

## Provocation To Christ-likeness

Harmony M.B.C., June 29, 2008 (Afternoon 5<sup>th</sup> Sun. Fellowship)

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**2Cor. 5:14-17** For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15 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. 16 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. 17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

**Opening remarks:** If this portion of truth from the Word of God cannot compel a person to exercise spiritual discernment and behavior which emulates Christ, then there is no incentive in existence to convince or provoke a person to do so.

Response to these profound words of truth about Christ's impact on the people of God is varied among believers, but there is consistency in that response.

I say that there is varied but positive response because we are able to observe that some of God's children digest what scripture has said here and make serious commitments regarding what they have discovered from the Lord's singular way of enlightening folks through the Word. Some others that I truly believe are God's children let these verses pass right over their heads, do not apply them in any deep personal way, and as a result are changed very little if at all. They do not necessarily reject the message of this Word and so that in itself is a positive thing. However, they fail to get the meaning and as a result lose the blessing of moving upward in spiritual growth. So, for one, there is a large blessing; for the other there is little or none.

So, let us notice from these verses the following:

### **I. The force of this scriptural argument is found in a phrase of v. 14: (...”the love of Christ constraineth us...”)**

> “Constraineth” is a mild looking word with great depth of meaning. Considering its meaning we may see the magnitude of the force of Christ's love operating upon our lives, as believers:

1. To compel by physical, moral, or circumstantial force; oblige
  - The moral impact of Christ's influence upon us
  - The circumstances of the relationship between Him and us
  - The obligation which that love imposes upon us as we willingly embrace the relationship
2. To keep within close bounds; confine
  - The boundaries which His constraining love draw around us
  - The boundaries that we prescribe for our lives as a result of the influence of His loving constraint
3. To inhibit or restrain; hold back
  - The preventive force of His presence with us and in us
  - The holy and prudent hesitancy and caution with which we conduct our business in the world and among God's people
4. To produce in a forced or inhibited manner.
  - The channeled and focused output of our lives as the Holy Spirit causes the purposes of

Christ to direct our productivity.

## II. The outcome of Christ's substitutionary death is found in v. 17: (“...a new creature...”)

> Believers are a quite different creation of God from the **carnal human**:

- who has one motive force; a depraved nature

\* Romans 3:10

- who is a servant (under bondage) to sin

\* John 8:33-34

> The new creature has another nature.

- John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

- A nature inclined toward God

\* Romans 8:15

- A nature attuned to God

\* Psalms 42:1

> What do you think this phrase (out of 1 Cor. 6:15) means? “But we have the mind of Christ”

- We have the spiritual understanding to know the way Christ thinks

- The Holy Spirit has been sent from Him to guide us into all truth and therefore we are possessed of a source for guidance that is coming straight from the mind of Christ

## III. The argument for the radical change in the person is found in v. 15 “...they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

> A contrast between the two lifestyles is intentionally set by scripture here

- There is living unto self

\* Do you spend your energy on your personal life goals without involving Christ in them

\* Do you spend your wealth on things that are relevant only to what you want without considering the purposes of Christ in it

\* Do you use your brain principally on thoughts relevant only to this earthly life without including the things of God in those thoughts

- And there is living unto Him which died for us and rose again

\* When you burn energy on personal life goals do you seek the will of God both in those goals and in the direction you will expend energy?

\* When you make plans to use your money for something, do you take thought for the purposes of Christ and whether how and what you spend can glorify Him

\* Do you consecrate your thinking processes to Him and call on Him to assist you in how you think?

## IV. As a final note, a contrast then between the walk of the unbeliever and the walk of the believer is the benchmark, the index that categorizes the person:

> **The walk of the unbeliever described:**

- Ephesians 4:17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, **in the vanity of their mind**,

- Peter describes the walk of the unbeliever like this: (2Peter 2:10) “But chiefly **them that**

**walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness,...”**

- Jude v. 18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should **walk after their own ungodly lusts.**

> **The walk of the believer described:**

- Romans 8:1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, **who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.**

- Romans 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so **we also should walk in newness of life.**