

Motivation

Part 1 of 2
Detailed Outline

Introduction

What motivates you to want to be a leader? What's behind your desire to shepherd God's people? Is it money, is it fame, is it a need to be publicly recognized, is it control over people? Is it some kind of self-image that you have of yourself that you are a born leader? Well, the Bible speaks to this issue, and the apostle Paul reveals what motivates him to give his life in the service of the gospel and for the care of the Lord's people.

I. The Motivating Power of Christ's Love and Sacrifice

2 Corinthians 5:14–15: **For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 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.**

Paul is telling the Corinthians, and us, what is the motivating force of his life. Why does he sacrifice himself so totally for the gospel and for the churches? Why does he allow himself to suffer so much and be persecuted? The answer is **the love of Christ!** It is the knowledge of Christ's love for him that **controls** his life. He could never get over the amazing love of Christ giving himself as a sin offering *for us* so that we could be saved from the wrath to come.

C. T. Studd: "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him" (Norman Grubb, *C. T. Studd: Cricketer and Pioneer* [Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1933], 132). If Christ did all of this for me, there is no sacrifice I could ever make that could make up for his sacrifice.

Isaac Watts: "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all" ("When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"). Paul is saying a similar thing: such sacrificial love demands from me the giving of my life for him who loved me so.

Ephesians 3:17-19: **So that you . . . may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth [of Christ's love], and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.**

The **love of Christ** is so vast and so incomprehensible, you need divine strengthening from above to truly grasp it. Although it surpasses knowledge, we are still to grasp it by God's help—not just intellectually but experientially, personally, intimately, directly—so that it grips us and moves us and motivates us. It is to be something that drives us. It is the motivating power of our life and why we serve as elders.

Harold Hoehner:

“The very fact that Christ’s love expressed itself in his willingness to die on behalf of sinners is in itself beyond one’s comprehension. The reality of Christ’s love is overwhelming to all believers . . . No matter how much knowledge we have of Christ and his work, his love surpasses that knowledge. The more we know of his love, the more we are amazed by it” (Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], 489–490).

We need to pray this prayer that we will be gripped, motivated, and driven by his love for us.

A pioneer missionary Mr. William Quayle said:

“I feel the woes of the heathen: I know the bitter barrenness of their lives; but this would not suffice to keep me among them. One gets used to heathenism and grows callous to its desperate tragedy. Not the love of man sufficeth to keep me away from my wife and my children through these years. Only the love of Christ is competent” (The Pastor-Preacher, ed. Warren W. Wiersbe [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], 39).

John Stott: “The cross is the blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled” (*What Christ Thinks of the Church: An Exposition of Revelation 1–3* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003], 33).

The hymn “How Great Thou Art”: “When I think that God, his Son not sparing, sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in; That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing, he bled and died to take away my sin.”

Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf saw the picture *Ecce Homo* (“Behold the Man”) portraying Christ upon the cross and the crown of thorns upon his head with the statement below: “I have done all this for you. What have you done for me?”

1 Corinthians 6:19–20: **You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.** We don’t belong to ourselves. Christ has bought us; he has sacrificed himself for us; he gave his all for us. What can we possibly do in any way that will equal what he has done for us? This should be the motivating force of our service for Christ and for giving our lives to shepherd his precious sheep.

Motivation

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Part 2 of 2*

II. The Motivating Power of the Value of God's Flock

Acts 20:28: **Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for [to shepherd] the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.**

Paul gives the Ephesian elders two powerful motivating reasons for guarding God's flock from wolves.

1. It is the church of God.

The church we shepherd is not our church. It is God's church, God's own people. They are not the elders' or apostles' people. God brought this flock of people into existence. He cares for it. He sustains it. He provides for it. He will be with them forever. Revelation 21:3 makes very clear that the Lord has wanted a people for his own throughout eternity.

This means that the work we do is serious work. We don't want to lose any of his people, so let us remember: it is **the church of God** we shepherd.

2. It was obtained with Christ's own blood.

The second motivating force is even more powerful. Paul says that the church is that **which he obtained with his own blood**, or the blood of his own one. Here he is giving us the incalculable cost of these people. They have unspeakable worth. Christ pays for them with his own blood.

David Gooding: "With this we touch the mainspring of all true defense and shepherding of the church: the cost at which God bought it" (*True to the Faith: A Fresh Approach to the Acts of the Apostles* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990], 360).

The price we are willing to pay for something tells us something of its value and its worth. Think of the worth of the church of God. There is no measurable worth. There is no price tag we can put on it. It is **his own blood**.

Ephesians 5:25: **Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.** Christ loved the church. He gave himself upon the cross for the church. We too should give ourselves for the Lord's people and be quite willing to sacrifice our life, our health, our everything, if he gave himself.

Richard Baxter:

"Can you not hear [Christ] saying, 'Did I die for these people, and will you then refuse to look after them? Were they worth My blood, and are they not worth your labor? Did I come down from

Heaven to seek and to save that which is lost, and will you refuse to go next door, or to the next street or village to seek them? How small is your labor or condescension compared to Mine! I debased Myself to do this, but it is your honor to be so employed. Have I done and suffered so much for their salvation, and will you refuse that little that lies upon your hands?" (The Reformed Pastor [repr. *Grand Rapids: Sovereign Grace, 1971*], 55).

It is of a great value to God when you care for his people. How important it is to understand the worth of the church of God. Thus, it is an immense honor to shepherd the church of God **which he obtained with his own blood**.

Hence, it is a very serious matter when we are inattentive and do not carry out our duties properly to shepherd God's flock.

Remember, God is no man's debtor. Peter tells us clearly that he will reward every shepherd when he appears (1 Peter 5:4). There is nothing you have done for Christ that he will not reward in a far greater way.

In the church of God, there are no little people and no little places. You are involved in a great and eternal work in which the Chief Shepherd will someday fully reward you.