

“The Love of Christ Controls Us” // 2 Cor 5:13–21 // All-In 2014 #1

Open your Bibles: 2 Cor 5:14: We’re going to do something today I really enjoy—**walk through a text** of Scripture that captures the center of who we are and what we do.

- As **part of this message today**, I want to spend some time celebrating with you where the Spirit of God has brought our church over the last 2 years.
 - **If you’re new**, I hope this serves as an introduction to who we are;
 - **If you’re not a Christian**, I hope this explains a little bit of the method behind the madness;
 - **If you’ve been here for a while**, I hope this serves as a reminder of where God has brought us and where he’s taking us.
- God **frequently had Israel erect monuments** that celebrated what he had done through them. **These monuments** served not only to **remind them of what God had done** in the past, but also to **instruct them about** what he would do in the future. That’s partially what we want to do today.

Two years ago the Summit Church entered into something we called “All-In.” We believed that God was calling us, as a church, to take several **bold steps forward** in our mission to Raleigh-Durham. We set the **ambitious goal of** nearly 100% involvement and **\$26 million** over 2 years that we believed would allow us to **renovate and expand** our campuses, **start** some new ministries, and also **raise up and send out** lots more people on church planting and community blessing teams.

- **26 million dollars was huge for us...** but we learned that, apparently, the Holy Spirit had more for us than we even realized.

- 5400 families joined in with the effort, which has been near 100% participation, and, to date, we are already at **\$28.5 million** and, I believe, with your generosity, we could be at \$33 million by the end of the year.
- *Could we give our Heavenly Father thanks for that?*

It’s never been about the money—God doesn’t really have needs—it’s been about us, as God’s people, going all-in, with our whole lives, for the mission!

- I used the **illustration of how, if you eat bacon and eggs** for breakfast, both the chicken and the pig have a part in producing your breakfast: but whereas the chicken only makes a contribution; the pig went all-in.
- We want to be **pigs for Jesus**.

I want to talk about where we are going to go from here.

2 Cor 5:13–21

[13] If we are beside ourselves, it is for God... [14] For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; [15] 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. [16] From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh...

[18] All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. [21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

I see 3 things in Paul’s majestic passage here: 1. A **motivation**; 2. **measure**; and 3. a **mission** for how to live. All of them **center around**

a **MESSAGE** for any of you outside of Christ: *The price has been paid for your sin; be reconciled to God.* BUT FOR US, WHO ARE BELIEVERS, that means 3 things:

I. A **motivation to live sacrificially: the love of Christ!** (v. 14)

- Paul says, vs. 14, **“The love of Christ controls us....”** The love of Christ had become his *guiding, motivating principle*; he had started to see everything in his life through it.

What does it mean to be “controlled” by the love of Christ?

A. **He has captured the 1st place in your heart**

- Paul never seemed to get over his salvation experience. He said, “We are convinced that if Jesus died for us, then those who live should no longer live for themselves...”
 - Illustration I have used with you... **Command me**
- I sometimes **think about what it’s going to be like** to stand before Jesus, and finally realize **how lost I would have been** had he not saved me. When I see the **nail scars** from where we took the wrath of God for my sin...
 - *I realize all that now*, but I don’t think I feel it... the joy of living for him.

That’s our motivation for giving. *Let me be clear.* We don’t give because God has needs. Our God multiplies loaves and fishes and pulls tax payment out of fish’s mouths. He never comes to us hat in hand saying, “Please, sir, can you spare some cash? Please, sir, just a little bit?” **We don’t give because God has needs; we give because in giving we declare his value to us & our love for him.**

Ever think about that? **What does your generosity say about the value of Jesus to you?**

- Jesus said if you want to know what you really love, follow the trail of your money.
- You say, “That means I love the **Federal gov’t.**” Yeah, I mean your discretionary income.

- What does your giving say about his value to you?

To be controlled by the love of Christ means...

When the love of Christ controls you...

B. **His love pours out of you toward others.**

- **Paul saw people in only two categories:** saved and lost. See how he says (v. 16), *“We regard no one according to the flesh any longer”*? In other words, we don’t see people according to the normal categories: rich or poor; powerful or weak; Republican or Democrat; white or black; educated or blue-collar; we only see them as those who know Christ and those who don’t.
- **1912: Sinking of the Titanic...** as word got back to England that the ship had sunk, people with relatives began to panic. A gigantic chalkboard was set up in downtown London with two columns: saved, and lost. There had been people from all classes of society... Kate Winslet before... **SAVED AND LOST.**
- That’s how Paul sees the world. And he says, *“I was one whom the love of Christ plucked up out of the waters of judgment; so now his love for other perishing people controls the agenda of my life.”*
- If you really believe the gospel is wrecks your life and you can never see other people, or your life, the same again.

Does the love of Christ control you?

II. A **measure for our sacrifice: Christ’s sacrifice for us** (15, 21)

- Two words characterize Paul’s description of Christ’s sacrifice for us: **total; substitutionary**
- A. **Total (vs 15):** He died for us. Our response ought to be in some measure the same.
 - Jesus did not tithe his blood... he gave it all! Therefore our response should be not just a portion of our lives, like 10%, but everything!
 - **We should offer God a blank check...**

B. **Substitutionary.** Paul writes one of **greatest verses** in all of Bible: [21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- Jesus' sacrifice was an **exchange** for us... on the cross, he took our place of condemnation (he became our sin); and gave us his position of privilege (we became his righteousness)
 - **Gen 48:14–19.** There is a story in the OT where Jacob is going to bestow the blessing on Joseph's son. He crosses his hands, so that what should have gone to the older son (the inheritance, the position of privilege) went to the younger son; and what went to the younger went to the older. Joseph protested, but Jacob said, "No, this is how God would have it..." because he was giving a picture of the Messiah.
 - At the cross, God crossed his hands. He gave to Jesus what was coming to us, and to us what was coming to Jesus. **The Great Exchange**
- **Don't miss what Paul is doing here;** in this context, he is using this as an **example of our generosity**... A believer takes what they have earned, what they deserve, and they **bestow it** onto others. They **cross their hands**: "The *benefit of my success*, or my talent, will not be for me, but for the lost world."
 - "*Remember the grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul would say... and then you be that way. **Paul says... switch hands** like Jesus did!

Question: Is that how you see your resources? **The world, of course, says that kind of mentality is crazy.** Leverage what you have for someone else?

Well, in fact, the context of this passage is Paul defending himself against the charge that he is crazy. Did you see the first verse? **For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God...** (2 Corinthians 5:13)

When is the **last time your generosity** made someone question your sanity?

- **C.S. Lewis:** How do you know you're giving enough? A. It scares you and B. People question your sanity.

III. The *mission in our sacrifice: the ministry of reconciliation* (vs. 18)

Paul says, **"to (the church) God gave the ministry of reconciliation"** (v 18). The church has a unique, very important, mission: **reconciling people to God.**

- **The gospel declares** that Christ bore our sin in our place; but it doesn't do them any good if they never hear about it.
- **It is the important mission in the world.** All other ministries, apart from that, fail.
 - *Helping people out of poverty; helping them get ahead... these things are wonderful and necessary but apart from reconciliation to God, their benefits are short lived.*
 - **To take care of the needs of someone's body;** or someone's social needs, and not address their primary need, to be reconciled to God, is to do them a **grave disservice.**
- This is the ministry God gave to the church! The church is his primary instrument for reconciliation. Churches make disciples of Jesus better than any other organization on the planet.

Which means two things:

1. Our focus in ministry at this church will always be the message of reconciliation.

- This is not to say **we don't also meet physical needs**, because (Paul says) we are **Christ's ambassadors**, which means we represent him—and just like he met physical needs we must as well... (which is why we have **special ministries** here like HOPUD and a counseling center) but the primary focus of our ministry, like his, is reconciling people to God.
- It means that in everything we do, we focus on developing churches or planting churches. That was Paul's whole focus in the NT. Yes, he met physical needs, but always part of a church

planting strategy. Nothing happens in Acts that is not part of a church planting strategy; so everything we do will be part of one, too.

2. Because the ministry of reconciliation is the most important ministry, and because it is the ministry given specifically to the church, the primary place of my investment will always be the local church.

- **A lot of organizations do good** in the world, and **I support many of them out** of my personal resources, but my **primary calling is to invest in** the organization with ministry of reconciliation.
- The church is God's plan A, so it will be my primary focus for the investment of my life and resources.

Summit, do you realize how important our role is? We, with all our problems, are God's plan A for reconciliation.

Update on All-In

So let me share with you a little of what we, by God's grace, he has allowed us to accomplish these past 2 years:

- We purchased and launched the **Blue Ridge Campus**, and started the **Chapel Hill Campus**... because Tarheels need Jesus, too. Especially. This September we averaged over 1,000/week
- We launched the **Downtown Durham Campus**... which is already averaging 650/week
- We renovated and expanded our **North Raleigh campus**... and the **Brier Creek campus**, putting in a new parking lot and doubling our Kids/Student Space
- Doing all this greatly enlarged our capacities to reach people. **We have added a total of 2500 seats per service!**

Because of these changes (get this)... in the last two years: **11,000** first time guests have walked through our doors; we've baptized nearly **1400 people**, and almost **2000** new members have joined our church. In the last two years!

- When I say that, don't hear numbers; **hear "people."** Ginger and the doctor: Backwards: he brought her to Christ; she brought him to our church.

That's what we've done for our families and for our neighbors. Here's what we've done for our **WORLD**. Since Dec 1, 2012...

- We've planted **11 domestic church plants**, sending out 297 people. (These were generous people: it hurt)
 - Andrew Hopper: Greensboro: 1100!
 - 6500 total. Soon that number will exceed the amount of people we have here.
 - What does that look like in 40 years when I stand up here and report it...? Walker... what will that number be like?
 - This week... meeting. 3 new church plants. 150 leaving!
- In the last 2 years we've seen out **592 people on 62 short-term mission trips** and **77 people to live, permanently**, overseas on a church planting team.
- In the last 2 years we've dedicated **\$6.1 million to missions**; \$2.1 million of that we've just given away!
- **And because of your generosity, we were able to make 2 huge gifts** that are going to have long-term gospel impact.
 - We've established a "half million dollar" endowment at Southeastern Seminary, which I think is going to be called the **"Sam James Chair for Church Planting"** to be used to train church planters and pastors committed to world wide church planting.
 - Locally, we've given \$500,000 to the **launch of ReCity, a non-profit growing up right here out of our church that is establishing a facility** in downtown Durham to meet the very real needs of disconnected youth in our community. The 500K is for the purchase of that facility, etc.

What is next?

A number of things we are preparing to do: we have to **renovate the Blue Ridge Campus**. Get it ready for what we do there.

As I said, we are **looking for space and a plan for our mobile campuses**.

- (Explain: **We're in a stage where** we are starting to think about how to grow up as church (we've been like a middle school kid who constantly outgrows his clothes). Now, we're saying, "OK, now that our growth has stabilized a bit—we're still growing at 10% a year), we need to get better facilities that better serve these campuses. "
- We have **three campuses that set up and tear down** at a school every week, and we **can't have a weekly presence** there in the community because we meet at schools. So we want to change that.
- **Those of you at those campuses are asking:** When are we going to get a permanent campus? **Just a few days into the future.** But remember, one day with the Lord is like a 1000 years... (so, somewhere between)
- **Our philosophy of buildings...**
- We're going to start new campuses in the Triangle... investigating several right now!

What This Means For You

Now, in case you're wondering, we're **not, at this time, going to be filling out another** faith commitment card. (No "still-in" card.)

But we do think generosity and faith ought to be a permanent part of our lifestyles in response to the generosity and promises of Christ.

- **Why?** Paul says, "I am convinced that if one died for all, we who live should no longer live for ourselves but for him..."

So, to that end, I want to introduce to you a tool that I want you use to evaluate this part of your life...

Generosity Ladder

It's called "**The Generosity Ladder.**" Veronica and I have been looking at this and it's been helpful for us...

Each rung represents growth in a lifestyle of generosity and sacrifice.

- These are not rungs you slowly ascend to get to God
- These are simply ways to chart your progress in your growth in generosity.

(And, before I give you this... I want to what I always say... first of all, if you are not a believer, I am definitely not talking to you... if you are not committed here... and if you are committed here... but you feel like this is a manipulative way to get money from you, give somewhere else! To be a disciple of Jesus means you go "all-in" with your life on the mission of God, and part of that certainly includes your money. But if you can't hear this without thinking I'm doing this to try and get your money, then I want you to apply this by giving somewhere else. Seriously. It is more important to me that you learn to be generous and invest in the kingdom of God than that you give here... God will take care of us. So, please, feel free, I urge you, if this is a problem for you, apply this by giving somewhere else.)

Initial Giver refers to a 1st time giver.

- During All-In, many of you, for the **first time**, made a significant investment in the kingdom of God. This is **huge!** Maybe the biggest deal of them all. I want to celebrate that.
- Through All-In, **3,064** of you became givers for the first time.
- Some of you joined us late, and you need to make that step. *Make your 1st significant gift to the kingdom of God!*

The next rung is **Consistent Giver**: this is someone who has gone from an initial gift to a consistent, recurring gift.

- The key element here it has become a **part of your budget**; a **recurring payment** like other monthly payments (cell phone,

mortgage, taxes, utilities, etc.) that you pay **whether you are in feast or famine**.

- Some of you that have become 1st time givers need to grow to this level: Put it in **your budget**; set up a **recurring payment** online.

Which leads us next to the **Intentional Giver**: Someone who is consciously trying to grow...

- They are asking the question of how their giving matches up with other priorities in their lives: how does my giving compare to what I spend on vacations, eating out, cars, clothes.
- They want their spending to match their priorities, so they have set a goal.
 - *I heard a story about a guy in our congregation that said I want my generosity to be the largest payment I make all month. His biggest payment each month was his mortgage payment, so that is what he started working toward.*

People in this category are not satisfied with meeting some basic requirement, like a tithe... Tithing is never really commanded in the NT.

- The principle of giving God of your *firstfruits* is taught, and we say 10% is a good place to **start**, since that's what they gave in the OT. But Jesus gave everything for us, and those of us who live should not look at our finances like something we pay a 10% tax to God from and spend the rest on ourselves.
- **Tithing ought not be** the ceiling of generosity; it is the floor.

Intentional givers set goals to grow to. Maybe that is what you need to do. **Set a goal**. Say, "I want to get my investment in God's kingdom at least equal to this other payment..."

- Or maybe **choose a percentage**, and go for that.
- Maybe you need to **start with the tithe**.
- **But intentional means** consciously trying to grow.

After that we have the **Sacrificial Giver**: *Someone in this category is no longer thinking "What am I supposed to give?" but rather "what am I **not** giving and why?"*

- The sacrificial giver is **less concerned about the 10% or 15%** and is now asking questions about the 85% or 90%.
- **Rick Warren**: Rick Warren said he made enough money from *PDL* to buy a small island but he still wears a \$14 watch and drives a 15-year old pickup truck. He and his wife **increased their level of giving incrementally** each year and are now giving away 90% of their income. Calls it "reverse tithing": where he gives away 90% and lives on 10! That's a sacrificial giver.
- Veronica and I have really been wrestling with this...
 - **My story**: I've always been faithful with the 10%. Always have been. But what about the 90%? *Am I **no longer living for myself** with it, but for him who died for me? Am I **switching my hands** on it?*
 - **My wife and I** were looking recently at some extra money in savings. We already had money saved to be responsible... Sure, I could justify keeping it, and thought of 100 things I could spend the money on and justify it, but we asked, "Why not give it?"
- Has your **giving become routine? Comfortable?** Maybe you need to move into this category.
 - **A sacrificial giver makes changes** to their lifestyle to direct more toward God's kingdom.
 - **Or maybe there is some resource** God has blessed you with (**savings, stock, retirement, etc.**) he's calling you to put on the altar to him?
- **BTW, maybe not about money**... I know a girl who took a hit in her income to work more in a field she felt called by God to reach. She has less capacity for financial generosity, but she's pursuing a sacrificial life.

Lastly, we have the **legacy giver**: This is someone who is thinking about the contribution their **entire life is making**. They are not asking

“How much am I giving this year?” But “How much am I giving over a lifetime?”

- They are thinking about their **eternal investment portfolio**... like a retirement portfolio (**Illus.** I go on and check). This person thinks about that in regards to eternity.
- They’ve started to think about **all their assets through the lens of**, “Which of these things, in eternity, will I **consider “wasted”** when I see Jesus?” Which of these things will I **regret having held onto?**
- **If you’re young**, that means planning... Setting a lifetime goal.
 - Young man in our church who is **28**... when he was 26: want to give away 1 million before age 60! For him, it means **putting a cap on spending and saving** so more can go to giving.
- **If you are older**, it may mean engaging in estate planning (or revise your current plan) so that what you leave lines up with your kingdom priorities: man in our church: largest gift will be given at my death!
 - It also may mean **cutting back and giving some of that away now**: *living off less in retirement* and punting some of your retirement bliss to enjoy in heaven! **Heaven is going to be an awesome retirement!** Sacrifice now, and enjoy more later!
 - It also means beginning to share with others your journey of generosity... so you can inspire kingdom generosity in the next generation!
 - **What greater legacy** could you leave than extravagant generosity in the kingdom of God? **Most valuable gift** my dad left me.

Conclusion

Where are you on **this ladder**? Where do you want to grow to?

- **I am convinced that if Christ died for me**, then those of us who live should no longer live for ourselves but for him who died for us...

- **Where do you need to grow in response to the generosity of Christ**, in the investment of your life in his mission?

If you made an all-in commitment, let me encourage finish strong. We’ve got a lot of exciting stuff ahead of us, and our mission to RDU has just begun.

Lastly, we have some **special things** coming up this month: Worship and prayer meeting **Nov 21!** You come whether you have **finished your commitment or not**, or even you didn’t make a commitment! This will be a time to **just worship and pray together about what God** has for this church in the future.

- We are going to **really meet with God, as a congregation**, that night. *If this is your church body*, it’s a time for us to meet and seek God together.
- It will be an **epic worship and prayer** event. Make plans to be there!

Prayer:

- *What kingdom are you building?*
- *Are you fully surrendered? Can you take your hands off it all?*