

## Compelled by Love

2 Cor 5:11-21



Sydney Christian churches ran a public campaign earlier this year called Jesus. All about life. You might have heard about it. If you watched Bathurst you might have even seen the Jesus racing car with the Jesus all about life logo on the side. The way it worked. What they did. Was basically a kind of a marketing blitz. A marketing exercise to raise awareness of the person of Jesus Christ. They ran TV ads, radio spots, churches put up banners. There were billboards. All with the same logo, all with the same message. Jesus, all about life.

And it must have worked. Because last week on prime time tv in the morning, Kochie and Mel were there on Sunrise, and they had Archbishop Jensen from the Sydney Anglicans in the studio. And they were asking him about it.

In one sense, it wasn't any different from a McDonalds marketing campaign. Like when they release a new hamburger. But it was different. Because of the product. Which was very clearly, the person of Jesus.

And so they asked the archbishop. They said. So what's this all about? Kochie was very dramatic. He said – you're sitting there watching TV, and all of a sudden there's JESUS.

Now lets say that's you. Just for a moment let's say this is happening in Brisbane and they've asked you in to the studio and you're asked that question. You've got the make up on. You're in the hot seat. You've got 30 seconds on prime time TV. How will you answer? Don't stuff it up. We're counting on you.

Here's the question.....Why is it that Christians want to turn people's attention to Jesus?

It's a question of motive. It's an excellent question. And Paul gives us an excellent answer here I think.

But let me just say. It's interesting. That no one asks that question to Tiger Woods do they? Tiger why are you promoting GILLETTE on those TV ads. Tiger what's your motivation? Is it because you really think Gillette's the best a man can get? We don't ask because I think we all know, and we've come to accept. That money is a perfectly acceptable motivation. Especially when it's 13 million. Or thereabouts. That's Gillette's motivation too by the way. We're ok with that.

But the radar goes off. When someone starts promoting Jesus. And I've got to say. Mel and Kochie looked extremely uncomfortable talking about the subject.

And maybe you'd be uncomfortable answering? What would you say?

Well Paul says two things very clearly here. Number one. We tell people about Jesus because of the fear of the Lord. And number two. We're compelled by the love of Christ.

The fear of the Lord, and the love of Christ. Those two things. Now I'm not sure if that's where you'd go. But have a listen to Paul here and see if maybe he's got a good point.

If you remember from last week, Paul says we walk by faith, and not by sight. We believe and therefore speak he said. We believe that Jesus died and rose again. We believe that we will be raised with him at the last day. We believe that we will stand before him and be judged.

And that's the solid ground on which he stands. I'll get you to follow on from verse 11 as Paul goes on from that thought.

He says. Verse 11

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men.

Mel and Kochie. We live by faith not by sight. We know what it is to fear the Lord. So we try to persuade people to turn to Jesus.

Actually at one point Kochie got pretty direct he said are you trying to convert people?

And I was a bit surprised that Peter Jensen actually gave a fairly soft, non-direct answer.

But if I'm reading Paul rightly here. The answer to that question is fairly straight forward.

Are you trying to convert people?

TOO RIGHT WE ARE.

Is Tiger Woods and Gillette trying to convert people? Of course they are.

They're trying to get people to turn to their product from another one.

So are we. TOO RIGHT. But for different reasons.

I used to have a comic up on my office wall. It was one of those far side type comics. And the picture was of a church vestry. The little office out the back. And the door of the vestry was partly open and you could see through to where people were sitting. You could see they were hot and bothered. They were sweating. And the preacher was there at the door about to go in. He had a kind of a menacing grin on his face. One hand was on the thermostat as he turned up the heat. In the other hand was his sermon with the title in big bold letters, HELL.

And I get the funny side of it. It's quite amusing. But of course the reality is. There's nothing funny about Hell at all.

Hebrews 10.31. It's a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

You might have heard people write the whole idea off and say well that's where all my mates will be so it'll be good.

But if we're living by faith and not just by what we can see in front of our face. If you look at the judgment Jesus endured on the cross. How can you make light of

the consequences of sin. Jesus blood... Jesus pain Jesus suffering.... to the point where he screams out to God in anguish says the offence of sin to God is serious.

You might remember Slim Dusty's funeral. Six years ago at the Anglican Cathedral in Sydney. Phillip Jensen talked about Slim's love of the notion of mateship. How his songs were full of stories of getting together at the pub for a beer with yer mates.

Then he went on to talk about Jesus at the last supper saying he wouldn't drink of the fruit of the vine with them again until he drank it with them in the Father's kingdom. He said this.

After his death has dealt with sin, after his resurrection when the new age of the kingdom of God began, then he would drink again but then drinking would symbolise mateship, friendship in all its pleasure restored and permanent relationships. For sin is paid for and death is defeated. So it will be the time of party and fun of drinking anew with God in his kingdom.

Heaven is not a pub without beer. Hell is the pub with neither beer nor the mates to share it with.

They're words that pierce the skin aren't they. They might make you mad. They're meant to make you run to Jesus.

The sobering reminder. So Phillip Jensen. So Paul the apostle.

Since we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men.

David Cook is the principal of the Sydney and missionary bible college. In the early days of the college a Christian man came to David and he said. I have 2 million dollars to invest in what you're doing. And he said you can have it on one condition. And that is – that you believe in the existence of hell. That you believe in eternal conscious torment for those who reject Jesus Christ as their Lord.

Since we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men.

It's the question of motivation. Are you concerned that people are saved from the terrible consequences of their rebellion? Are you concerned for Sue and the kids next door? Are you concerned for Peter at work. For the girl at the checkout?

See I think we can be led to believe and I've heard people say we should only be motivated by love. That fear shouldn't come in to it at all.

And as a parent I get where that's coming from, I get the ideal. I'd love it if my kids would do what I asked and live to please me purely from their benevolent little hearts. But unfortunately it's poppycock.

It's only an ideal you can hold if you haven't had kids. My kids are like me. Their hearts are not pure. We're all sinners.

And God by his nature. Is a sin crusher. And rightly so.

If I tear up the streets driving wrecklessly I ought to live in fear of being caught by the police.

There's a right and proper fear. Fear of electricity. Fear of strangers. Fear of your mother in law. They're all real life and we get that.

And right through the bible there's a proper fear of the Lord. Not a cowering sort of hide in the corner kind of fear. It's a reality type fear. It's a respectful fear. God won't tolerate sin. It's a fear that's meant to lead to obedience. When you're tempted to do the wrong thing. Fear the Lord, and do the RIGHT THING.

Abraham goes to sacrifice Isaac. And at the last moment the angel says.

SLIDE

**Genesis 22:12** <sup>2</sup> "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

God's people Israel are commanded to fear the Lord and obey him.

**Deuteronomy 5:29** <sup>29</sup> Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

And it's not just an Old Testament thing. It's there in acts as well. Annanias and Sapphira lie to the church about money they got from selling land. And they drop down dead at Peter's feet. And the fear of the Lord grips the church. Philippians 3 Paul tells the church to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

If you're a Christian. When you came to trust Jesus. Was it pure unadulterated love for God that brought you to your choice? Or was the threat of judgment a real part of it?

In Deuteronomy 6 verse 2 Moses tells Israel to fear the Lord by keeping his statutes that things will go well for them.

And three verses down verse 5 is that great command to love the Lord your God will all your heart and mind and strength.

And it might sound a bit strange to fear God and love him at the same time. Seems strange that those two things can co-exist....But in a world where we're sinners. They do.

Because we know the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade men.

Has to be said, the implication if we're not doing that. If there's no sense where you're trying to persuade people to follow Jesus. IF you're not praying. If you're not consciously concerned about people who don't know Jesus, then if Paul's right. You're either not quite understanding. Or you're a very callous person.

Paul goes on. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is plain to your conscience. We're not trying to hide our motives. God knows them. Paul says to the Corinthians. You ought to grasp that and take pride in it. So you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than what is in the heart.

Like anything, you can easily have mixed motives. People can have all sorts of motives for Christian ministry. They want to build their ego. Be able to stand up

the front. Have people listen to them. Maybe they want a title. Or special privileges. You could go into it for the money. Or for the power trip.

Paul says we're in it for your Good.

Verse 14, for Christ's love compels us. He says.

Which is the other half of Paul's motivation. God's called us not to just escape the judgment.

But to be reconciled through Jesus' death.

God could have just rightly condemned us.

But Jesus in his death. Demonstrates God's love. In his death he doesn't just save us from judgment. He gives us a new life. Jesus IS ALL ABOUT LIFE.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

I think he's saying something like this. Jesus death shows the comprehensive nature of the sin of men. Death and more than that God's judgment sits on all of us. All died. But Jesus died because he's all about life. And his death offers life to all people. Because he was raised. That's the love of Christ.

Notice Paul doesn't say it's his love. He's not compelled first and foremost by his own love. It's Christ's love. That compels him. To suffer the same things Jesus did. To try to persuade people. To lay his life down for others.

So from now on we think of people differently. Because of the love of Christ. Verse 17 therefore here's the great news if anyone is in Christ he is a NEW CREATION; the old has gone, the new has come.

literally the old has passed away. Same words Jesus uses in Matthew 5 when he talks about heaven and earth passing away when God's kingdom comes. When you're in Christ. That is. You've understood your sin. You've asked Jesus to be your Lord instead of you being your own God. When you do that.....God's

kingdom has come for you in a sense. You died. And now you live with Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. If that's you. In some sense. The new has come. Already. Which is a bit to get your head around. But I think as Paul explains it a bit further it gets a little clearer.

You have to really grab this idea of being IN CHRIST.

Paul talks about the reconciliation that's happened from God's side. He says verse 18 all this is from God, who gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting mens' sins against them.

God in his love calls sinners to come to him. Not just to escape judgment. But to be found in him, in Christ, connected with him, joined with him, with a new life and a new hope and a new future.

And we're like ambassadors. He says. Verse 20 as though Christ was making his appeal through us. We're compelled by Christ's love and so verse 20 we implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Jesus in his death shows the two aspects Paul's talked about here. The fear of the Lord. The love of Christ.

If God's innocent son faces the cross. You can be sure God takes sin seriously.

If God's son suffers like this for sinners like us. You can be sure of his love for you.

Here's the message of the cross.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

IT's the great exchange. We rightly deserved judgment. But he became what we were so we could become what he is. Compelled by love for sinners. HE became sin? So we could be God's righteousness.

Which is a strange concept.

David Jones. Who's the minister of the Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Tasmania was a minister in London. And one of his elders went down to Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park there in London. It's a place that's famous for two things. One public speakers. Who speak on whatever topic they like.

And two – it's famous for hecklers. Which just makes me think of the muppet show and the two old guys up on the balcony.

But David Jones tells the story of one of his elders who was speaking there about Christians things. And he was talking about this idea of substitution. Of Jesus becoming sin.

And a heckler yelled out. So that means Jesus was a homosexual then?

And this man was taken a bit by surprise with this comment. And he stopped. And he thought. And then he said. Yes. Yes he was. And a prostitute, and a rapist, and a paedophile, and a murderer. Which is Paul's point.

Compelled by love. He took your shame, and your guilt, and your punishment. In exchange for his righteousness.

What you need to do. To hear that verse properly. If you want to really understand God's love for you...is you need to put your name in there. God made him who had no sin to be sin for Stuart. You put your name in there. So that in him Stuart might become the righteousness of God.

Stuart deserved wrath and punishment for his rebellion. But instead. Stuart received new life and forgiveness and friendship with God which is what righteousness is. And Jesus took the punishment.

Are we trying to convert people? Too right. Why wouldn't we?

Now of course we need to understand that we'll be misunderstood. And we need to understand that we need to be tactful in the way we express ourselves. But as we evaluate who we are and what we are. Let's not be ashamed about being Jesus' ambassadors. We don't speak to people's itching ears we don't just say what we think they want us to say. We don't stroke people's egos. We don't promote ourselves. We speak to the conscience. And we speak with a clear

conscience. Because we know what it is to fear the Lord we try to persuade men.  
Because Christ's love compels us. We're his messengers. His ambassadors.