oida** is not so much that which is known by experience as an intuitive insight that is drilled into one's heart. **Eido/oida** is a perception, a being aware of, an understanding, an intuitive knowledge which in the case of believers can only be given by the Holy Spirit.

**Plummer** says that **eido** is used here in the same sense as it is used in 1Th 5:12 where it conveys the sense of "we appreciate, we value." There is a similar sense in 1Co 16:18. As Plummer goes on to say...

'We value no one because of his external attributes.' The differences between king and clown, rich and poor, master and slave, genius and dunce, do not come into the estimate; what counts is the person's character as a Christian. ([2 Corinthians 5 Commentary](#))

**No one** (3762) (**oudeis**) is an adjective which means not even one. When Christ takes over your life, He jettisons fleshly prejudice toward other people.

### **ARE YOU IMPRESSED BY THE... EXTERNAL or INTERNAL? VISIBLE or INVISIBLE? TEMPORAL or ETERNAL?**

**According to the flesh** - "According to external distinctions, by what he is in the flesh" (Plummer). As a mere human being, by usual human measures or standards, from a human point of view, based on "externals". The **love of Christ**, His death and His resurrection has inaugurated a new age so to speak for Paul (and for all believers) so that now everything (and everyone) is viewed a different light (cp Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11), ultimately the light of eternity.

**R Kent Hughes** refers to "Paul's piercing declaration of ***gospel disregard*** (that is, the disregard of superficial evaluation that stems from our death in Christ on the cross)... Because of the gospel, Paul and all believers are to be done with their shallow, external, carnal regard of Christ and others—and especially those who are of the household of faith... ***Gospel disregard!*** Paul's declaration collides with the spirit of our age, a spirit that revels in superficial, fleshly regard... Looks, externals, dominate our existence... People evaluate one another externally according to their wealth, their position, their connectedness, and their fame or infamy (either of which is to be coveted)... As Christians we must be done with such carnal distinctions... How Pauline, how Christlike, how Christian, how loving, how liberating, how empowering, how potent it is when "we regard no one according to the flesh." (See [2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness - Page 118](#))

**Reformation Study Bible** - Paul emphasizes spiritual judgment and spiritual insight into people's lives and situations. Our experience of Christ's love moves us to stop viewing others according to worldly standards and to learn how to view them from the standpoint of God's great act of salvation in Jesus Christ. ([2 Cor 5:16 - ESV Reformation Study Bible](#))

**Guzik** - We regard no one according to the flesh: Why? Because we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen (2Corinthians 4:18). Because our earthly tent will be destroyed, but we will have a new body, eternal in the heavens (2Corinthians 5:1). Because we walk by faith, not by sight (2Corinthians 5:7). Because we do not glory in appearance, but we glory in heart (2Corinthians 5:12). For all these reasons, we don't look to the image and appearance of the flesh, but to the

substance of the heart. ([Enduring Word Bible Commentary](#))

## CALVARY'S CONTROLLING LOVE

Practically this passage says to us as believers we (like Paul) should have a new view of every person (soul) we encounter. As believers (who should be being) controlled by the **love of Christ**, we need to see lost people as sinners for whom Christ died. In other words we should no longer see them as friends or enemies, rich or poor, black or white, etc, but the way Christ sees them, as lost sheep who need a shepherd (cp Luke 15:4, 5, 6, 7). When we are truly controlled by the **love of Christ**, we will want to share Calvary's love with others.

Calvary's Love will sail forever  
Bright and shining, strong and free  
Like an ark of peace and safety  
On the sea of human need.

So desire to tell His story  
Of a love that loved enough to die  
Burns away all other passions  
And fed by Calvary's love becomes a fire!

[\(Play Steve Green's powerful vocal\)](#)

**A T Robertson** - According to the flesh, the fleshy way of looking at men. He, of course, knows men "in the flesh", but Paul is not speaking of that. Worldly standards and distinctions of race, class, cut no figure now with Paul (Gal. 3:28) as he looks at men from the standpoint of the Cross of Christ.

When Jesus comes into our life and in fact now even becomes our life according to Colossians 3:4+, He changes every aspect of the way we evaluate people, so that now human standards are no longer adequate for judging others. When we come to know Christ, He changes everything about us.

We see this "divine vision" regarding people also alluded to in a number of other passages...

But the Lord said to Samuel, "**Do not look at his appearance** or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but **the Lord looks at the heart.**" (1Sa 16:7).

And He (referring to Messiah ruling and reigning on earth from Jerusalem in the **Millennium**) will delight in the fear of the Lord, and He will not judge by what His eyes see (Isa 11:3).

(Jesus declared) "**Do not judge** (present imperative with a negative = stop doing this, implying they were judging others this way and "*implies that they were guilty of wrong judgment and urges them to mend their ways*" [Leon Morris]) according to appearance, but **judge** (aorist imperative = Jesus use of this command conveys a sense of urgency.) with righteous judgment." (Jn 7:24).

**NLT paraphrase:** Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly.

**Williams paraphrase:** Stop judging superficially.

You (Jesus addressing the Pharisees complaint in Jn 8:13) judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. (Jn 8:15+)

**Comment:** Recall that before his conversion, Paul was a Pharisee of Pharisees (Acts 23:6, 26:5, Php 3:5-+), constantly judging men according to the flesh, but now in Christ, controlled by the radical love of Christ which was made possible by His co-crucifixion and co-resurrection with Christ, he counted that manner of living as loss for the sake of Christ (Php 3:7-+), even considering such thinking and living as rubbish in order that he might gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of (his) own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith (Php 3:8, 9-+).

The ancient writer **Chrysostom** commented that...

Even if believers are still in their earthly bodies, we do not relate to them in that way, because the life according to the flesh has been transcended. We have been born again by the Spirit and have learned a different kind of behavior, which is that of heaven. It is Christ who has brought about this change. (Homilies on

the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians)

**Flesh** (4561) (See word study on **sarx**)

**Newton** feels that

Paul is using **flesh** in a negative way - flesh as opposed to Spirit; flesh that sees things only from human thoughts but fails to understand anything transcendent, majestic, eternal. ([Ref](#))

To know Christ "according to the flesh" means to know Him only as a human being in history, but not to know him as Savior and Lord.

**Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh-** Paul admits that at one time (Saul the Pharisee) in the past (before his conversion), he viewed Christ in this way and he sought to persecute His followers (Acts 9:1, 2, Acts 26:9, 10, 11), but no longer (Paul the Apostle) views Him according to the standards men judge other men.

**Phil Newton** asks...

What did Paul (Saul of Tarsus) know about Jesus Christ prior to his conversion?

- A popular teacher, deemed a disturber of the peace and tranquility in Israel
- A native of Nazareth but lived in Galilee most recently
- Followed by a band of uneducated fishermen and despised tax collectors, along with sinners such as prostitutes and other profligates of society
- Esteemed by the poor, common man in Israel
- Disrupts synagogues, criticizes and pronounces woes upon scribes and Pharisees
- Able to quote the Law with authority, even speaks with authority as though He spoke for God Himself
- Questionable birth; rumor has it that his mother was pregnant before she was married; so he may be illegitimate
- Claims to be God, calls himself "Son of Man" and is called "Son of God" by some
- Rumored that He has multiplied bread on two occasions to feed thousands, healed lame and infirmed, gave sight to blind, delivered demon possessed, and even rumors that he had raised the dead
- Blameless in His conduct and speech; no one can corner Him successfully

As Philip Hughes put it, "To have known Christ in this way was a guarantee of nothing. Great numbers had followed Christ in person who afterwards deserted Him and demanded His crucifixion" (201). But Paul only believed what the "flesh" could understand. As he had already told the Corinthians, spiritual things can only be understood by spiritual means (1 Cor 2).

As long as a person allows the world to form his opinions on Christ, he will not find the message of the gospel to be of interest. I told you a few weeks ago about talking with the young lady at the U of M who said that she was a "pagan." She claimed to also believe in Jesus, but when I questioned her about Him, she denied that He is God. I began to quote Scripture's teaching about Christ, and she seemed stunned, as though she had not really considered that He is the one and only God, creator of the world, sustainer of the world, and as God He also invaded the world to become one of our race of humanity so that He might reconcile us to God. ([Sermons from the Second Epistle to the Corinthians](#))

**Morgan** writes...

When he knew Christ **after the flesh** he considered Him as the leader of a new sect, the leader of a new party, a menace to holy religion. He says we do not see Him like that any more. We know Him now in the Spirit, by the Spirit.

**Murray Harris** explains that...

Paul's encounter with the risen Lord on the Damascus road effected the twofold change in attitude: Jesus was the Messiah and Lord; Gentile believers were his brothers "in Christ" while his unbelieving compatriots were "without Christ."

**A T Robertson**...

He had before his conversion known Christ *kata sarka* (according to the flesh), according to the standards of the men of his time, the Sanhedrin and other Jewish leaders. He had led the persecution against Jesus till Jesus challenged and stopped him (Acts 9:4). That event turned Paul clean round and he no longer knows Christ in the old way *kata sarka* (according to the flesh). Paul may or may not have seen Jesus in the flesh before his death, but he says absolutely nothing on that point here.

**We have known** (1097) (**ginosko**) means to acquire information usually by experience (rather than by intuition), to get to know, to gain experiential confirmation regarding something or someone. Generally, the knowledge of **ginosko** goes beyond the merely factual and in some contexts was used of a special relationship between the person who knows and the object of the knowledge. For example, in certain contexts **ginosko** even referred to the intimate relationship between husband and wife or between God and His people.

**Ralph Earle** says that although Paul uses two verbs for **know** (**eido**, **ginosko**) in this same verse, there is...

no appreciable difference of meaning. Both are used of knowing God or Christ with an intimacy and personal quality that leads to fellowship

As an aside there is a process by which one receives spiritual knowledge and it primarily involves obedience to the Word of God. As I **obey** the truth I have heard (choosing to deny my flesh and instead choosing God's way regardless of the cost), I began to "assimilate" that truth. This principle was taught by Jesus Who stated that...

If anyone is willing to DO His will, he will KNOW (ginosko) of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. (Jn 7:17)

**Comment:** Do you see the link Jesus establishes between "doing" and "knowing"? As this truth becomes an experiential part of my thinking, the product is **gnosis** and the process of is **ginosko**. Like Wayne Barber likes to say, most of us want the final product "spiritual gnosis" but not many of us want to walk through the sometimes painful process of **ginosko** to obtain the gnosis. If this explanation confuses you like it did me when I first heard this teaching, persevere and I think you will see that this principle is Biblical.

**Christ** (5547) (**Christos** from **chrío** = to anoint, rub with oil, consecrate to an office) is the Anointed One, the Messiah, **Christos** being the Greek equivalent of the transliterated Hebrew word **Messiah**. In the OT the word "anointed" was closely linked with two offices -- king and high priest. It was prophesied that Jesus, from David's kingly line, would one day hold ultimate authority in our world. As high priest, Jesus offered himself up for us and lives today to make intercession for us. In Jesus' day, then, the Christ was thought of as Israel's deliverer.

**Yet now** - Marks a contrast.

**We know Him** - This is the same verb **ginosko**, which describes knowing by experience (but see note by Earle above).

**In this way no longer** - In other words Paul no longer viewed Christ from a human point of view or by human standards of judging. This does not mean that Paul disregarded Jesus life on earth as a man as some commentators teach. That would be patently absurd! The point is that before his new birth, Paul hated Christ as well as all who followed Him. Paul's avowed aversion toward Christ was supernaturally transformed by the love of Christ into an "avid attraction" toward Him.

**Butler** offers a simple explanation that...

To know someone after the flesh means knowing and evaluating people as the flesh judges. Paul says he used to evaluate ("known") Christ on that basis but now he evaluates Christ from a spiritual point of view. Furthermore that is the way he evaluates men. The flesh says fame and fortune make a man great—but that is to "know" someone after the flesh. To evaluate spiritually will make a much different judgment of people. It says the rich and influential need the Gospel just as much as the poor person and that the educated need Christ just as much as the uneducated. ([Analytical Bible Expositor: 1 and 2 Corinthians](#))

**Wiersbe** explains that because of our new birth, our new life in Christ, this "spiritual revolution" brings about a new relationship to other human beings "We no longer look at life the way we used to. To know Christ "after the flesh" means to evaluate Him from a human point of view. But "the days of His flesh" are ended (Heb 5:7+) because He has ascended to heaven and is now glorified at the Father's right hand. Adam was the head of the old creation, and Christ (the Last Adam, 1Co 15:45) is the Head of the new creation. The old creation was plunged into sin and condemnation because of the disobedience of Adam. The new creation means righteousness and salvation because of the obedience of Jesus Christ. (See Ro 5:12-21+ for the explanation of the "two Adams.") Because we are a part of the new creation, everything has become new. For one thing, we have a new view of Christ. It is unfortunate that too great an emphasis is given in music and art on Christ "after the flesh." The facts about the earthly life of Jesus are important, because the Christian message is grounded in history. But we must interpret the manger by the throne. We do not



worship a Babe in a manger; we worship a glorified Saviour on the throne. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**No longer** ([3765](#)) (**ouketi**) is an adverb which negates an extension of time, so that it extends up to a certain point but not beyond that point = no more, no longer, no further. One of the saddest uses of **ouketi** is found in John 6:66 where the "disciples" that had followed Jesus part of the way were not willing to go all the way and thus "were not walking with Him anymore." (Jn 6:66) A well known use is found in Gal 2:20 where Paul states that it is "no longer" (**ouketi**) he who lives, but Christ lives in him. **Oh, that this would be true in more and more of the lives of God's children for the glory of His Name. Amen.** In Ep 2:19 Paul says the Gentiles (most of you reading this) are no longer (**ouketi**) strangers! Hallelujah!