

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, August 5, 2015 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



Compelled to Love

Romans 8:28-29, Ephesians 5:1-2, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

A HYMN STORY – “O Love that Will Not Let Me Go” by George Matheson (*Hymn #292*)

*O Love that wilt not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe, that in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.*

*O light that foll’west all my way, I yield my flick’ring torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray, that in thy sunshine’s blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.*

*O Joy that seekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.*

*O Cross that liftest up my head, I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life’s glory dead, and from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.*

Questions:

- (1) What do you think might have prompted the hymn writer to write these words to God, “O love that wit not let me go”?**
- (2) Why do you think the hymn writers soul might have been weary?**
- (3) How can a love that will never let us go help us?**

George Matheson suffered poor eyesight from birth, and at age 15 learned that he was going blind. Not one to be easily discouraged, he enrolled in the University of Glasgow and graduated at age 19. He then began theological studies, and it was while pursuing those that he began totally blind.

Matheson's three sisters rose to the occasion and tutored him through his studies — even going so far as to learn Hebrew, Greek, and Latin to be able to help their brother. With their help he was able to complete his studies.

After graduation, he answered a call to serve as pastor of a church in Innellan, Argylshire, Scotland. He had a successful ministry there, and was later called to serve as pastor of the much larger (2000 member) St. Bernard's Church in Edinburgh.

On the day that one of his sisters was married, Matheson wrote this hymn. He recorded this account of that experience in his journal: "My hymn was composed in the manse of Inellan on the evening of June 6, 1882. I was at that time alone. It was the day of my sister's marriage, and the rest of my family were staying overnight in Glasgow. Something had happened to me which was known only to myself, and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. The hymn was the fruit of that suffering. It was the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. I had the impression of having it dictated to me by some inward voice than of working it out myself. I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any retouching or correction. I have no natural gift of rhythm. All the other verses I have written are manufactured articles; this came like a dayspring from on high. I have never been able to gain once more the same fervor in verse."

Matheson obviously didn't intend to tell us what caused his "most severe mental suffering," but people who know his background strongly suspect that it had to do with a heartbreaking experience several years earlier. His fiancée had broken her engagement to him, telling him that she couldn't see herself going through life married to a blind man. Matheson never married, and it seems likely that his sister's wedding brought to memory the woman that he had loved and the wedding that he had never enjoyed.

At any rate, Matheson's "severe mental suffering" inspired him to write this hymn, "O Love that Wilt Not Let Me Go." The hymn celebrates the constancy of God's love — "love that wilt not let me go" — "light that follow'st all my way" — "joy that seekest me through pain." It concludes by celebrating "Life that shall endless be."

Albert Peace, organist and editor of a journal called *The Scottish Hymnal*, wrote the tune, "St. Margaret," that is associated with the hymn. His experience was amazingly like that of Matheson, in that the music came to him quickly and he was able to write the tune in only five minutes.

When I read the various accounts of Matheson's writing this hymn, one sentence struck me as especially important. It was this — Matheson said, "The hymn was the fruit of that suffering." There is an important lesson in that. All of us suffer some sort of heartbreak or disappointment or

disability at some point in our lives. What makes all the difference is our response —whether we let the hardship stop us or inspire us to greater effort.

Matheson suffered two severe blows that could have stopped him — the loss of his eyesight and the loss of his beloved. In both cases, he made the best of a bad situation — and we are all the richer for it. As this hymn reveals, it was his faith in God that kept him going through the adversities that he suffered. He believed that God's love would not let him go — and that God's light would follow him all his way — and that God's joy would seek him through his pain — and that faith made all the difference.

³ The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.” – Jeremiah 31:3

¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.” -2 Corinthians 5:14-15

REVIEW

As believers we know that God's plan and purpose for our lives is to make us like Jesus. Romans 8:28-29 says it like this, *²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.* In other words like little brothers and sisters we are to grow up to be just like our big brother, Jesus. We are to “conform (or take one) to the image” of God's own Son, Jesus. And in Ephesians 5:1-2 the Apostle Paul tell us to, *“...be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”* When Paul say we are to “walk in love,” he is telling us that we are to live love, but not just any kind of love. We are to live out Christ-like love, to love like Jesus loved, “agape” love.

I. WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW?

"**What the World Needs Now Is Love**" is a 1965 popular song with lyrics by Hal David and music composed by Burt Bacharach. First recorded and made popular by Jackie DeShannon

What the world needs now is love, sweet love.
It's the only thing that there's just too little of.
What the world needs now is love, sweet love.
No not just for some, but for everyone.

It's really true! The world is looking for love, real love, genuine love, love that's unconditionally, that doesn't look first to determine if it worth loving, but loves without looking, love that is color blind, and economically blind, and socially blind, real genuine love, like that exhibited by Christ. That is what makes Jesus Christ and His love so

compelling... so drawing... so magnetic. This study will take a look the magnetic appeal of love, but not just any love. Christ's love! The one we are to live out in our Christian lives.

“People are hungry for acceptance, love and friends, and unless they find them in the church they may not stay there long enough to become personally related to Jesus Christ. People are not persuaded, they’re attracted. We must be able to communicate far more by what we are than by what we say.” -Marion Jacobsen, “Saints and Snobs,”

Based on this quote:

1. What are people really looking for today? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
2. Why is it so important for us to live love in the church (as church members)?
3. What does our ability to “live love” (to really love as Christ does) have to do with others coming to know Jesus Christ?
4. Why are people attracted rather than persuaded? Do you agree or disagree with this statement (*“People are not persuaded, they’re attracted.”*)? Why or why not?
5. What do you think is meant by the statement, **“We must be able to communicate far more by what we are than by what we say.”**?

Jesus said, ³² *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”* ³³ *This He said, signifying by what death He would die.” –John 12:32-33 (NKJV)* The word “draw” literally means to attract, and speaks of a magnetic appeal... drawing power. There is a magnetism in the cross. But what is it about the cross that make it such a draw. In one sense we would think the cross as repulsive, something that would turn others away, and cause them to be repelled. As an instrument of brutal and cruel torture, the cross was bloody, degrading, and extremely inhumane. It has been suggested that after the brutal beatings and mistreatment Jesus endured prior His crucifixion He would have been hardly recognizable, covered in lacerations, bruises and much blood. Not very appealing, to say the least. So, what was the draw? What makes the cross so magnetic, and what did Jesus mean when we said, *“... if I am lifted up from the earth, (I) will draw all people to Myself... ”?*

Notice what Jesus said a little earlier in John’s Gospel in John 3:14-17, ¹⁴ *“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,* ¹⁵ *that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.* ¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* ¹⁷ *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”* Once again, the idea of the Son of Man being lifted up on the cross is mentioned (just as Moses lifted up the redemptive snake in the wilderness to save his people). But this passage make it more clear what God was up to in lifting up His only Son, Jesus, on a cross. Again was makes the cross so drawing. That familiar verse, John 3:16, make it clear. It’s love... the love exhibited in the cross. Never has the world seen such a picture of love. Never has the world been loved, with this kind of love, and to this extent as what is exhibited on the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

5 Reasons the cross is so magnetic in it’s appeal:

1. **The cross is a divine demonstration of real love (Romans 5:8) -** *"⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* – Romans 5:8 **How is the cross a divine demonstration of real love? How would you explain this to someone who has never heard the good news?**
2. **The cross is the greatest example of sacrificial love the world can know (John 15:13) -** *"¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."* – John 15:13 Jesus, Himself, is telling us that the sacrificial love of one man giving his or her life for another is the "greatest love" that can be shown. We see this exhibited from time to time in our world. We think of the sacrifice of love given by our men and women in uniform who have died that we might enjoy the freedoms we enjoy in this country. From time to time we see this type of "sacrificial" love exhibited when one steps in front of a bullet or a car for another and gives their life, or someone who gives us a kidney to another in a medical emergency. These are good pictures of the "greater love" that Jesus speaks of, but Jesus is the greatest picture of this kind of sacrificial love that gives his life for another, because Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. He literally became the perfect sacrifice for the entire human race. Not all accept His sacrifice on their behalf, none the less Scripture tell us He made it. *"For God so loved the world that He gave.."*
3. **The cross is an unparalleled portrayal of love for the unlovely (1 Peter 3:18) -** *"¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God..."* – 1 Peter 3:18 To be "righteous" means to be "rightly related to God." To be "unrighteous" means to be "wrongly related to God," enemies of God, fighting against God. Peter tells us that Jesus, the Righteous, died for you and I when we were wrongly related to God, enemies of God, fighting against God. Even from His cross Jesus demonstrated this when He cried out on behalf of his crucifiers, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"* (Luke 23:34). Jesus even told His followers (you and I) that we were to love the least of these... the unlovely and the unlovable in Matthew 25.
4. **The cross is the only way we really know what love is (1 John 3:16) –** This is interesting... we talk so much about "love," but do we really understand love. No wonder the world has such a mixed up notion of love. I believe that Scripture suggest (no tells us) that real love can't be known outside of the cross. Listen to 1 John 3:16, *"¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters."* -1 John 3:16 Real love is not us loving, but God loving. That is where we really start to understand love. When we look at Him, and how He loves. *"¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."* – 1 John 4:10
5. **The cross is passage way to an all access love and availability with the Father (Ephesians 2:18) -** *"¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."* – Ephesians 2:18 Through Jesus' death on the cross the love of the father, the love He has for us became available and accessible to us always... all the time... anytime. *"¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."* – Ephesians 3:12

See, it is on the magnet of the cross that Jesus pinned His hopes. And Jesus was right because love will live long after might and power and force is dead. William Barclay

writes, “The only secure foundation for any kingdom is the foundation of sacrificial love.” There is a “magnetic” appeal created by love that the world desperately needs. The world is in desperate need of the magnetic appeal created by authentic love – genuine “agape” love, lived out in action.

Again, as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:14, *“¹⁴ ...Christ’s love compels us...”* **Why? How?** Here it is, *“¹⁴ For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”* -2 Corinthians 5:14-15 Or as George Matheson said, *“O Cross that liftest up my head, I dare not ask to fly from thee; I lay in dust life’s glory dead, and from the ground there blossoms red; Life that shall endless be.”*

II. COMPELLED TO LOVE (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

Let think a little more deeply about what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 5:14, when he states, *“¹⁴ For Christ’s love compels us...”*

3 Initial Observations About 2 Corinthians 5:14:

1. **Paul is speaking to believers (to Christians) here** - More specifically he is speaking to, addressing Corinthian Christians, but he is also speaking to Christians (believers) everywhere... including you and I who call ourselves. Christian he is saying that Christ’s love “compels” you.
2. **Paul is not speaking of an earthly kind of love here** - Rather is speaking of a divine “agape” love... a love that remember we characterized as “unconditional,” “no matter what you do I’m going to keep loving you. Paul calls it “Christ’s love”... “For Christ’s love compels us...” So he is speaking of a certain type of love.
3. **Paul is speaking of something that kind of love produces in us** - We have already studied the great love chapter in the Bible (1 Corinthians 13) and the overwhelming nature of what the love chapter is calling us to as believers. And we have discovered that Jesus spoke of and called His followers to exhibit a type of love that is often very foreign to us, such as loving our enemies and those who persecute and ridicule us, turning the other cheek, loving unconditionally, loving sacrificially even to the point of giving our very lives for others, loving the hard to love and the unlovable.

So what is Paul talking about when he says he feels “compelled” by Christ’s love? What does it mean to be compelled by something?

An English Definition of “Compel” – *“To drive or urge forcefully or irresistibly, to cause to do or occur by overwhelming pressure.”* -Webster’s Dictionary

Read Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 5:14 with that definition inserted: “¹⁴ For Christ’s love drives and urges us on forcefully and irresistibly by overwhelming pressure, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.” Pretty interesting? Huh? Do you have a problem...an objection to what that says?

Let me give you some synonymns of the word “compel” that may help us to further understand and lean into the deep implication of what Paul is teaching us, under that inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in 2 Corinthians 5:14 concerning love... especially the love of Christ.

Synonymns for “Compel”:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Bound | 6. Required |
| 2. Obligated | 7. Constrained |
| 3. Forced | 8. Induced |
| 4. Obligated | 9. Coerced |
| 5. Duty-bound | 10. Strong-armed |

Think about the implications of what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 5:14 given those synonymns for the word “compel” that Paul uses to describe the love of Christ in his life and ours as believers:

1. The love of Christ bounds us
2. The love of Christ obliges us
3. The love of Christ forces us
4. The love of Christ obligates us
5. The love of Christ duty-bounds us
6. The love of Christ requires us
7. The love of Christ constrains us
8. The love of Christ induces us (think induced labor on a pregnant woman... forces delivery)
9. The love of Christ coerces us
10. The love of Christ strong-arms us (or twists our arm)

What do you think about that? Do you have a problem...an objection to what that says? Why? Why not?

Reasons we may not understand being compelled to love:

- 1. To our way of thinking, to be “compelled” to love would not be love at all but force** - After all, you can’t make someone love you. You can’t make someone love at all. That, to our way of thinking, that would not be love... maybe even the furthest thing from it. Rather that would be a gross misunderstanding of love... more like bondage, or slavery... forcing someone to love. That is not love in our minds.
- 2. In our minds, you can’t force yourself to love what you do not love** – You might say, “I don’t care how many times you shove broccoli in my face I will never love it... I don’t like the smell, the texture, the taste. I just can’t force myself to taste it, much less like it.” Let’s face it, loving others can be tough because some of the “others” we are talking about are just not very palatable (pleasant, appetizing, agreeable) to us... not very loveable, and you can’t force yourself to love what you don’t love. Right? There are just some people, some types, some that I can’t love and I can’t be compelled to love them... that wouldn’t be love in my book. I’m just being honest.

3. **We don't normally think of love as a choice, but rather as something we fall into and out of based on human attraction that we may have little or no control over –** “I'm just not attracted to him or her.” “I just don't feel in love with him or her.” “I don't know why, I just don't love it... something about it just isn't appealing to me.” There are the kinds of things that we say that indicate our understanding of “love”... what we do love and what we don't and it is much based on feelings and sway

Think about this: We “choose” not to love certain things and certain people (OU, Broccoli, cats, a political figure or sometimes a party, those who have hurt us, etc.), why can't we “choose” to love certain thing and certain people that previously we chosen not too? Maybe “love” is more of a choice and commitment to that choice that we ever imagined. And just maybe the difference Christ makes in the life of a truly saved child of God, one that has had an encounter in a personal and living relationship with Him will chose, because of Christ in them, to drop the “choice” not to love and begin to love like He loves.

Okay! Let's dig a little bit deeper into exactly what Paul is saying when we says in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, **“^{d4}For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”** We have looked at our English language understanding of the word “compel” and it certainly has some huge implications for what Paul is saying, in indeed that is an accurate translation of that verse and word (and by the way I think that it is). What is Paul really saying about being “compelled” by Christ's love?

Understanding “Compel” in the Greek Language:

1. **The Greek word translated “compel” in 2 Corinthians 5:14 is the Greek word “sunecho”**
2. **Litereally the word means “to be pressed, pressured, confined, constrained.”**
3. **The context tells us that Paul was saying that what Christ had done for him was so overwhelming, he would be in bondage to Him the rest of his life – A sentiment that Paul would often repeat calling himself a “bond-slave of Jesus Christ,” and a “bond-servant of Christ.” He was so overwhelmed by the unbelievable love Christ has exhibited that that he literally felt in bondage, obligated, enslaved, pressed, pressured, confined, constrained to live for and serve Him the rest of his life. And think Paul must have felt... **“Here I am a man who was so ‘anti-Christ’... I hated Christ and the cause of Christ. I was hunting down and killing Christ's followers. I was doing all in my power to end the Christ-movement and silence His voice in the world and what did He do... He came to me. He saved me. He loved me, just as I was. He rescued me. He spoke to me. He changed by life, and I am hereby compelled by that love to love others as He did and point them to His love for the rest of my life.”** That's Paul! Literally “Christ paid a debt He did not owe. I owed a debt I could not pay. I need Christ to wash my sins away. And now I sing a brand new song, ‘Amazing Grace’ all day long. Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.”**

An Application to Get: Here is an application that we must get from 2 Corinthians 5:14. Think of the word “compel” and more particularly the Greek word translated as “compel.” It is the word “sunecho.” Notice the word is sun echo. We, like Paul, as recipients of the marvelous and overwhelming love of Christ in our lives... a love we did not deserve (Romans 5:8), a love we could never have earned, a love that was freely and unconditionally give to us and exhibited on the cross by the “Son” are to “echo” that love. We are to “echo” the love of the “Son” so that others might see and believe. We are compelled... we are “Son-echoes!”

III. THREE POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Once again there are three possible response for us as believers to Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and all that we have been looking at thus far in our study. They are not mutually exclusive responses, but rather the proper perspective and response that ought to be ours.

3 Possible Responses:

1. **How can we not?** - See with what great love we are loved how can we not echo that love? How can we not love, even the unlovable, seeing how we have been loved in our unlovable state. Again Paul’s word ring out, *“¹⁴...Christ’s love compels us...”* So how can we not love out?
2. **Compassion** - We see with different eyes now... at least we should now that He lives in us and has poured out His love in us. We should begin to see, feel what Christ feels for other. He had such compassion for others that He died for them. **Matthew 9:6** says, *“When he saw the crowds, he **had compassion** on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”* **Matthew 14:14** says, *“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he **had compassion** on them and healed their sick.”* And **Matthew 20:34** says, *“Jesus **had compassion** on them and touched their eyes. **Immediately they received their sight and followed him.**”* And so must we!
3. **Love to spare** - His love overflows in us and should flow over into the lives of those around us. We have more love that we can know what to do with, therefore it is there to overflow from us into the lives of others. **1 John 3:1** says, *“See what great love the Father has **lavished** on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”* Paul spoke of the lives of believers *“overflowing in many expressions”* in **2 Corinthians 9:21** We have love to spare and we need to start spreading it around to those who are running low on it.