

Series: 1 John
Title: The Motive of Believers
Text: 1 John 2: 12-14
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In this epistle, the Holy Spirit gives some commands that God's saints heed. These commands are all included in Christ's one command to his saints to believe on Christ and love our brethren. God's saints heed these commands by God's love bringing us to this purposed-end. (2:3-5). But what is the motive whereby Christ constrains us to obey him?

1 John 2: 12: I write unto you, little children, because...

Here John declares the reason—or motive—why he writes these things to us. This is the motive for believers to obey the commands in this epistle. This is *the motive* whereby Christ *constrains* us to honor him and love our brethren.

Proposition: The motive of God's saints to obey Christ is, not because we are trying to obtain the blessings of salvation, but because we already possess these blessings of salvation in Christ.

For our divisions we will see:

- 1) Our constraint is we are already in the family of God—**1 John 2: 12: I write unto you *little children*, 13: unto you *fathers*...unto you *young men*...unto you babies in Christ**
- 2) Our constraint is God has already forgiven our sins—**12: I write unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.**
- 3) Our motive is because God's saints already know God—**13: I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is from the beginning*.**
- 4) Our constraint is we have already overcome the devil—**13: I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.**
- 5) Our motive is we are already are strong—**14...I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong,**
- 6) We are constrained because the word of God already abides in God's saints—**14: and the word of God abideth in you,...**

So we see our motive to obey Christ is—not threats of law nor that we are trying to obtain God's blessings—but because we already possess these blessings by Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

ALREADY FAMILY

1 John 2: 12: I write unto you, little children,...unto you fathers...unto you young men...unto you little children

The motive for God's saints to honor Christ and love one another is because we are already members of the church and family of God.

This is why the Holy Spirit moved John to use family terms when addressing God's saints. This first word "little children" describes all God's saints because grace makes us all as little children. Then he describes the various stages of growth in grace: "*fathers, young men, little children.*" The second time he uses "*little children*" it is a different word. It means babes or newly born-again believers. Growth in grace and knowledge of Christ has nothing to do with our physical age. A young man in age may be a father in grace while an old man in age may be a babe in grace.

What did you do to become a member of your earthly family? Nothing. We were born into our earthly family or adopted into it. A sinner does nothing, and can do nothing, to make ourselves a member of the family of God. We are adopted and born into God's family by his free and sovereign grace.

Ephesians 1: 3: Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: 4: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6: To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Galatians 4: 4: when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5: To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6: And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7: Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Ephesians 2: 19: Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, [in God's kingdom] and of the household of God;

Ephesians 3: 14: For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15: Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named...

Be sure to get this believer, God's saints *are already* in the kingdom, church and family of God. God *is* our Father and we *are* his children. Christ *is* our Elder Brother and we *already are called* by Christ's name—the *LORD our Righteousness*. (Jeremiah 23: 6; 33:16). God the Holy Spirit *is* our Comforter. We *are* heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, heaven with Christ being our same inheritance

1 John 3:1: Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should *be called* the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Brethren, as I showed you at the beginning, in God's family we are all *God's little children*. But there are various levels of maturity in grace and understanding: fathers, young men, and babies. At times, the stronger are weaker and the weaker stronger. God grows some in knowledge of doctrine sooner than others. I wonder if the reason for some separating themselves is because they have not been grown to understand what God has grown their brethren to know. But we should never reject our brethren nor desert our family because of that.

God put us together in his family not only to hear the gospel, but to make us *experience* the sufficiency of his grace which grows us in love to one another, which grows us in longsuffering and patience toward one another. Remember, true growth in grace is to be little children in malice but men in understanding. Paul said, "*Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men*" (1 Cor 14:20).

So let's get John's point. Our constraint to honor God our Father, to devote ourselves to Christ, and to love our brethren is not because we are trying to become sons of God but because "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God.*" (1 Jn 3:2) This is why the Holy Spirit includes this motive when he exhorts us in how we are to conduct ourselves. He commands every true believer, "*Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.*" (Eph 5:1)

ALREADY FORGIVEN

1 John 1: 12: I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

The motive of God's saints to honor Christ and love our brethren is because our sins are already forgiven for Christ's name sake.

Christ is Victorious! Christ did not lay down his life for all sinners without exception merely giving us a chance to be redeemed. He accomplished the redemption of God's elect who he represented on the cross. That is why forgiveness of our sins is "*for his name's sake.*"

Forgiveness is not for the sake of merit or service or works in us. It is for the sake of Christ's blood, sacrifice, and satisfaction. He established the law in justice and righteousness for God's elect for whom he died. This is why it is for Christ's name sake that God forgives our sins.

You who are without Christ, have you ever thought of asking one of these believers what God has done for them? We will happily tell you what God has done for us. God in sovereign grace brought us under the gospel. The Spirit of God taught us we are sinners deserving only wrath. He drew us irresistibly to confess our sins to God and ask for his mercy. Then God made the gospel good news to us by revealing that our sins are forgiven for Christ's name sake. And we have been happy ever since!

Psalm 65: 4: Blessed *is the man whom* thou chooseth, and causeth to approach *unto thee...*

Psalm 32: 1: Blessed *is he whose* transgression *is* forgiven, *whose sin is* covered. 2: Blessed *is the man unto whom the LORD* imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is* no guile.

So, the Lord teaches us to honor him and love our brethren, not that we *may be* forgiven, but because "*In [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*" (Eph 1: 7) This motive is always given when the Spirit exhorts us to love our brethren. He says "*Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*" (Eph 4:32)

ALREADY KNOW GOD

1 John 2: 13: I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning...I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

Our Lord Jesus Christ constrains his saints to honor him and love our brethren because we already know him.

A sinner does not know God by our own wisdom. I urge you take everything I preach from this pulpit to God's word and study. But sinners do not know God by our fleshly wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1: 21: For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

The wise and prudent will not bow to this truth because they consider preaching foolishness. But God chose this means to destroy the wise and prudent. You will not find men who think themselves wise and prudent in Christ's church. Through this foolish means God makes Christ Wisdom unto his child so that we cease glorying in our fleshly wisdom and glory in the Lord alone! (1 Cor 1: 29-31)

At times we hear men say that you have to know this doctrine and that doctrine or you cannot be saved. Men say that you have to know this much doctrine or you cannot be saved. What does Christ our God say?

John 17: 3: And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Luke 10: 22: All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and *he* to whom the Son will reveal *him*.

God's saints all see through a glass darkly. There was much the apostles of Christ did not know. He said there were things they could not bear before as yet he had gone to the cross. Yet, Christ had already truly converted them, giving them life and faith in him. I heard Brother Henry Mahan say, "If you put all our knowledge in a thimble it would rattle like a peanut in a boxcar." But our comfort and constraint to honor Christ and love one another is, not that we might know him, but because Christ has given us an understanding and we do already know him whom to know is life eternal.

1 John 5: 20: And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

ALREADY OVERCOME

1 John 2: 13...I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.

The motive constraining God's saints to honor Christ and love our brethren is because we have already overcome the devil.

The devil and Christ are not in a competition. It is not that sometimes the devil wins and sometimes Christ wins. Christ has already conquered the devil and his believing people have already overcome the wicked one by the blood of Christ.

Revelation 12: 10: And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. 11: And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; [our testimony is: we overcame by the blood of the Lamb] and they loved not their lives unto the death. [God made us cease saving our lives and our works, made us trust the blood of the Lamb]

Our testimony is that we have overcome the devil by the blood of Christ the Lamb. By his grace we loved not our lives by repenting from our dead works and trusting the blood of the Lamb to make us overcome the devil.

When Christ went to the cross he said, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (Joh 12:31) On the cross, Christ put a death blow to satan's head. Christ's blood has justified his people from all our sin so that though the devil may accuse us, God says we are justified. Knowing we

are already “more than conquerors through him that loved us” is what constrains us to obey Christ. (Rom 8: 37)

ALREADY STRONG

1 John 2: 14...because ye are strong,...

God’s saints are constrained to honor Christ and love our brethren because we are already strong.

Christ is our Strength.

2 Corinthians 12: 9: And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness...10:...when I am weak, then am I strong.

Isaiah 40: 29: He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength.

But we do not even have strength to see that we have no strength. Christ is our strength to behold our inability. Christ, pre-incarnate is the angel spoken of in the passage below. It is Christ that gives us strength to behold we have no strength.

Daniel 10: 16: And, behold, *one* like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision, my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17: For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. 18: Then there came again and touched me *one* like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, 19: And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace *be* unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.

Brethren, Christ is our Strength to behold that we have no strength and Christ is our strength to behold Christ is all our Strength. So it is by his Strength that we are constrained to be patient and longsuffering with brethren and to do so with joy. By Christ we are "*Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;*" (Col 1: 11)

ALREADY ABIDETH

1 John 2: 14:...the word of God abideth in you...

We have seen that God has blessed us to now already be born into the family of God. We are already forgiven of all our sins. We have already overcome the wicked one. We have already known the Father. We are now already strong by Christ. And all these things are true because we now already possess this last blessing—*“the word of God abideth in you.”*

1 John 2:27: The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

The Lord used John to command his saints to brotherly love, godly behavior, and devotion to Christ. But he used no threats of the law. Never in the epistles of the New Testament are the saints of God forced into obedience by fear of punishment. The whip of the law produces outward, fake obedience in legal slaves. But the child of God has a stronger and more pleasant motive — *“The love of Christ constraineth us.” Amen!*