

YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN

and Other Sermons

by

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SERMON SIX

FOR CHRIST'S SAKE

(II Corinthians 5:14-15)

THESE two verses tell more about the heart and life of Paul, the Apostle, than any other statement anywhere in the Bible, even his sermons about his own conversion. He says: **“For the love of Christ constrained us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 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.”**

Originally Paul wrote this statement as an apology. The people of his day and time were just like other people. Paul was so enthusiastic about his religion that they said he was crazy. He wrote, “You don’t understand; the reason I am like I am is the love of Christ constraineth me.” I have gone up and down, preaching in good churches, in cold churches, even where there was no church, and I find this is as true today as it was back yonder.

If a man lives up to the love of Christ, that person will be called crazy, and we Christians first will call him crazy. It is all right to go wild over a big league series; it is all right for you to screech and scream and whoop over a football game; but let somebody say “Amen” in a congregation to something the preacher says out of his burning heart, and we want to see what is the matter.

The average preacher would almost fall dead from apoplexy if anyone were to say “Amen.” Yet, I tell you—not so much as a preacher and Christian but as a Jew and a man of the world—there is just one thing worth getting enthusiastic over, and that is the religion of our blessed Saviour. When these baseball leagues and football games and everything else will have disappeared into the limbo of forgotten things, the religion of our Saviour will have just begun to triumph.

One institution is permanent. You say, “Marriage?” No, there is no marriage in heaven. You say, “Government?” Far be the thought from you. There is just one institution that will outlive eternity, and that is the church of the living God.

I think it is because I am a Jew, I don’t know, but I always have been a poor loser. I don’t like to lose. I am used to driving enthusiasm and fire. I detest lukewarmness, this namby-pamby, wishy-washy, blow hot, blow cold kind of religion.

Jesus said, **“If you are neither hot or cold I am going to spew [spit] you out of my mouth.”**

That gives me a pretty good example to follow in what I am saying. Maybe it is the Jew in me, but I want to be on the winning side. I want my team to win, my army to win, my city to win, my school to win. Thank God, I am tied up with something that is just as sure to win as that God is on the throne— that is the church. It is going to win. Not all churches will score. Some of them Jesus is going to spit out of His mouth, but the church as a whole is going to come out triumphant. The church is going to reign forever with the Lord Jesus Christ. I advise you with a burning heart and yearning soul that you tie yourselves up and stay tied to the church. To the church! It is the hope of the world! It is the only institution under God’s shining heaven that God will use to change the world. Everything else will go by the board.

Paul realized it, and he threw himself with all of his heart, mind, and soul into the work of serving the Lord and the church. Paul was a church man. Paul was a funny sort of person. He couldn’t get along with all of those preachers back yonder. He and Peter fussed like a stray cat with a strange dog, but that didn’t drive Paul out of the church. The church was Christ’s; the argument was Peter’s and his. The church-members lied and committed adultery and cheated and stole and violated every principle of Christianity, but if you think that Paul went out and organized a new denomination you are all wrong. He stayed right in there and “pitched ball.” He stayed right in there and served Christ. He surely did get a “rubbing-in” from the church people of his day and time, but he stayed true. Compare the acts and practices of Paul with the religion and practices of the average Christian of this day and time and you will understand why it is we do not have very many Pauls.

In every line of business, intensity is one rule of success, whether it is teaching school or preaching the gospel. If you don’t believe me, ask the man who erects buildings. In running a store, in building automobiles, in carrying on government, intensity, enthusiasm, single-mindedness, consecration, devotion, dedication to the one purpose is one of the mightiest rules of success.

You know a plodder will get farther and stay there longer than a genius, because a plodder realizes his shortcomings and knows he has to put himself into the work, where a genius is erratic and works by spurts.

The same thing that drove Paul, the Apostle, to serve Christ, ought to drive us. The same thing that made Paul, the Apostle, surrender himself and all that he was and had to the service of the blessed Son of God, ought to lead us to make that same sacrificial surrender.

In these verses of Scripture, Paul tells us what there was that drove him to that abandonment in the work of the Lord. He tells us three things:

1. First, **“We were all dead.”**
2. Second, **“Christ died for all of us.”**
3. Third, **“The love of Christ constraineth us.”**

Now, whether you admit it or not, whether you know it or not, whether you believe it or not, makes not a particle of difference, the Bible teaches that every unsaved soul in the world is spiritually dead in trespasses and in sins.

There is only one thing that keeps that soul from the burning torments of an eternal hell, and that is the grace, the mercy, the compassion of God.

There isn't anything the sinner has, there is nothing the sinner can do, there isn't anything that the sinner can offer or give to God that will cause God to remit the sentence of death that has been passed against the sinner in the councils of eternity. Whether you agree with it or not makes not a particle of difference. Whether you believe it or not or like it or not, it makes no difference at all.

God is the moral Governor of the universe, and He has the absolute, unchangeable, and unmistakable right to pass any kind of laws that He wants to. He can affix any kind of sanction or punishment to those laws that seem good unto His wisdom, unto His majesty, unto His glory. God has said from the beginning of time that **“the soul that sinneth it shall die,”** that **“the wages of sin is death,”** that **“whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”**

Sinners, Jew and Gentile, of every kind and description, male and female, young and old, were face to face with the terrible fact that they had transgressed the law of God and that the curse, the wages, the wrath of sin were hanging over their heads like the sword of Damocles.

Sinners had to come face to face and have to come face to face with the fact that in their own wisdom, in their own power, in their own strength, in their own ability, in their own merit, in their own righteousness, in their own efforts, in their own works, in their own sacrifices, there wasn't anything that they could do for themselves, or combined do for each other, to rescue, to redeem a single one of them from the burning, certain condemnation that God has brought to bear upon those whose lives were lived contrary to His will.

Now, that is the teaching of God's Word.

- I have no right to change it.
- I have no right to minimize it.
- I have no right to preach anything else.
- I have no right to offer you any kind of loophole.
- I have no right to say anything except to point the finger in your face and say, **“Thou art the man.”**

Outside of Christ you are a lost, hopeless, eternally helpless sinner.

But Paul does not stop there. **“While we were yet in sin, Christ died for us.”** Christ died for us! His own self, in His own body, He bore our sins on the cross. **“Him who knew no sin, God hath made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”**

“He has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.”

It would take too much time to go into the arguments, the suggestions, the explanations of the idea of substitutionary sacrifice. All I want to say to you is that by God’s Word we are taught that God has been willing and is willing and will continue to be willing to accept the sacrifice of Christ on behalf of the believing sinner. That is something to shout about. That is something to sing about. That is something to preach about!

I can’t understand a dry-eyed preacher. I can’t understand a preacher who can stand up and preach in a monotone, a man who believes in this gospel, who can stand before dying sinners and not scream at the top of his voice that on Calvary’s cross Jesus was substituted in the pain and penalty of sin, in the curse and condemnation of God’s law, for all sinners. God tells us that. He points to the cross and tells us that.

While we were yet enemies, Jesus came down from heaven, took upon Himself all that was coming our way, spilled His blood, died the death of a cur dog in order that we might have a way of escape, as dead in trespasses and in sins we hung over hell by the brittle uncertainty of our lives that any minute might be snapped in twain.

When you recognize your own condition before you came to Christ, your helplessness, hopelessness, powerlessness, when you realize the brink on which you were standing, the fires of hell licking up to receive your soul, the endlessness of the fearful eternity that you were facing as a stranger to God and an alien to the commonwealth of Israel, the bottomless pit and the awful hell from which Christ rescued you on the cross, you will cry with Paul, **“The love of Christ constrained us.”**

That is what I am concerned about mostly tonight. What does the love of Christ constrain us to do? Well, I can’t say exactly. I don’t know all of you; I don’t know your homes, your hearts, what impressions God may be making on your lives. I know the things the love of Christ constrains me to do. For example, there isn’t anything wrong with a man loving his father. The Bible teaches we are to honor him. There is nothing wrong with a man loving his mother. The Bible teaches we are to honor our fathers and mothers. There isn’t anything wrong with a man loving his brothers, his sisters, his kith and kin. But the love of Christ constrained, this poor preacher to turn his back on his father, mother, brothers, and sisters and blood kin of every kind and description, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of Christ constraineth me to do that.

There is nothing wrong with a man loving his wife. We are supposed to do that, especially if we are Christians. Certainly, how can a man call himself a Christian and not love with every thought of his heart and mind and soul the wife God has given him! There’s nothing wrong with a man loving his children. Thank God, I can say children! I have two of them. God wants us to love them. But the love of Christ constraineth me to turn my back on my wife, on my boy, on my girl, and go out for lonely weeks to serve the Lord. If you think it is easy to go through a heart-breaking service and then go up to the hotel and be all alone and weep half of the night, you don’t know very much. But the love of Christ constraineth me to do that.

What does the love of Christ constrain you to do? I don't know in detail, but some things there are for every one of us to do.

First, we are constrained to give up our sins, to turn our backs on our transgressions.

Just as when a man marries he is supposed to give up the thought of every other woman in the world and cleave to the one alone, even so if we love Christ, if we accept Him as Saviour, if we are grateful for what He has done on the cross, we are to forsake all others and cleave to Him.

The bitterest tragedy about sin in the heart of a Christian, the bitterest tragedy about sin in the heart of the sinner, is not that the sinner will go to hell. No, the hardest thing about sin in any of our hearts and lives is that our sins crucify Christ afresh. They break His heart, disgrace His name, dishonor His cause until heaven becomes a hell for the Son of God as once more He trudges under the heavy cross of our transgressions back to the Calvary to which we send Him by day and by night.

Oh, I tell you if you had a spark of gratitude in your souls for what Christ has done for you on the cross, you would fight sin with every ounce of strength and power you have in your souls. If you catch a vision of Christ on the cross you will give up every questionable thing, though it be as small as the breadth of a fingernail, rather than to have any kind of action or thought or practice in your life that might bring the slightest blush to the cheek of Him **“who loved us and gave Himself for us.”**

Why are most of our churches half empty? Why are the members of the church not backing up the program of the kingdom? They are in sin. They love the devil. They love the world and the flesh. They hate Christ in spite of the fact that they may have seemingly accepted Him. They may have walked into the baptismal waters; they have their names on the church roll, but it was a travesty, a mockery.

It was Biederwolf who made this statement: “When we get to heaven there will be three surprises. First, the people who will not be there; second, the people who will be there; and third, that we will be there ourselves.”

What a terrible day the judgment day will be when we stand before God and some of these rootin', tootin', shootin' church-members find out they have never been washed in the blood, that their lives were contrary to everything God wanted. They play around with the preacher, play around with the church, play around with religion, play around with responsibility, but there will not be any playing at the judgment bar of God.

Search your hearts, search your lives, search your souls, search your experiences. Does your life bear out the testimony of your lips that you are a child of God? It is not enough to walk down the aisle and give your hand to the preacher; not enough to say your name is on the church-roll; not enough that you give money.

Jesus said, **“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.”**

Scolding, criticism, broken-hearted appeals will not do a bit of good. If a Christian can face Christ on the cross, if a Christian can remember the torment of God, if a Christian can see the blood-stained cross and not be moved to give up any and every sin, there isn't anything the preacher can do to draw that Christian to God. Sin will make you forsake God because sin is an enemy of Christ. Sin crucifies Him now.

Second, *we shall be constrained to confess Christ*; to confess Him upon any and every chance; to look for opportunities to confess Him with our lives; to confess Him with our tongues, with our church loyalty; to confess Him in every possible way.

It is a privilege to stand before the world and tell the world in no uncertain terms that Christ is ours and that we are Christ's.

I had been in this country about two years, maybe a little longer—the war was on in Europe—when the newspapers in Chicago came out with the awful statement that the young daughter of a local millionaire could not walk, was paralyzed. They sent her to the greatest surgeons and hospitals and sanitariums in America. It was of no use. One section of the paper in Chicago came out picturing the girl in a wheelchair, saying that the chances were she never would walk. Just about that time there arose into prominence that great Austrian physician, Dr. Lorenz. The girl's father paid him twenty thousand dollars as a fee and brought him to America. He took her to Vienna, operated on her, brought her back in six months, and the girl walks with just a little drag. You have to know it before you can notice it.

In those days, in Chicago, back of the stockyards, there used to be a section—poor, impossibly poor, beyond description poor. We called it the Shanty Irish section. It was just dirt poor, poorer than poor. In the poorest home of that poor section, there lived a widow and her fourteen-year-old boy, Michael. He, too, had paralysis—got it in an accident. He had been confined to his bed.

They were so poor they couldn't buy a wheel-chair. The mother would carry him to the table or outside for airing. One day the mother came from her work and found Michael sitting up in bed, crying, a newspaper spread on his knees. "What is the matter, Michael?" She looked at the paper. The war in Europe, strikes, divorce, automobile accidents—nothing unusual appeared on the page. "What are you crying about?" He pointed down. She looked and there was an article describing the marvelous cure of the rich man's daughter.

"Son, that is something to praise the saints over."

"Mamma, wouldn't it be wonderful if that doctor would operate on me and make me walk?"

The heart of that poor mother rose in her throat. "They paid him twenty thousand dollars, and we don't have twenty thousand pennies," she said.

He looked up and said, "Mamma, can't a guy even wish?" She could stand no more.

Running out the door, she leaned up against the wall of the house and wept.

God gave her an idea. She went down town to Michigan Boulevard, walked into the Blackstone Hotel, and asked for the doctor's suite. She threw herself on her knees before that doctor. He could hardly talk English but between he and his secretary they learned what she wanted. He quieted her down and asked her some questions.

He said, "Madam, do you have any money?"

She threw herself down again and did everything but kiss his shoes, and kept on pleading and begging. "Not for me," said Dr. Lorenz; "I don't want any money. It is to go to the hospital for the X-ray, the laboratory, for bandages, for the nurses. Not for me."

She kept on crying. He turned to his secretary and said something. The secretary got his hat and coat, took the woman, and went to Michael's house. He examined the boy, probed him, made him scream with pain once or twice, called an ambulance, and took the boy to the West Side free hospital.

Dr. Lorenz stayed over here for eleven weeks, worked on that boy, and he walked. One day the boy was sitting in his wheel-chair when his mother came to visit him. They greeted each other. After they had talked awhile, the boy said, "Mamma, go to the third window and look out."

"Why?"

"Never mind; you go and don't turn around."

"All right."

"Don't turn around."

In less time than it takes for me to tell you of it, she felt a touch on her sleeve. She looked up and found Michael had walked across the room. Some of the visitors had to come running and push the woman outside because from a law-abiding Catholic she had turned into a shouting Methodist. She hugged and kissed and lifted up that boy and pulled him to her.

God had given her her boy almost from the dead. He could walk.

The days went on. One afternoon Dr. Lorenz came walking into that boy's ward. "Son, I am leaving. I am going back to Vienna to my wife, my children, my work, my hospital, my people." He said, "You are going to be a good boy. You will be all right now, and the doctors will take care of you. In a few days you will go home."

Before he knew what that boy was going to do he got hold of the doctor's hand in his two hands and pressed a passionate kiss on the back of it.

"You mustn't do that," said the doctor, as embarrassed as any man would be.

The boy, the great heavy tears coursing down his cheeks, said, “Doctor, as long as there is a tongue wagging in this head, there ain’t nobody ever going to hear the last of what you have done for me.”

I can’t understand why a Christian, why a Christian who claims to love the Lord, never says, never does anything about it. It is just an anomaly that is beyond any ability of this Jew to comprehend. I can’t understand how anybody can be quiet about the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. I can’t understand why anybody with all the wonderful opportunities we have of showing our gratitude to Jesus, can hold back your church-membership, can keep from moving your church letters, from witnessing to the saving power and grace of the Son of God.

Third, we shall be driven not only to give up sin, not only to confess Christ, but to win others.

The greatest thrill I get out of life is seeing people saved. I am just as selfish as a swill-drinking hog out there keeping his brother hogs away from the trough—I am just as selfish as anybody you ever saw. There isn’t anything to me. I am just a sinner, common, unworthy, and feeble as any sinner could possibly be. And yet, beloved, there isn’t anything God can do for me that will start the joy-bells ringing in my soul more than His sending the people down the aisles to confess the Lord Jesus Christ. I am a miserable, sinful nobody. How much more is the heart of Jesus thrilled when we bring souls to accept Him as Saviour!

You say you love Christ? Prove it. You can’t invite Him to your home and give Him a chicken dinner. You can’t send Him a present. You can’t give Him a birthday party, because He won’t come to it. What can you do for Jesus? Can you buy Him a gift for Christmas, or send Him a box of cigars? I shall guarantee He hasn’t much use for cigars. But how can you prove your love to Christ? You go out and bring some man, some woman, some child you have prayed over and sacrificed for and wept over, bring that child, that man, that woman to the feet of the Son of God, and all heaven will resound with the joy of the shouting and the singing of the blessed Son of God as He welcomes the writing of a new name in His Book of Life.

Now that responsibility—no, responsibility is such a harsh word—duty—that is just as harsh—that joyous privilege, that blessed opportunity, that God-given chance—why, people, listen! If God were to come here and say, “I will make you the King of Great Britain, I will make you the President of the United States, I will get all the nations together and make you the super-dictator of them all,” I would say, “Lord, that is not what I want. I want to win souls for Christ.” I want to bring men, women, and children to a saving acceptance of the Son of God, because in that way I can show my love, my appreciation to the Son of God more and better and clearer than in any other practice, in any other program, in any other pursuit to which I might be able to give my life.

The same things that drove Paul, the Apostle, to the depths of his sacrificial devotion, the same things that drove Paul, the Apostle, to the heights of his almost divine love for Christ, are our whips, our scourges, our spurs, our reins, driving us, constraining us, compelling us, insisting on our going out in the name of the Lord and doing the same work for Christ in our day and time that Paul did in his day and time.

Some years ago, in a town in Maine where my wife came from, a young man upon graduation from the Boston Technological Institute was offered a job in a Bank in Boston by one of his mother's old friends. He was to leave during the week. On Wednesday his mother came to his room as he was packing and said, "Son, they are showing a painting in the Department Store in town that I want you to go and see."

He said, "Mamma, I am so busy packing; I have an engagement today for tea; and then there is a party tonight; and I am leaving tomorrow. I have no time for pictures."

She reached up, pulled him down, kissed him, and said, "Son, by this time tomorrow you will be so far away I won't be able to ask you any more favors. Please do this for me."

He said, "When you ask like that, I have to do it."

He went into the Department Store. The painting was on the fifth floor. They showed him the room. The door was closed. He knocked on the door again and again. Finally he pushed the door open, took a few steps in, and walked out. There was somebody kneeling in prayer in that room. He knocked again and looked in. That somebody was still praying. By that time fifteen or twenty minutes had passed. He pushed the door open, made a noise with his feet, cleared his throat, fumbled with the newspaper in his hand, but the man was still praying. He was going to touch the man on his shoulder and arouse him and ask for the painting, when lo, and behold, it was the painting. The kneeling figure was the portrait.

It was so beautifully displayed, so artistically lighted up, that it looked for all the world like a living, breathing man in prayer. Nobody came into that room. He took off his hat and held it in his hand. He began to cry and after a while walked backwards out of the room and closed the door. All that afternoon and night he thought about that picture. He didn't enjoy himself at that party and didn't get much sleep.

The next morning at the breakfast table he spoke to his mother. "I don't have to be in Boston until Monday. I don't have to leave until Saturday. Mamma, will you go with me and see that picture?"

They went to town and walked into the Department Store room. The mother stood on one side of the painting and he on the other. The pathos, the concern, the anxiety of that kneeling form again moved his heart. This time the boy bowed his head and sobbed like a broken-hearted child. The mother didn't know what was passing in her boy's heart but she knew there was a storm there.

After while he looked up and said, "Mamma, why is that man's form so sad, and his face so sorrowful, and his hands so pleading?"

"Son, I don't know," she said, "but this is Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. Son, He is thinking about the cross on the morrow and is praying that God might give Him the grace to die like a man, not like a coward."

“Son, He is thinking of all those generations of men, women, and children who are to come, who will need to know the story of that cross, and is praying that God might raise up in every city, country, climate, nation, men, women, even children, who will give themselves to the telling of the story of that cross.”

The boy bowed his head and wept again. Then he looked up, clasped his hands and, looking into the face of that picture, said, “Blessed Master, if there is anything that you have left undone that I can do, count on me.”

I wonder how many of you are willing to say that? By the memory of that broken body and shed blood on Calvary, by the memory of those hours of agony, how many of you will say that right now?

- Did you ever wake up in the middle of the night and find yourself standing facing that cross?
- Have you ever found yourself thinking of all it cost Jesus?
- Have you ever thought of the nails in His hands, the nails in His feet, the crown of thorns on His forehead, that blazing sun on His unprotected head?
- Have you ever considered the sins of every man, woman and child in the world crushing His heart with their killing load?

He did that for you and for me. I wonder if you can say to this Jesus now, “Lord, the love of Christ does constrain me, and if there is anything you have left undone here where I live, that I can do, to the best of my power and ability you can count on me. I am going to do it.”

~ end of sermon 6 ~

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