



## Constrained by God's Love 2 Corinthians 5:12-15

Our program today is about being “constrained” or “compelled” to \_\_\_\_\_ something or maybe constrained \_\_\_\_\_ to do something, and \_\_\_\_\_ it is that constrains us or compels us.

If you are familiar with the Bible you are aware that we are introduced to the apostle Paul as \_\_\_\_\_ in the last paragraph of the seventh chapter of Acts. Saul was \_\_\_\_\_ and educated in the School of Gamaliel, where he was taught strictness in the laws of the Hebrew “tradition.” It was from that background that he became a violent “persecutor of the church of God” (1 Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13; Acts 9:1-4). That is \_\_\_\_\_ he was going to Damascus, to silence the heretics, to bind them and imprison them; to kill them if necessary. It was on the road to Damascus that he saw the \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:8). He even \_\_\_\_\_ with Him, and that was enough for Saul. He became a \_\_\_\_\_ at that time. “So he, trembling and astonished said, ‘Lord what do You want me to \_\_\_\_\_?’ Then the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must \_\_\_\_\_’” (Acts 9 and 10). If you have been taught all your life and you have believed that a person is saved at the \_\_\_\_\_ he believes in Jesus, you must be thinking: “What do you mean do? All you have to do is believe.”

Because he had been stricken blind by the light, those who were traveling with him led Saul into the city where he \_\_\_\_\_ three days and nights. No, he didn't \_\_\_\_\_ after Ananias something called the “sinners prayer.” That is a 21<sup>st</sup> Century \_\_\_\_\_ of forgiveness; it isn't even mentioned or suggested in the New Testament. People aren't \_\_\_\_\_ by “praying through.” Saul wasn't saved even \_\_\_\_\_, not even after all that praying. We know that because no one had come yet to \_\_\_\_\_ him what he had to do. Finally, Ananias came and told him, “Why are you waiting? Arise and be \_\_\_\_\_, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16). The Bible says, “. . . he \_\_\_\_\_ and was baptized” (Acts 9:18). You may be saying, “I always thought sins were washed away by the blood of Christ, and you are telling me that \_\_\_\_\_ washes away sins.” The water of \_\_\_\_\_ does not wash away sins; forgiveness is through the blood of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19). In baptism we re-live the death of Christ in our own lives, and here is where we \_\_\_\_\_ the atoning blood of Jesus (Romans 6:3-4). Saul was obedient to Christ (Acts 26:16-18).

Our Lord was calling Saul, who was given the name \_\_\_\_\_, to be His apostle, his representative, his witness to the Gentiles, just as \_\_\_\_\_ had been called to be His apostle to the Jews (Galatians 2:7). Some denied his apostleship, so it was necessary to affirm it again and again (Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1). He wrote thirteen (some think fourteen) of the twenty-seven \_\_\_\_\_ of the New Testament and except for four books they were written to \_\_\_\_\_ of the Gentiles. Paul knew it was God's intent to bring \_\_\_\_\_ people, Jews and Gentiles together in one body, the \_\_\_\_\_ (Ephesians 2). His becoming a Christian and a preacher of Christ's gospel irritated and antagonized the \_\_\_\_\_ so greatly that they persecuted him very sorely. Even many who had been \_\_\_\_\_ to Christianity became very bitter enemies. He defended his apostleship (2 Corinthians 11:22-32).

Why would Paul willingly submit himself to such reckless \_\_\_\_\_? What compels people to \_\_\_\_\_ themselves and all they have and are for a cause like that of Christ? The answer is in the text, “For the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ constrains (or compels) us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died.” Christ's love for us (John 3:16) is the \_\_\_\_\_ that kindles our love for Him (John 14:23-24). It shouldn't \_\_\_\_\_ us that a person who really does love the Lord is driven to be a “different” kind of person and to do things differently.

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