

THE BON AIR PULPIT

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March 28, 1999

Scripture: *II Corinthians 5:14-15*

Sermon: *What Must We Do Because of the Cross?*

Napoleon is known in history as the little corporal because while small in stature he marched across Europe with the strides of a giant. Napoleon is one of the few men in history who are known only by their first name. For fifteen years, he marched the troops out of Europe and conquered an empire almost as large as the Roman empire. One night he was sitting alone contemplating about what he had done and how others had conquered before him. He said, “Charlemagne, Caesar and I have conquered great empires. How have we done it? We have done it by force.”

There is one man, however, who has more people who owe allegiance to him than any other person who has ever lived. How has he conquered? He conquered by love. John Knox, a spiritual conqueror of Scotland, said about Jesus that no person has ever been held higher in the hearts of mankind than Jesus. He said other people have been as devoutly worshipped, but no one has been as devoutly loved.

The passage of scripture we are reading today says that if you want to understand the motivation of the Christian life, if you want to understand its cohesive power and its dynamic, than you will understand that it is founded in our love for Jesus. The love of Christ constrains us because we are convinced that when He died, He died for all. Therefore all of

us have died. He died that all of those who live should no longer live for themselves, but live for Him who died and rose again.

Let me remind you about the man who wrote this passage of scripture. He was a man who was at the top of his nation. He was one of the young men who had already been accepted into the highest political, religious systems of his nation. He had been recognized already as one of the bright stars of his country. He was a tremendous writer and orator. He was a man people looked up to and said here is a person who is really going to rise to the top. One day he met Jesus Christ and he said “I am willing to put everything aside, all of my education, all of my money and power. I am willing to put all of it aside because I want to follow Jesus Christ.” When you read about Paul, you are aware that he had to pay a tremendous price. I want to remind you of what he said he went through because he followed Jesus. He said I have worked harder, I have been in prison frequently. I have been beaten severely. I have been exposed to death again and again. Five times from the Jews I received forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once, I was stoned and three times shipwrecked. I spent a day and a night in the open sea. I have been constantly on the move. I have been endangered from rivers, bandits from my own countrymen, from Gentiles. There was danger in the city, danger in the country, danger at sea, danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled. I have gone without sleep. I have known hunger and thirst. I have gone without food. I have been cold and naked. The question I wanted to ask you is why would a person put aside all of the luxuries in his life and go through all of this. Paul said “let me tell you why. It is important that you understand my motivation.” He said “the love of Christ compels me.” If you want to know the wind beneath his wings and what it is that night after night just pushed and prodded him along, then you

will understand that it is one of those four letter words. The word is love.

It is amazing to me when I studied this scripture and realized that this word compels us. Love is a word that appears many times in the Bible but never in the same way. For example, the scripture talks about the city of Jerusalem being surrounded. It is the same word. Paul said “it seems I have been surrounded by Jesus, I can’t get away from Him.” One time, it is used in the Bible to describe a plague that came upon the people and all of them were seized with sickness. It is the same word. Paul said “I feel like I have been seized by Christ.” Another time, Paul said that he was talking about Jesus and people didn’t want to hear it so they put their fingers in their ears. It is the same word. It seems that Paul said “I don’t hear anything else. All that I hear is about Jesus Christ.” One time Paul “it was an opportunity that I had when Christ became a hold of me. It is like Christ holding the whole world together.” He said “it just seems like all of my life is held together by my allegiance to Jesus Christ.”

I wanted to remind you today what the motivating power is for Christians all around the world and what makes them do what they do. The answer is love. The love of Christ compels us. We are compelled not because we have to, it is because we want to be compelled. Sometimes people say to me that in their Christian life “I have not been as active as I ought to be. I know I ought to do more.” I say to them, “no, Christian life is not an ought to, it is a want to.” The question you and I need to ask ourselves is, if we don’t want to, then, why not? You have just struck at the very heart of what it means to be a believer.

I have in my library a book I started to bring today. It is called “Fox’s Book of Martyrs.” Mr. Fox began to recognize how many people there were in Christian history who literally had served as a

martyr for their faith. The book is about this thick and it only covers the first several hundred years of the Christian faith. I wanted to ask you, why are there people like Paul? Why are there people who are willing to give up everything and who are willing to be compelled to serve?

The answer that you come up with time and time again, is love. Everything we do in our church, we do out of the same motivation. We say, “the door is open, will you come to worship?” And, we come to worship. In a few moments the offering plate will come by. We don’t assess our members anything. When the offering plate comes by, they put money in the offering to keep all of our ministries going. The question is why do they do that? The answer is still the same. We are going to go out after this service and have a ground breaking for our new facilities. Members of this congregation have pledged over four million dollars to build new facilities. Nobody came to them and said “listen, it looks like you have a few bucks, why don’t you give a thousand dollars.’ Nobody said anything. We simply said, ”here is what God is asking us to do. What would you like to do?” Out of their love for Christ, this is what they have done. When you begin to examine everything that you do in your spiritual life and the reason that you do it, is because of your love for Jesus Christ.

In disasters, there is a little phrase that is often used. It is the phrase “ground zero.” If there is a fire in a house, firemen will go in and say “where did it start?” This is ground zero. If there is an explosion, it may rattle windows for blocks. But, the officials will come in and ask “where is ground zero?” If there is an earthquake, it may affect people for three hundred miles. But, the scientists will come

and ask “where did it begin.? Where is ground zero?”

I can tell you that the love of Christ compels us, but, the question is where is ground zero of Christian love? The answer is: it is the cross. When you and I come and stand here, we recognize this as the place that reminds us of our love for Him. Paul said, “I understood that Christ died for me.” From the very beginning, when people wanted to give thanks to God, they would take the life of plants and bring it to God. When they really wanted to deal with the innermost part of their life and deal with who they were in their relationship to God and their sin, they would bring the life of an animal. They would lay the animal on the altar and say, “dear God, I give this life to you. I give this life because I recognize that I should be the one who should be penalized. In an act of substitution, I give this animal. I give my life to You.” Paul said, “I understood that one day as I stood in front of a cross. Christ was there.” A human life was given. It was given for the sins of the whole world. He said “my whole life was changed. When I realized He died, I started living differently.”

The wonderful, good news I can tell you today is that in Jesus Christ, you get a second chance to live. The first chance is this: what is in it for me? The second chance is: what can I do for God and others? Paul said, “I began to love Christ. Out of that love for Christ, I begin to love others.” If you ask why I am motivated, I am motivated because of what He has done for me. I had the opportunity to live in Germany for three years. Just north of where I lived, is the ruin of a castle. It is in a little town called Herren Hut. The man who lived there years ago was a man whose name was Count Zimzendorf. Zimzendorf was a baron and he owned a large part of Germany. One day, he

decided that he would have a big art exhibit in his castle. You can see him, the Count, walking down the halls of his castle with all of his entourage behind him. They’re explaining the various paintings to him. They came to one of the most famous paintings in the world called “Eccehomo”. It is simply a picture of Jesus Christ on the cross. The people explained the painting and they went on to the next picture. The man who was explaining the pictures realized the Count wasn’t there. He looked back and realized the Count had stopped at the “Eccehomo”. He went back and stood with him. At the bottom of this famous painting in Latin are the words “This I have done for you, What have you done for me?” Zimzendorf didn’t move. The people began to notice he was weeping. Then, of all things, he got on his knees. When Zimzendorf got up, he said “If this is what He has done for me, there is nothing I won’t do for Him!” Do, he did. He gave away all of his money for Christian causes. He invited people in his town to come and hear the story I had heard. Many people came. Zimzendorf decided that night to have a prayer meeting. In the little town of , there was a prayer service in that castle for one hundred years. Every day, young people came and said “we have to tell other people about this story.” They began to go around the world. These group of people grew into a Christian denomination, known as the Moravians. During that one hundred years, one out of every eight young people who joined the Moravian movement, left Germany and went around the world telling people the story of Jesus Christ. To show you what that would mean, if that percentage was among Southern Baptist, Southern Baptist have four thousand five hundred missionaries around the world. We are one of the largest missionary sending organizations in the world. If we had the same percentage, we would have two million missionaries. Two of the Moravians were on a ship coming back from the United States. Another man was on the ship who had come to the United States to try and do good

things, he said. He went back home and he was disturbed and despondent. On the ship these two Moravians talked to him. That man said that was the turning point in my life. His name was John Wesley. Listen again to what happened. “This I have done for you. What have you done for me?” Why are there people who are willing to give what they have, give their time, possessions, talents, leave this country, literally give their life to the cause of Christ. Why? The answer comes back again. The love of Christ compels me. Many of you know the name of Bobby Richardson. He was all star second baseman for the New York Yankees. He coached baseball at Liberty University for awhile. Let me read you the first couple of pages of his autobiography. At age fourteen, I saw for the first time really that a live flesh and blood person had suffered an agonizing death because of love for a boy by the name of Robert Richardson. From that moment, a tiny flame of desire was kindled in me. A desire to know this man, to follow Him, to show my gratitude and though there have been detours along the way, that flame has never gone out. You see you just get surrounded by Christ. When you and I come to church on Sunday, literally what we are doing is that we are singing our love for Christ. In almost every hymn, there is an opportunity to express our love for Him. You tell me why I do the will, then go back to Calvary and you will see. When I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died, my riches gain I count but lost and pour contempt on all my proud. There is an old rugged cross on the hill and I will cherish the old rugged cross til I lay it down for a crown. You understand that while we come and do it, that the same praise and adoration is going on in heaven at the same time. Let me read you what is going on in heaven right now. I saw a lamb, He was looking as though he had been slain. He was standing at the center of the throne encircled by four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns, seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God that

He sends out in all the earth. They came and they took the scrolls from the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. When he had taken it the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb. Each one of them held a harp, they were holding golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints. This is what they are singing. You are worthy to take the book, to open its seals, because you were slain. With your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe, language, people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom of priests to serve our God and they will reign for ever. Listen to what they are singing. Worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and honor and glory and praise. While you are singing here, everybody who has gone on before and all of the angels, that is what they are singing. You are worthy. What you do here, you will spend an eternity doing there. Expressing to Him your love for Jesus Christ. The city of Jacksonville, Florida has one of the largest churches in America. It is the First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, three city blocks. Dr. Homer Lindsey, Jr. is the pastor of the church. A reporter came to Dr. Lindsey and said Dr. Lindsey, you own all this property, thousands of people come to church here. You have ministries to the poor and the needy. Tell me, what is the secret. No secret, he said. One word. Love. Well the reporter said, tell us if you had to say what is the greatest need of the church today. The greatest need of the church is for people to fall in love with Jesus Christ. That is it. If I don’t feel the flame, if I am not compelled, check your love life. There are a few things I would not do for those that I love. But over forty years ago, I met Jesus Christ. I haven’t gotten over it yet. To my knowledge, there is not anything I would not do for Him. Why? I would like for you to take your hymnals and

sing between you and God, When I Survey the
Wondrous Cross. [1st and 4th stanzas] Then
sing to the Lord, I Love You Lord. This is
what I have done for you.

What are you going to do for me?