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I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A MUSKETEER
2 Corinthians 5:14-15

A couple of years ago Martin Scorsese made a movie titled *Hugo*. It took place in 1930's Paris and the central character was a 12 year old orphan named Hugo. He had loved his father, who taught him to repair mechanical things. They shared a love for all things mechanical, but Hugo's dad had died in a fire. Now Hugo works on the massive clocks in the Gare Montparnesse train station. In one scene he is in the tower surrounded by the massive workings of the station clock with another orphan, a young girl named Isabelle. Speaking of a kind man, Monsieur Labisse, Hugo says, "He's got real purpose." Isabelle asks what he means and Hugo says, "Everything has a purpose, even machines. Clocks tell time. Trains take you places. They do what they're meant to do. Maybe that's why broken machines make me so sad. They can't do what they're meant to do. Maybe it's the same with people. If you lose your purpose, it's like you're broken."

Isabelle wonders about her purpose then Hugo says, "Right after my father died I would come up here a lot. I'd imagine the whole world was one big machine. Machines never come with any extra parts, you know. They always come with the exact amount they need. So I figured, if the entire world was one big machine I couldn't be an extra part. I had to be here for some reason. And that means you have to be here for some reason too."

If you don't know your purpose it's like you're broken. That is a true and critical observation about life. The Bible says that Hugo is right, that the world doesn't have extra parts. There are no cast off human beings who have no reason for existing. We have a part to play in God's plan. We are thinking about being antifragile, about being able to not only survive stress and hardship but to profit from it. We cannot be antifragile unless we know what our purpose in life is. We must be clear on what determines our choices and our responses to every situation. Today we will consider 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and see that there is a purpose that can make us less fragile, more able to grow stronger no matter what circumstance may occur. This passage says that:

CHRIST'S LOVE IS ARRESTING

Verse 14 begins with the word "For." That tells you that these words are connected to what came before. They are an explanation. Paul said in verse 13, "if we are out of our mind, as some say, it is for the sake of God, if we are in our right mind, it is

for you.” That verse tells us that what drove Paul is serving God and caring about people. He said that some people thought his elevator didn't go all the way to the top floor, that he was Looney Tunes. He said maybe I'm nuttier than an almond tree, but I'm God's nut. And, he claimed, if he was totally sane (which he was) he always operated to benefit others. He wanted to serve God and people. Those motives were behind everything he did.

Why do you do what you do? We always have a motive, a reason behind what we do. Laurie and I recently went on a crusade to lose some weight. Some people have asked us why. It's because we both got distressed about our girth around the middle. We've always both been slender, but we found ourselves starting to look like we were related to Shamu.

Have you seen comedian Jim Gaffigan's bit about whales? He says he's been trying to swim for exercise because it's supposed to be so good for you, but then he says, “but have you seen how fat whales are?” They swim all the time. “It's not working, whales.” They even sound depressed about it. Do whales live in denial? “It's mostly water weight.” My point here, which may have gotten lost, is whether you think it made sense or not, we felt like we were growing too whale like. So for us there was a reason to lose weight. We had a motive that made sense to us. That's true of us in everything we do.

So why did Paul care about serving God and serving people? In verses 14-15 he explains the reason. Paul only cared about those things because, as he said, “Christ's love compels us.” The word translated “compels” is a strong word. Luke used it in Luke 8:37 to refer to people being “gripped by great fear.” It could mean to be totally controlled or ruled by something. The word at times was used in the first century of arresting someone. To arrest them means to take hold of them and control them. That's the idea here. Paul's statement here is that he was totally controlled by Christ's love for us.

For followers of Jesus the controlling factor in their lives should be that Christ loves us. This truth was like a nuclear blast in Paul's mind and heart, blowing everything else away. He had always known that God is sovereign, the ruler of all. He knew that God is holy and powerful. He knew that God is good and has nothing to do with evil. He knew that God is righteous and just. He knew that God is faithful. He knew that God is full of lovingkindness and is merciful.

What he had never grasped until the risen Lord Jesus confronted him was the immensity of God's love for him personally. He was shocked into the realization

that Jesus Christ had paid for his sin, that even though Paul had rejected Jesus, that same Christ had died for him. Christ went to the extreme of stopping Paul in his headlong rush into destruction and evil to bring him to himself.

This is a message that we need to hear continually, because for some reason we humans have difficulty believing it in our hearts and living in light of the significance of it. Christ's love for us is to be the controlling factor in how we think about God, how we see ourselves, how we relate to other people and the choices we make every single day. It is essential to being "antifragile."

In Romans 8:37 Paul said "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." What things? The things he mentioned beginning in verse 31. It was people bringing charges against him. It was people condemning him. It was trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and the sword. In verse 36 he quoted Psalm 44:22 to describe his life as facing death all day long, being considered "a sheep to be slaughtered." Paul was able to conquer in all those things. He was the definition of antifragile.

What made him antifragile like that? It was "through him who *loved* us." Knowing God's love was the crucial component. Then Paul went on to say, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul was able to conquer in all of that, he was the ultimate antifragile person, because he was convinced that God loved him and nothing in all of creation could ever change that.

In Ephesians 3:14-21 Paul prayed for some of his brothers and sisters who were in Ephesus. There are two key requests in that prayer. The first is that they would be strengthened inwardly by the Spirit of Christ within them. The second was essential to the first. It was that they "being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge."

To be strengthened they needed to be rooted in love. We have some trees behind our house that cause us some concern. There are two of them, but one especially that bothers us. They are eucalyptus trees. Our concern is that these two trees are approximately 5 miles tall. They are huge with a capital H. One of them is only about 25 feet from our house. So what's the problem?

Our home owners' association board ordered some of our neighbors across the street to cut down a couple of eucalyptus trees much like these that were on their property. It cost \$1000 to do it. You see, those trees, not quite as tall as the ones behind our house, were on a bank. The problem is that eucalyptus trees have fairly shallow roots. Trees that tall on a bank with shallow roots stand a good chance of being knocked down in a big storm. Because they are so tall they likely would hit a house and do some serious damage.

You begin to see our concern with the trees behind our house. They also are on a bank. Furthermore, they are south of our house, and when we get big storms the winds often blow out of the south, meaning those trees will take direct aim at our house if they come down. In fact, our house has already been hit by a couple of big limbs that have broken off one of the trees. So, you say, solve the problem, Rick. Just cut them down. Ah, therein lies the rub. They are not on our property. Our homeowners association owns the property they are on, just on the other side of our back fence. Yeah, the association that ordered our neighbors to pay to have similar trees removed from their property because it was a safety issue, doesn't want to pay to have these trees removed. I don't want to say I'm bitter here, but I think we can all agree that there is more than just a touch of irony in this situation can't we?

My point is not to once again vent my resentment of the local Nazi association, but to say that the problem is shallow roots. If those trees were deeply rooted into the ground there wouldn't be as great a concern. If they are deeply rooted they stand a good chance of being able to stand firm when the storms come.

For us, the key to being antifragile, is being rooted deeply into God's love. Paul says he wants us to grasp that God's love is infinite in every dimension, to know how wide, long, high and deep it is. He knows that it is not possible to truly comprehend God's infinite love, but he wants us to know it in the sense of experiencing it. Martyn Lloyd Jones wrote in his book, *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ* (p. 187), "It is love alone which can give us real power to live the Christian life...There is nothing in the world that so energizes us as love."

Every single human soul is wounded, yours and mine included. We have been hurt by other people in a myriad of ways and we are left with deeply wounded hearts. To complicate matters our hearts are also sick. Something has gone wrong with them. There is only one thing that can heal a sick, wounded heart. It is love, unconditional love. Only love can heal a heart and only grace can give it life.

About 5 years ago I had an interesting conversation with a man who had been a faithful follower of Jesus all his adult life. He served as a missionary for a number of years, then returned to this country where he joined the staff of a large church where he served as a pastor. He knew the gospel backward and forward. He knew that God loved him and that Jesus had died for his sin and he had shared that message with many people. Then one day in the middle of his frenetic service for God his life began to unravel. He said he had a total breakdown. He fell into a depression so deep he could not even function and had to go on disability because he could not work. This wasn't a matter of a mere few weeks or a month. It went on for more than a year, and in the middle of it he felt he would never get better. His discovery of the cause was startling. Though he knew at an intellectual level that God loved him and could quote the verses that said so, he never really believed that God actually did. He believed that God put up with him but was mostly disappointed in him and didn't like him. He had spent his years of ministry attempting to get God to actually approve of him and love him and knew it was never enough. That went on until he was exhausted and hopeless and his life caved in. He only got better when he began to understand and truly believe that God actually loved him and loved him desperately, not because he was good enough, won enough converts, did enough good works and was holy enough, but simply because God's infinite love surpasses knowledge.

We only become truly antifragile when our roots are sunk deeply into this transforming truth that God really does love us. But it doesn't always feel like that, does it? I can believe that there is a Creator out there somewhere. That makes sense. But could a Being so vast as to create the immensity of the universe take any note of someone as minutely small as me? That seems so very unlikely. And life takes some turns where it feels like God wants nothing to do with us. And frankly, if I were him I don't think I would love me much. I'm pretty fickle and feckless, pretty hard to love. Why should a holy God love me? How can I believe that God loves me?

CHRIST'S DEATH IS THE PROOF

Philosophical speculation about God's love won't get us there. Neither will rational thinking. The best it can do is get us to the possibility that God might love humanity in general based on the general goodness of creation. Wishful thinking certainly is not enough, and to be honest, if we're going to try to measure God's love by how pleasant the circumstances of our lives are, we'll never believe it for we can and do almost always find things that could and should be better.

How did Paul know God loved him? It wasn't that God gave him a smooth life full of abundance, good health and comfort. Far from it. His life was one hardship after another. He knew God loved him because as he said "we are convinced that one died for all." The evidence of God's love is that Christ died for him even when he was rejecting him, even when he despised Christ. In Romans 5:8 Paul wrote, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners Christ died for us." God proved he loves us when Jesus died for us. **Christ's death is the proof!**

The question here is how do you know a person loves you? How do you measure how much they love you? I've come to the conclusion that ultimately the answer to that question boils down to this: ***how much is that person willing to sacrifice for you?*** There was a kind of curious example of this in my life. When our kids were young there was a point that they decided they wanted, no *needed* a dog. I wanted no part of it. I like dogs but I didn't want the complications that came with a dog. Through a kind of unusual set of circumstances however my kids maneuvered me into a trap where I had no choice. I either had to agree to buy a dog or I had to show myself unfaithful to a promise I made. So we ended up with what may have been the cutest puppy ever, an 8 week old American Eskimo we named Luke. Luke turned out to be a terrific pet. He was a beloved member of our family for 16 years. He was smart, funny, cute, and he loved his family. We loved him. He was very healthy and we had almost no trips to the vet, until near the end. About a year and a half before he died he developed a problem with his eyes that was serious. Eventually we were faced with an emergency surgery and the cost was ghastly. He was old and wouldn't be alive for many more years. I didn't want to cough up the money for surgery. We had some friends who said we should just put him to sleep for good, that it wasn't wise to spend the money that way. He's just a dog and he's old. When faced with the decision Laurie and I didn't blink. Wisdom had nothing to do with it. We loved the little guy. Yes, it was a lot of money that we really could have used, but we did it anyway. We sacrificed for him because we loved him.

Maybe it wasn't financially wise, but it seems to me real love doesn't worry much about prudence and financial wisdom. It tends to be awfully extravagant, at times maybe even wastefully so. That was certainly the case with God's love for us.

This is what Hollywood and much of our society never gets. Movies usually want to make it seem like what you can do is pursue your personal success and fulfillment and still have a relationship with someone. You can have a relationship, but you can't love another fully without putting them ahead of selfish interest and

pursuit. You're not really loving someone fully until you are willing to sacrifice everything for them, career, status, desires, dreams, all of it.

One movie actually depicted this truth. There's a great scene in the movie *Family Man* that illustrates this. Nicholas Cage plays Jack Campbell, a successful Wall Street mover and shaker who is mysteriously transported into another life in which he is married to former girlfriend Kate, played by Tea Leoni. Earlier Jack had broken up with Kate in order to pursue success. But now, in this bewildering new life he finds himself a tire salesman, married to Kate with two kids. He comes to realize how much he loves Kate and the kids, yet he tries to get back to the wealth of his old life. He is eventually offered his old Wall Street job. Kate, who loves their life together, wants no part of it. But in a climactic scene she tells him how she has what she's always wanted, how happy they all are in their little home, how she doesn't want to disrupt that. But then she says, "If you need this, Jack, then I will give that all up, because I love you and I choose us." In other words, she is willing to sacrifice what she deeply wants, for no other reason than that's what love does.

You know this. Suppose you have a brother or sister who lives near you who says he or she loves you. Imagine that you have to move and you need some help so you call this sibling and ask if they can help. If that sibling says, "Oh, uh, I don't think I can do that. I'm too busy," what would you conclude? That love is pretty shallow at best. I know this because I hate moving people, and we've had to do a lot of moving our kids in the past year plus. Now my brother is moving here. Recently he asked if I could help him move. "Hey, I love you bro, but that's a bridge too far." Just kidding. We all know an attitude like that is not love. Love says, "Of course I'll help." That's what I did. Love sacrifices, and if you won't make the sacrifice you simply don't love.

Now we see some measure of the depth of God's love for us. There is no way that we will ever understand the magnitude of the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for us. That's because we cannot comprehend what he left just to live on this planet. That alone is an infinite price to pay. But then came what happened to him on this earth. The rejection, the shame, the pain, the torture of the cross is unfathomable. It says the depth of his love is infinitely beyond our ability to comprehend.

December 4, 2006, Pfc. Ross McGinnis of the 1st Infantry Division was on a combat patrol with his unit in Adhamiyah in northeast Baghdad. He was manning the .50 caliber machine gun of a Humvee when a grenade flew into the vehicle. McGinnis yelled, "grenade!" to warn his comrades. He just needed to jump out the

gunner's hatch to protect himself from the blast. Instead he dropped down and fell on the grenade, absorbing the explosion with his body. His Medal of Honor citation says, "Private McGinnis' gallant action directly saved four men from certain serious injury or death. Private First Class McGinnis' extraordinary heroism and selflessness at the cost of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army."

Do you think the 4 men in that Humvee think Pfc McGinnis cared about them? My guess is not a week goes by that they don't think about what he did for them. I suspect they will be grateful to him for the rest of their lives and will be both humbled and saddened by what it cost him. They will never question whether Ross McGinnis loved them.

If the measure of love is sacrifice, then no one, no one, has ever loved like Jesus Christ loved, for no one ever has or ever will sacrifice the way he did. He did it for you. Not for a nameless, faceless mass of people. He did it for individuals, because he loves individuals. He loves you and me and he has proven it beyond doubt.

CHRIST'S DEATH GIVES NEW PURPOSE

Paul said something interesting next. "We are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died." Wait, what? Didn't you expect him to say something along the lines of "one died for all and therefore we all live"? What did he mean when he said, "therefore all died"? When Jesus died we didn't all die. He was the only one who died, wasn't he? This is weird.

Some quote Romans 6:3-4 where Paul wrote, "Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." They say in a theological sense we died with Christ.

That is true. But I don't think it's what Paul meant here. I think he explains what he means in verse 15 when he says, "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them." When we put our faith in Jesus our old way of living that was all about ourselves dies. We now are to live not as we used to. That life is over. Now instead of living for ourselves, we are to live for him. This new life isn't about promoting self, protecting self, defending self, indulging self, serving self, fulfilling self or proving self, it is about one thing—serving the one who loves us so much that he died for us.

One of the great stories of western culture is Alexander Dumas' *The Three Musketeers*. Usually in every version of that story we hear the motto, "all for one and one for all." This passage turns that around into an even better motto. It is "one for all," meaning Jesus died for us all, then "all for one." Since he died for us, let us all live for him, not for ourselves. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Paul wrote, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

There are people in this world who obviously understand this. In his book *Renegade*, Vince Antonucci relates something he heard from Ajai Lall, a missionary in India. Lall met with a group of Christians that live in a city in India where religious extremists set 285 churches on fire and killed 2000 Christians in August of 2008. One woman related her story of how a group of men burst into her house on the night of August 23, 2008, tied up her husband, who was a pastor, and her. Then they proceeded to rape their daughters. When they were done they cut the daughters into pieces. Then they tied this woman's husband to a large rock and threw him into a lake where he drowned. Ajai was stunned, but the woman went on to tell him she was committed to doing God's will and was willing to suffer for it. All the others in the group agreed. A pastor spoke for the group and said, "We will not compromise. We will continue to share Jesus Christ...we will choose persecution instead of praise. We will choose harassment instead of honor. We will choose abuse instead of applause. We will choose death instead of dignity. Because we want to continue to live and be witnesses of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This is a new and radical focus for life, a brand new purpose for living. The life of Rick Myatt lived for making Rick comfortable, approved, applauded, happy and safe is over. The life of Rick is now to be about Jesus.

There are some strange stories of major league baseball players suddenly developing an odd inability to do a routine act. In one famous one a successful major league catcher suddenly couldn't seem to throw the ball back to the pitcher. I think I've had something like that happen. In the past few years I seem to have developed a parking glitch. I get in a parking lot and can't decide which parking space to take. I get indecisive, hesitate, and finally do a bad job of parking. At one point Laurie said, "Rick, you are make me nervous when you are parking because I don't know what you're going to do." I've always been a safe driver. Somehow her comment pricked my pride. My wounded ego instantly wanted to fire back a sarcastic, "Oh, I'm so sorry that my terrible parking is frightening you, O Queen of the Parking Lot, O Mistress of the Marked Spaces." Before I could say a word the

love of Christ showed up, flashed a badge and said, “Myatt, your mouth and your thoughts are under arrest.” The love of Christ controlled my mouth. I didn’t say anything, but then came the thought, “does a dead man care what someone thinks of his parking? No. So the important question here is what will serve Christ? What will pass on his love for you?” When I finally spoke I said something along the lines of, “Yeah, I don’t know why I do that. I’m sorry that this weird thing causes you concern.”

Having the love of Christ control us so we live only for Christ will make us truly antifragile. **What makes us fragile most of all is our obsession with ourselves.** I will repeat that. What makes us fragile is our obsession with ourselves. I am fragile. I can easily be threatened, offended, discomfited and intimidated because if I am about myself, there is so much that can be inflicted on me, so much that can be taken from me. But if I am no longer about me, but about Jesus Christ, all of those threats become opportunities. There is no more threat.

A simple question to ask yourself is how fragile is a dead person? They aren’t very fragile. Nothing can hurt them anymore. I am concerned about Carissa. She is separated from her husband by thousands of miles because he is deployed to Afghanistan. When he comes home at the end of this year she is moving with him to a foreign country called Mississippi. I am really concerned about Michael. We were talking to him this week when our conversation was interrupted by a couple of massive explosions. I am concerned about Anna in her new job and Toby and his application to medical school. I’m not concerned about our son, Joel. He died and is safe with the Lord. I do not fear that something bad might happen to him.

As long as we are about ourselves we will live under constant threat. There is so much bad that can happen to us. But if we have died, then, like Joel, nothing more is threatened. As Paul says in Colossians 3:3 “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”

In Christ we have a new purpose. It is to live for Jesus. It is to point people to him. It is to become like him. It is to love others with the unconditional love that he has for us. We can do that no matter what our station, our status or our condition. We can do that no matter what may happen. Nothing can threaten the pursuit of that purpose.

As a kid when I saw the story of the Three Musketeers I wanted to be a heroic musketeer. Now I can be. **One for all, all for one.** I can live out that motto, and nothing can stop me.