

The punchline of 2 Corinthians 5 is in v. 14: “For Christ’s love compels us.” His love drives us forward. But it compels us not only by motivating us, but also by guiding, constraining, and restraining us. It not only pushes us forward, but also directs where we go. We make thousands of decisions every day. What compels us to make these choices? What guides your decision-making when it comes to spending? Is it the desire to be frugal, to stay comfortable, or to have instant gratification? In everything our motivation should be the love of Christ. We all know it, but what does it look like?

Recall in v. 1 Paul talked about our eternal house, which is the resurrected glorious body we will receive by the resurrection power of God when Jesus returns. God promises us a body that is so much better than the cursed body we have now, and while we are waiting for Jesus, God gives us the Holy Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. God works in us through the Spirit now, which assures us of the work He will complete in us upon Jesus’ return. Why does God do this? He already gave up His Son for us, so we can have eternal life. He already promises us a renewed body. He doesn’t have to give us the Spirit as well. But He does it because of His infinite love for us.

Skeptics will question God’s love for mankind by asking why He would allow Adam and Eve to disobey, and thus bringing sin, death, and suffering into the world. We may not understand God’s plan and His wisdom completely, but if we ever doubt His love we only have to look back to the cross. God gave Adam the choice to sin knowing that it would result in sacrificing His own Son to save mankind. If God wasn’t motivated by love for us, if He wanted to spare His own Son, He could have forced Adam and Eve to obey. We may have many questions about God’s plan, but we should never question His love. For God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And beyond that, He promises us the eternal glory of bodily resurrection, and gives us His Spirit to guide and assure us. It’s this love God has for us that drives us to hope and endure through this tumultuous world full of persecution and human tragedy.

In v. 14 Paul says the love of God dictates how he lives, hopes, and endures in faith. It prompts him to serve people. Christ died for all, that those who live should live not for themselves, but for Him (v. 15). Ephesians 5-6 explains in more detail what it looks like to live for Christ. Employees should serve as if serving God. The relationships between wives and husbands as well as children and parents should be informed by and motivated by God's love. Because He loved us, we love Him and love others. It's easy in this world to be driven by other things besides Jesus' love. The world tells us to be driven by ambition and self-preservation. We fight for ourselves because nobody will fight for us. But did Jesus fight for Himself when the world hated Him and wanted to kill Him, when He was abandoned by His disciples? No. The rightful King of the world humbled Himself unto death for us. The world values fairness and equity. I grew up with a sense of fairness engrained in me. We divide chores with our siblings or spouses as evenly as possible. But no matter how we try, we can't make everything exactly equal. If we insist on fairness, we will be disappointed. But did Jesus insist on fairness when He, who had no sin, was executed for our crimes (v. 21)? We should be motivated to love with the love He showed us. He was motivated by love and service, and so should we be. The world values recognition for service. But Jesus didn't serve to be recognized, but rather out of love. No doubt if you live to serve others in a world that does not know the love of Christ, most of the world may take advantage of you. But don't focus on the fairness of serving more than others serve you, because it was so much more unfair that Jesus served us when we did nothing to deserve it.

In v. 20, Paul tells us that the love of Christ should motivate us to be His ambassadors. We should be driven to tell people about Jesus. We are privileged to share the message of God's love. Whenever you debate with unbelievers about controversial issues, like evolution, try to direct the conversation back to the cross. We don't have all the answers to these issues, and we may not win the debates by the power of our intellect. Stick to what you know, that God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to die for us. His selfless love for us motivates us to love selflessly for Him. So in light of His love, let us love others and tell them that God loves them.