

The Compelling Love of Christ

By
Elder Enoch Ofori Jnr
(Sermon, 17th August, 2013)

"No Greater Love"

It's a love of a unique, unprecedented kind. "The love of Christ" for us. It's a love that meant His stripping Himself of all His divine honour, majesty, glory and prestige. Stripping Himself of His heavenly throne and adulation and adoration as the Eternal Son of the King of the Universe and the WORD through whom all things were. And all that great sacrifice not for any greater selfish interest or benefit but to become like us; to share our humanness, our ill-fate, our poverty and, yes, our death. And when He came, born of the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, He came preaching glad tidings to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, liberty to the captives, and the year of Yahweh's favour (Luke 4:18-19). But He was hated and persecuted by men, hounded and scourged by them and finally tied to a crude and cruel stake to die a slow cruel death (Isa. 53). He endured all the pain and humiliation as a worthy undertaking because He was in love. In love with us. And He put it as no one could ever put it-- in His simple but profound inimitable words, " Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). His love for you and me is nonpareil. Beyond compare, beyond description. This love is one of a kind.

For this love meant He would not only die to pay the ransom for our sins with His LIFE but would also rise to give us new life and hope of eternal life.

What could we ever give Him in return for His love? How could we ever reciprocate His love for us?

The Love of Christ Compels us to Live for Him

Precisely because we can never requite His love ought to make us want to offer nothing less than our lives to Him which we entirely owe Him. As our appreciation for His great love for us, we are to live to please Him. We are to live for Him. This is the message and call of the beautiful scripture in 2 Cor. 5:14-15:

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again (NKJV) .

According to the above scripture, Christ died for us for two reasons:

1. It was absolutely necessary that He die because we were all dead and in need of redemption. But that couldn't be possible unless He came down to our level - become

human like us subject to death, though remaining sinless. As our Creator who became human, He's infinitely worth more than the sum total of all humanity and therefore qualified to die in the place of all men to pay the ransom for our sins (Rom. 5:17-18). This explains why He is called the "last Adam", having replaced the first Adam of the flesh who led man down the path of death and He life (1 Cor. 15:45)! Our redemption is in His blood (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). Having paid the penalty, He confronted and overcame death for us so that we too would overcome death someday. The *Epistle to the Hebrews* put it this way:

" Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15).

2. He died for us so that in giving us life we will live for Him.

The life He gave us broadly consists of two elements: the righteous character of God and the eternity of God. The first aspect of this life of God is what Paul describes as alien to the dissolute life of unconverted Gentiles who "walk in the futility of their minds". He warns in Eph. 4:

¹⁷ This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

¹⁸ Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

¹⁹ Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

²⁰ But ye have not so learned Christ.

"The life of God" can be summarized as the divine *excellence, grace* and *power* at work in the life of a converted individual by which he overcomes moral weakness and corruption common to all unregenerate men. Daniel was said to have "an excellent spirit in him" (Dan. 6:3); Paul described his experience as Christ living in him (Gal. 2:20), and John attributed it to divine power - " as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12).

Is this higher life of God true of your life? It should, if His "seed" (word) dwells in you. Sin becomes contrary to you as it's to God (1 John 3:9). You are neither motivated by it nor enthused by it. You live above the 'normal' life of sin and unholiness every Tom, Dick or Harry is living. Husbands 'go behind their wives' (as the Akans put it) and vice versa; indiscriminate sex, including same-sex, is a game boys and girls and grown-ups freely play anytime anywhere including with 'sex tourists'; lies and double speak is the language of the streetwise and the political class, ably facilitating their 'upward mobility'; alcohol adds glamour to the sophisticated lifestyle of the 'enlightened' and is the permanent friend of

socialites and clubbers. But for you the "pleasures of sin" hold no allure. You live the life of God; His seed dwells in you.

The life of God can't be lived by our own power or efforts. So then, Christ gave us both the gift of the higher divine life and the ability to live it. It's because of this life that we owe Christ an incalculable debt. In the inspired words of the apostle Peter, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire" (2 Pet. 1:3-4 ESV).

The unprecedented depth of Christ's love which He demonstrated in His death and the life He gave us compels us to live for Him. But He's a living Christ who is no longer dead. He's risen. He is alive in heaven, and He is alive in our life and hearts.

How do we live for Him?

Be holy for Him; purge yourself from all uncleanness. The Preacher touches on the principle in Prov. 25:4:

"Take the impurities out of silver and the artist can produce a thing of beauty".

Applied spiritually, it simply means that without holiness we can't even begin to live for Christ, let alone be used by Him. We live for Him in holiness and is, in fact, the essence of the life in Christ. For He will only use what is sanctified and fit for His use.

"In great house", Paul wrote, "there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. 2:20-21).

Righteousness is the evidence of our living for Him, for He bore our sins in His own body "that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24).

Holiness is imperative. Let not the filth of sin mar your relationship with God (Jam. 1:21; 1 Pet. 2:1); keep a pure heart (Matt. 5:8), and demonstrate your love for the Lord by keeping His commandments "for His commandments [of love] are not burdensome [unless you don't love Him]" (1 John 5:3; John 14:15).

It's that simple. He gave up His all for us and it's only fitting--though incommensurate--that we live 24/7 for Him who loved us even when we were dead in sins. If He gave us life, is it asking too much if we offer that same life to Him in holy living and service? (Rom. 12:1-2).

Certainly not! His love compels us!