

The Believer's Right View

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[0 : 00] How many of you like to listen to our singing together? Do you enjoy that? I, particularly this morning, I guess one of the things I want to thank the Lord for! is the enthusiastic and joyful faces of our choir. Did you notice them?

I mean, they're not up there just kind of with this obligation, like, okay, I've got to sing this morning, so... I like looking at your smiling faces. I was tempted to turn around and look at the rest of you, because it sounded like you were having a good time, and I'm thankful for that.

Here's the deal. Are you listening? If we know Christ as our Savior, and we are filled with the Spirit, what should our singing be like?

How should it be? Huh? It should be pretty enthusiastic. Would you agree with that? Amen. Okay. I want to thank you for that enthusiastic singing.

Stop while you're ahead. Okay, I got that. Hey, I want you to turn your Bibles this morning to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. We're going to be looking at a passage that really brings together what we are gathered here today to do.

[1 : 18] This day is a day where we celebrate the Lord's table. Isn't that right? And these elements here, this bread and this cup, are little reminders for all of us who know Christ as our Savior.

I want to tell you up front that taking communion doesn't make you saved, and it doesn't get you extra points in heaven. You know, the idea that you have to take communion in order to get a pass or whatever, whatever, that's not in the Scriptures.

We take communion to celebrate what Christ has done for us, and anyone who is here that has come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior is invited and welcomed to this table. We want you to celebrate with us when we remember what Christ has done for us. And as we take the bread and we take the cup, we are really taking what are reminders of His sacrifice.

The bread reminds us of His death on the cross. The cup reminds us of the blood of the new covenant. And when we take that bread and we take that cup, one of the things I trust that happens in your heart, and I would not be put off in the least, if as you are taking the bread and you taking the cup, you went ahead and said out loud, thank you, Lord Jesus, for being my Savior and for the blessing of what you've done in my life.

[2 : 42] And I have no doubt that part of Christ's purpose in giving us this command to remember what He has done for us is not so much to inform us of the facts of what He's done, but to rekindle in our heart an affection and appreciation for His grace and His salvation.

And so when we are taking these elements, it is appropriate to think about just how foundational and how central His salvation is in our lives. And I want you to look this morning to a passage in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 where the apostle addresses this issue of the centrality of Christ's work for us and how affecting that is to be in all of our lives.

I want you to look there, if you will, in verses 14 and 15. For the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this, that one has died for all, therefore all have died.

And He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who for their sakes died and was raised. As we look at this passage, we're going to find three little truths that I want you to focus on.

We're going to find, first of all, the believer's operating principle. What is it that governs and controls our life? The believer's operating principle. We're going to find, secondly, a reminder of the believer's past.

[4 : 06] And every single one of us in here have a past that we'd soon not remember. Am I right? Every one of us. Third, we're going to see the believer's present and a reminder of this fact that if you have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, you are not your own.

We find Paul says elsewhere, you are bought with a price. You belong to Christ. And so let's begin, first of all, by looking at the believer's operating principle. You look there in verse 14, it says, for the love of Christ controls us.

Now, one of the important rules to understanding the Scriptures is remembering that the best commentary on the Scriptures is the... It's the Scriptures. And so in order to understand what a passage is saying, it always helps to pay attention to the context.

And the larger context of this passage really is the entire book of 2 Corinthians. You'll remember, if you think about the book of 1 Corinthians, that it was written to a church dealing with a lot of different problems, and Paul was writing to correct one thing after another.

In particular, the church was struggling with immorality. The church was also struggling with having an argumentative and divisive spirit within the body, and Paul wrote to correct that.

[5 : 24] Now, as a result of Paul ministering to the church at Corinth and giving them these kind of firm admonitions, guess how they responded to it? Hey, how do you do when you're corrected?

Bring it on. I had it coming. I need it. Is that how all of you behave? When your wife says to you, honey, you need to stop, how do you do that? Oh, thank you.

I am so glad that God hired you to be my primary helper. Is that how you deal with it? Well, here's what happened. When Paul kind of admonished the church at Corinth, they kind of bristled and they got a little attitude, and they began pushing back against the apostle.

And one of the things that was particularly used against the apostle is that he was suffering so much. He had one hardship after another come into his life, and as a result, the people that were critics of him said, hey, listen, if Paul was really God's man, he would not be having all these problems.

Do you ever bump into people today that propose one of the clear indicators that you're God's man is that everything goes perfectly? I mean, after all, after we're saved, we all have these promises that we're going to get a better job, we're going to get more pay.

[6 : 41] Is that the way it goes? Now, if you're buying into the health and wealth gospel, probably so, but this is not the first time, this generation is not the first time that people have been caught up in ideas that if you're God's child, everything's going to be perfect, and just a wonderful uphill kind of walk with everything kind of working out perfectly.

And so Paul's critics were saying, listen, here's the proof that Paul is not really an apostle. Look at all his sufferings. Look at all the difficulties he's having.

Look at all the persecution he endures. And Paul took this subtle accusation head on and wasn't shy in the least about talking about his suffering for the gospel.

In fact, he goes on and explains the value of suffering. We're going to see that, particularly just a little snapshot, in chapter 1. And so I want you to turn back, keep your finger there, in chapter 5. But look at chapter 1, verse 4. Paul's talking about suffering, and remember, people were being critical of his suffering. And so he says, hey, let's take a look at this issue of suffering.

[7 : 52] In chapter 1, verse 4, he says, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Do you know what Paul's saying? One of the benefits of our own suffering is that God uses that to equip us to minister to other people.

Have you found that to be true? The things that have been your private heartaches and things that you have had to deal with over the years, whether it is a disappointment in a family relationship or losing your job or whatever that hardship is, the Spirit of God then takes those very difficulties and brings in His wisdom and economy, He brings people into your life.

You didn't go looking for them. You didn't have to post on the internet. I have suffered in ABC. If you're interested in any counsel in relationship to these things, please email me and I'll follow up. That doesn't happen. But here's what happens. God in His wisdom knows what your suffering has been, and He knows how He got you through it, and He will, in His providence, bring people right into your life that you can minister to according to how He's ministered to you.

[9 : 11] And Paul says, hey, suffering's not all bad. Suffering is actually one of the things that equips me to minister to other people. And so this morning, as you're sitting there and you're wondering, what's going on in my life and why am I having some of the hardships that I'm having?

Understand this. God is actually in that, not only strengthening your character and your spiritual walk, but He's also equipping you for a future ministry that you will someday have.

Look also, if you will, at verse 8 and 9. For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. Remember there were people that were being critical and saying, you know, that Paul, he's not the real deal because if he really was God's man, everybody would just love him.

Paul says, hey, let's be up front. When we were in Asia, we were taking a beating. And he says, don't want us have you be ignorant about that for we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.

Have you ever felt like you were so overwhelmed that you just couldn't handle it anymore? That's what Paul was talking about. He says, I was burdened to the point, I can't do it. Look at verse 9.

[10:27] Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death, but that was to make us rely not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead.

Guess what another lesson is that we learn in hardship? We learn our own inadequacy and we learn His sufficiency. So long as you think you can pull it off by yourself and you're not dealing with any of the hardships of life, it just seems, hey, I'm good.

I can handle this. And then God allows something to come into your life that is absolutely beyond your ability and you find yourself relying upon God and you discover what? His sufficiency and His worth to handle that challenge.

And so when we find ourselves in those hard times and those difficulties, instead of kind of despairing and saying, I give up, I give up, understand that in that, God is at work and He is not only strengthening you, but He's teaching you that He will care for the problem.

We may not admit it, but we are guppies in some sense for the prosperity gospel. And we act that way on occasion because when disappointment and difficulties come, we find ourselves kind of wondering, so all right, God, what did I do?

[11:45] What's happening? Where are you in this picture? And we need to remind ourselves that when those difficult times come, it's something that God wants us to learn through.

And so recognize this, a test of faith really is how we handle the hard times. Mark it down. A test of faith is how we handle the hard times. Now, you don't need to go around praying for those opportunities.

Do you understand that? I've had people say to me, well, I'm praying for patience. Don't do that.

Hey, listen to me. He knows what you need better than you do. And so just kind of say, all right, Lord, whatever you pitch, let me be on the game and be able to handle it and grow through this.

I'll never forget several weeks ago when we were having our missions conference and Tom Graves stood up here and he said, you know, in Romania, they are looking to have a Bible conference and the chief thing that they're going to talk about is, all right, all right, so what have we lost now that we no longer suffer open persecution for Christ?

Isn't that amazing? Here are people who recognize that hardship and difficulty were doing positive things for their spiritual walk and over here we would be doing what?

[12:57] We would have a conference ringing our hands about, what are we doing wrong? Nobody likes us. You know, all wound up. Here they are. Hey, what do we lose when we're not suffering for the gospel?

And so I want you to recognize that Paul, as he is working his way through the book of 2 Corinthians, each one of the chapters talk about this issue of hardship and suffering. And so the logical question is this, Paul, what makes you different?

What makes you the way you are in the face of the adversity and the difficulty you have? And we're dealing with that question's answer in verse 14 of chapter 5.

Christ's love is the gospel-centered motive for Christian living and endurance. That's what Paul is going to remind us of. Christ's love is the gospel-centered motive for Christian living and endurance. Look at the passage that we are going to deal with here. For the love of Christ controls me. What really motivates a person reveals what's in their heart and what they value the most.

[14:05] It's always interesting that when you bump into people within a short period of time, if they're relatively new to you, you figure out what things they care about. Isn't that right? When you're in a situation that's fairly new, there may be a little bit of natural reservation, but eventually you open up and we always begin to talk about the things that we like.

We talk about the things that we think are important. We talk about the things that we value. We can't help ourselves. It comes out. And Paul says, listen, let me tell you something. It is the love of Christ that controls me. I look at a world that we live in that you don't have to listen to very long if you're paying attention to the news.

And guess what you find out when you listen to the news? You have two opposing world systems, both of them which are deeply flawed, that propose that the solution to all the world's problems really lie in one side or another.

How many of you know John Kenneth Galbraith? Do you know John Kenneth Galbraith? One or two of the older people here know John Kenneth Galbraith was an economist, an incredibly brilliant man.

[15:19] And by the way, he's buried out in Sunset Cemetery within a stone's throw of where William Brock is buried. You needed to know that. Write that down. There'll be a quiz on that little fact. It's an extra piece. But John Kenneth Galbraith made this statement.

He said, capitalism is a system in which one man takes advantage of another one. He said, and communism is exactly the opposite. You know what he meant?

He meant, it's also a system where one man takes advantage of another man. Can I tell you that when Jesus comes back and the millennium gets kicked off, he is not going to rely on capitalism or communism.

He is going to rely upon his infinite wisdom and his justice and his love to bring about perfect governance and a world at peace.

And I want you to understand that as we who are his children think about how we are to live in this present day, it is not getting wound up by one side or another of that argument.

[16:22] It is getting wound up by the supremacy of the love of Christ that he has lavished on us. And when your life is dominated and controlled by your appreciation for the love of Christ, and I appreciate what John said this morning, getting overwhelmed with the love of Christ and understanding the depth of the love of Christ is the driving force in helping you grow to be a more loving person.

Apart from appreciating the love of Christ, you are not going to be very loving of anyone but guess who? Do this little thing right here.

If you are not affected by the love of Christ, you will be affected by the love of self. That's the way it is. Well, Paul wants us to recognize that the believer is to be dominated and to be controlled by the love of Christ.

Let me come to the second part as we think about this passage. You see, a believer has a past and there in verse 14 it says, the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this that one has died for all, therefore all were dead.

So I want you to recognize that prior to salvation, each of us were utterly dead and lost. Do you understand that the gospel actually starts with bad news?

[17:44] The idea that Jesus came into the world just to be kind of a nice and wonderful example that people can follow and kind of move their way uphill and eventually get there is a lie from hell.

When you ask people what the gospel actually is and they propose to you that this gospel is just a, just simply and exclusively a nice and wonderful little story about how to be sweet to each other, if that's what they think, they're missing what the scripture has to say about the gospel.

Paul made this statement, he said, that the gospel is something that is offensive. Do you know what's offensive about the gospel? The gospel is offensive because first of all it tells us that all mankind equally are dead in their trespasses and sins and stand justly condemned before a holy God.

That's the part people don't like. But you know what Jesus said? He said, hey, those who don't understand that they're sick, there's a free rendition unless you're wondering what passage it is. Remember Jesus said this? He said, it's not those who are healthy that need the physician but those that are sick. By the way, was he saying that some of us were healthy and some of us were sick?

[19:00] No, he was saying the problem with the Pharisees is they didn't understand just how sick their soul was. You see, in order for people to recognize their desperate need for the gospel, the first thing they have to do is come to grips with the wickedness and the absolute despair of their soul.

And can I tell you something? Of all the things we can learn from history, the thing that is clearest is that apart from the power of Christ to save mankind, all human existence is insufferably wicked and despicable.

Does that mean we're as bad as we could be without further practice? No. But here's the truth. Apart from Christ, what it says in the Scripture is there is none righteous, no, not one. There's not a one that seeks after Christ.

And so as we think about the truth of what the gospel tells us, it announces, as we see here in this passage, that prior to the grace of God, I was utterly dead and hopeless in my sin with no hope. I stood justly condemned for the blackness of my heart and the wickedness of my sins, and yet Christ chose to take my place and die in my stead. And that's true for every one of you here this morning that know Christ as your personal Savior.

[20 : 18] He took your sin. He paid the penalty. He was given the full judgment of God in place of you. And the thought of what He has done for me and how He loves me is something that I should never tire of thinking about and it should give me warm fuzzies every time.

Hmm? Last night, sitting in the family room, I said to Judith, I love you. It was just out of the clear blue.

You were watching OSU football and so there was a very clear connect between the two events, you know. I said, I love you. And she said, and she asked that dumb question, why?

Well, and here's my answer. She's sitting in the back. I think she'll raise a hand if I miss it. But I said, actually, starting point is because Jesus loves me. Do you understand that?

Here's what the Bible says, love is of, how did Tim Knoyer, and I'll tell you what, a pathological sinner apart from the grace of God, how did Tim Knoyer become someone who loved anybody else but himself?

[21 : 26] It was the grace of God who brought salvation in my life and taught me the width and breadth and depth and height of a love of Christ and then began working and helping me learn how to love other people.

It didn't happen by accident. It happened on the cross and it happened subsequently in the work of God dealing in the life of a believer. I said, I love you because of Jesus.

I love you, secondly, because I promised to do that. I made a promise. I think it's 43 and a half years ago, give or take. I said, that's the one I'm going to spend the rest of my life learning how to love.

And can I tell you something? It's a whole lot more fun today than it was yesterday and the day before. You follow that? It gets better as you go. By the way, here's a little surprise, but it does take work.

The reason it takes work is because I'm a sinner living with another sinner. Coming back to the subject, I want you to understand that as I think about the love of Christ, it ends up affecting my love for others.

[22 : 30] I want you to recognize the believers present. You look there at the passage again and pick up in verse 15. It says, and he died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sakes died and was raised.

Who do you live for? Who does your life belong to? Who determines what you do and where you are and how you spend your time? Are you the center of your universe or is Christ?

Can you justly and honestly say that the driving and operating principle in my life is a desire to draw attention to the lover of my soul?

The text really isn't complicated, and it makes the point that those who are gripped by the love of Christ will live their life for him and not for themselves.

And so, Paul closes off his argument here as he explains, what is it that makes you handle the suffering and the rejection and the disappointment that you live with? He says, that's not a hard question.

[23 : 43] I'm the way I am because the love of Christ controls me. And let me explain it this way. I was dead and Jesus died for me.

And so, the remainder of my life, I live to say thank you for who he is and what he's done for me.

So, let me ask you this. Do you really honestly believe that he loved you enough to die in your place and that he has paid the penalty for your sins?

Is that a thought that is central in your living? If it is. I want you to understand this.

Listen to me carefully. The way we think determines the way we act. Do you understand that? Let me kind of put the string together. Thoughts produce actions and actions produce consequences. Would you agree with that? The way we think ends up being evident in the way we act. and the way we act creates consequences. And so, here is Paul saying, listen, I got it.

[24 : 51] I got it figured out. I am dominated. I am controlled by the fact that Christ loves me and because of that, I don't live my life for myself. Turn over in your Bible just for a moment to a passage in Titus chapter 3, verse 8.

Titus chapter 3, verse 8. Titus nails it when he talks about Christian motive.

He says there in verse 8, the saying is trustworthy and I want you to insist on these things. He's talking about the pastoral responsibility is to kind of challenge God's people to live a life to a certain agenda and objective.

He says, I want you to insist on these things so that those who have believed in God, you might even underline this and memorize it, so that those who have believed in God might be careful to devote themselves to good works.

Hmm. What does it mean to devote yourself to good works? Ah, working into your agenda once every six years. Right? Well, make it a point, once a quarter, you're going to kind of do something nice.

[26 : 12] You know, you're in line at McDonald's and when you pull up and you hear the next order coming in, you say, hey, I'll pay for that so that, is that it?

No. Here's what it says. Nothing wrong with the McDonald's idea if I'm behind you, but the point is, look, it says here. You caught that? You're awake. Oh, let's read the verse.

What's it say? It says, those who have believed in God, is that you? Is that you? Have you believed in God? In other words, you've believed in Christ as your personal Savior?

It says, if you believed in God, you may be careful to devote yourself to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. Who should know about your good works?

Who should know about your good works? Number one is God, but number two, it's your neighbors. Everybody smile because what you're asking me, the next thought you're having is can you prove that from the Bible?

[27 : 16] Is that what you're saying? Is that what you're thinking? Is that, so should I go to my neighbors and hand out a little survey saying, so do you know that I'm into good works? Okay. Matthew chapter five, remember what Jesus says in verse 14, you are what?

You might be on occasion. He says, you are the light. And he says, by the way, this is the next part of it, he says, and when you light a lamp, what do you do?

So when God saved you, his intention in using your life was just like when you light a candle in a home. You put it somewhere where it makes a difference. The expectation that Christ has is that you and I are lights where we've been planted.

Monday morning when everybody comes into work and their attitude is, ugh, ugh, you know, I mean, the one bright spot is what happened in the OSU game and the rest of life is kind of a bust, you know, and here you are.

How are you acting on Monday morning? Happy Monday! Probably when I come in on Monday, I'll say to Connie, the same thing I said on Thursday, you know, happy Thursday, it'll be Monday, happy Monday, right?

[28 : 28] Why? Because I've been lit like a candle and by the way, when that candle is shining properly, who gets the credit? Here's what it says, that people may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

the way you act either reflects favorably on Christ or it causes people to think he is of irrelevant difference in their life and anybody else's.

And so let me help you understand as you think about this matter is when you recognize what God has done, understand this, that the love of Christ controls my life because I knew I deserved the penalty of death and he died in my place.

I was bought with a price and my life belongs to him. As a result of that, other people should be able to see that.

Isn't that right? They should be able to see that Christ has made a difference. I am living proof and you are living proof of the power of Christ to change a life.

[29 : 46] Agreed? Agreed? And one of the ways we do that is not by being a frowny, grumpy, frumpy person. Would you agree with that? One of the ways we do that is by being a forgiving and forbearing individual.

One of the ways we do that is by having endurance under stress. One of the ways we do that is by being compassionate to those who are enslaved by their sin. One of the ways we do that is by having joy in the midst of adversity and everybody knows.

Where's that come from? Well, it's not from me, right? It's from Christ. It's from Christ because the love of Christ controls me.

That they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves. But unto him who died for them and rose again. I'm going to ask that the men come at this time as we come to the Lord's table.

And as the men are coming this morning, let me encourage you to recognize that I need my Bible. Let me encourage you to recognize that what I said earlier stands to be undeniably true that the Lord's table is a table to which all who know Christ are freely invited.

[31 : 07] If you're here this morning and you know Christ as your personal Savior, let me encourage you to recognize that this table and what we engage in as a memorial is something that is designed to encourage, strengthen, convict you as a believer.

in relationship to that, it says in the Scriptures that if you are here, that you are also to examine yourself, that you do not take the Lord's table in an unworthy manner.

And so as we get ready to take these elements, I'm going to ask that you spend the time in quiet prayer right where you're sitting and you just say, Lord, if there are issues in my life that I need to repent and forsake, now's the time to do that so that when I take the bread and I take the cup, I can do it with a clear conscience.

Let's pray. Precious Father, as we take just a moment to examine ourselves before You, we recognize that the Scriptures are quite clear that if You were to mark iniquity that none of us would stand.

and yet You have granted to us forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ and so we first of all come with thanksgiving for what He has done for us.

[32 : 27] At the same time, we also recognize that the Scriptures teach us that clearly we do struggle with sin from day to day and so this morning, if there are issues in our hearts that we need to confess and forsake, whether it is an attitude towards another believer or a practice that is secret and hidden that is offensive to You, or a matter of the soul that nobody else knows about, Lord, this morning that we would confess that, that we may take this bread and take this cup with a clear conscience.

We're thankful that what it says in the Scriptures is if we confess our sins, You are faithful and just to forgive us of those sins. And so we ask for that privilege to be exercised in the lives of each and every believer that humbly confesses that we may take this cup and this bread without condemnation.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.