

Session 5: Who Do We Share With: Our Mission Field

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (NIV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Key Idea: What God has Done for Us:

Ezekiel 11:19-20 (NIV)

¹⁹ I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. ²⁰ Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.

God doesn't make bad people good, instead he does something even greater by making dead people come alive through the power of the gospel. And he has done this for each of us who call ourselves a follower of Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions:

- How does the transformation we experience as new creations in Christ affect our motivation to share the gospel with others?
- In what ways has your life changed since becoming a follower of Jesus? How can you use that to inspire others?

Key Idea: What God has Entrusted Us With:

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

God has saved us, for the opportunity to serve him. In fact, he has already created situations for us to glorify him in what we say and do. As Christians then, we should constantly be praying for God to show us the good works he has in store for us.

Discussion Questions:

- Considering Ephesians 2:10, what are some unique opportunities or relationships God has placed in your life to share the gospel?

- How can you make the most of these opportunities? Are there relationships in your life you need to be more intentional about sharing the gospel?

Key Idea: Our New Identity and Purpose:

2 Timothy 1:9 (NIV)

⁹He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

As Christians we have been saved and now have a new identity in Christ, to live a life that is holy and set apart from the rest of the world. This changes every part of our lives, from how we talk to

Discussion Questions:

- Based on 2 Timothy 1:9 and our new identity in Christ, how should our purpose of making disciples affect the way we see ourselves?
- How can you remind yourself of your new identity and purpose daily? What are some practical ways this can impact your actions and choices?

Application Questions:

- Each one of us naturally proclaims what we are passionate about. (i.e. coffee, work outs, sports teams, etc...) What steps do you need to take personally to become so passionate about God's greatness that you can't help but share the gospel?
- Have you come to terms with the fact that you are the instrument of God to announce His offer of grace to the people you will encounter this week? What will you do to make the most of those opportunities this week?
- Get real:
 - Simply embrace the fact that some will be offended when you share the gospel. After all, Christ, who is perfect, shared the gospel – and they crucified Him. (John 15:18-21)

- Is there some sin in your life from which you need to repent that makes you feel like a hypocrite when telling others about this “abundant life” (John 10:10) that you’re not living?
- Here’s great news: from God’s perspective, you succeed every single time that you share the gospel because:
 - You are being a faithful ambassador (2 Cor 5:20) and your obedience pleases God (John 14:21)
 - You share God’s Word which never returns empty without accomplishing what God set out for it to do (Isaiah 55:11)
 - The Holy Spirit of God will use the word of God to convince people of their sin and God’s justice and judgment (John 16:8) – whether they admit it or not.

Ask every person to commit to pray for the opportunity to share the gospel with at least 1 person over the next week. Be sure to set aside time next week to share and celebrate the results.

Commentary

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Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

a. **If anyone:** This is a promise for **anyone. Anyone!** It doesn’t matter what class, what race, what nationality, what language, or what level of intelligence. **Anyone** can be a new creation in Jesus Christ.

b. **Is in Christ:** This is a promise for **anyone who is in Christ.** This is not a promise for those who are in themselves, or in the religion of men, or in someone or something else. This is for those **in Christ.**

c. **He is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.** Paul here teaches the great principle of *regeneration*. Jesus Christ changes those who come to Him by faith and who are **in Christ.** The saved are not “*just forgiven.*” They are changed into a **new creation.**

- It is unfair for us to expect those who are not **in Christ** to live as if they were a **new creation.** However, it is *not* unfair to expect a changed life from people who say they are Christians. “I know no language, I believe there is none, that can express a greater or more thorough and more radical renewal, than that which is expressed in the term, ‘a new creature.’” (Spurgeon)
- However, being a **new creation** doesn’t mean that we are perfect. It means that we *are* changed and that we are *being* changed.

d. **He is a new creation:** Who makes us a **new creation**? This is something God alone can do in us. This isn't just "turning over a new leaf" or "getting your act together." Yet the life of a **new creation** is not something God does *for us* but *in us*. So, we are told to *put off... the old man* and to *put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness* (Ephesians 4:22-24).

- Being a **new creation** is a gift from God received by faith. "God is surely the author of the second creation as he was of the first." (Harris) "A phrase which argueth the greatest change imaginable, and such a one as can be wrought in the soul by no other power than the power of God." (Poole)
- The work of a **new creation** is even greater than God's work of creating the world. "My brethren, it was more difficult, if such terms are ever applicable to Omnipotence, it was more difficult to create a Christian than to create a world. What was there to begin with when God made the world? There was nothing; but nothing could not stand in God's way – it was at least passive. But, my brethren, in our hearts, while there was nothing that could help God, there was much that could and did oppose him. Our stubborn wills, our deep prejudices, our ingrained love of iniquity, all these, great God, opposed thee, and aimed at thwarting thy designs... Yes, great God, it was great to make a world, but greater to create a new creature in Jesus Christ." (Spurgeon)
- Living as a **new creation** is something God works in us, using our will and our choices. So, we must both *receive the gift* of being a **new creation** and be challenged to *live the life* of a **new creation**. All this is God's work in us that we must submit to. This reminds us that at its root, Christianity is all about what *God did for us*, not what we can or should *do for God*. "Beloved, if you have no more religion than you have worked out in yourself, and no more grace than you have found in your nature, you have none at all. A supernatural work of the Holy Ghost must be wrought in every one of us, if we would see the face of God with acceptance." (Spurgeon)

e. **All things have become new** is the language of God's perfect, recreated work (Revelation 21:5). God wants to do a **new** thing in our life.

- "The man is not only *mended*, but he is *new made*... there is a *new creation*, which God himself owns as his workmanship, and which he can look on and pronounce *very good*." (Clarke)

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

a. **All things are of God:** Paul soars high here and wants the Corinthian Christians to know that he is writing of things that **are of God**, not of man. This work of *a new creation* and our eternal destiny are works **of God**, not something we have to earn and achieve.

b. **God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ:** God initiated this ministry of reconciliation, even though He is the innocent party in the estranged relationship. He **reconciled us to Himself**; we did not reconcile ourselves to Him.

- Importantly, God did this **through Jesus Christ**. God did not **reconcile us to Himself** by neglecting His holy justice, or "giving in" to sinful, rebellious humanity. He did it by an amazing,

righteous, sacrifice of love. God demands not one bit less justice and righteousness from man under Jesus, but the demand has been satisfied **through Jesus Christ**.

c. **And has given us the ministry of reconciliation:** Having reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, now God expects us to take up the **ministry of reconciliation** and has therefore **committed to us the word of reconciliation**.

- Reconciliation comes by **the word of reconciliation**. God uses the preached word to reconcile men and women to Himself.

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d. **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself:** Through all the terrors of the cross, God the Father worked in and with God the Son, **reconciling the world to Himself**. The Father and the Son worked *together* on the cross.

- **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself** is all the more amazing when understood in light of what happened on the cross. At some point before Jesus died, before the veil was torn in two, before Jesus cried out "*it is finished*," an awesome spiritual transaction took place. The Father set upon the Son all the guilt and wrath our sin deserved, and Jesus bore it in Himself perfectly, totally satisfying the justice of God for us.
- As horrible as the physical suffering of Jesus was, this spiritual suffering – the act of being judged for sin in our place – was what Jesus really dreaded about the cross. This was the *cup* – the cup of God's righteous wrath – that He trembled at drinking (Luke 22:39-46, Psalm 75:8, Isaiah 51:17, Jeremiah 25:15). On the cross Jesus became, as it were, an enemy of God who was judged and forced to drink the cup of the Father's fury so that we would not have to drink that cup.
- Yet, at the same time, Paul makes it clear that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself**. They worked together. Though Jesus was being *treated* as if He were an enemy of God, He was not. Even as Jesus was punished as if He were a sinner, He performed the most holy service unto God the Father ever offered. This is why Isaiah can say, *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him* (Isaiah 53:10). In and of itself, the suffering of the Son did not please the Father, but as it accomplished the work of **reconciling the world to Himself**, it completely pleased God the Father.
- Robertson rightly comments: "We may not dare to probe too far into this mystery of Christ's suffering on the Cross, but this fact throws some light on the tragic cry of Jesus just before he died: 'My God, My God, why didst thou forsake me?'" In that cry (Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34), Jesus expresses both His partnership with God the Father (*My God*) and the agonizing feeling of receiving the wrath of God that we deserved.

e. **Not imputing their trespasses to them:** Why? Was it because God went soft and gave mankind a "Get Out of Hell Free" card? Not at all. Instead, it is because our trespasses *were* imputed to Jesus. The justice our sin demanded is satisfied, not excused.

- If God sets aside His wrath or His justice to save sinners, then the cross, instead of being a demonstration of love, is an exhibition of unspeakable cruelty and injustice, and of one man's misguided attempt at do-goodism. If sin could just be *excused*, then it never needed to be *satisfied*.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

a. **Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ:** Paul sees that he serves in a foreign land as the representative of a King. The King has a message, and Paul is delivering that message **as though God were pleading through us.**

- There is so much to the idea of being **ambassadors!** An ambassador does not speak to please his audience, but the King who sent him. An ambassador does not speak on his own authority; his own opinions or demands mean little. He simply says what he has been commissioned to say. But an ambassador is more than a messenger; he is also a representative, and the honor and reputation of his country are in his hands.

b. **Ambassadors:** This is a glorious title for Paul and the other apostles. However, it is not more glorious or more stunning than the thought of God, out of love, **pleading** to man. Why should God plead for us?

c. **We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God:** As an ambassador Paul makes a simple, strong, direct plea: **be reconciled to God.**

- This makes it clear that the work of reconciliation mentioned previously in the chapter does not work apart from our will and our choice. Who are the ones **reconciled to God?** Those who have responded to Jesus' plea, made through His ambassadors.
- This makes it clear that it is *we* who must be **reconciled to God**, not He to us. *We* are the party in the wrong.
- Who is Paul imploring? The **you** of **we implore you** was added by the translators. Paul may have said, "*We implore the whole world on Christ's behalf,*" or he may have said, "*We implore you Corinthian Christians on Christ's behalf.*" The thought is valid either way, and both ideas may be in mind.

d. **Be reconciled:** We are not commanded to do the work of reconciliation between man and God. He has done the work; it is merely ours to embrace and receive. "It is not so much reconcile yourselves as 'be reconciled.' Yield yourselves to him who round you now the bands of a man would cast, drawing you with cords of love because he was given for you... Submit yourselves. Yield to the grasp of those hands which were nailed to the cross for you." (Spurgeon)

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

a. **Him who knew no sin:** The idea that any man could be sinless was foreign to Jewish thinking (Ecclesiastes 8:5). Despite that, no one challenged Jesus when He claimed to be sinless (John 8:46).

b. **He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us:** Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul carefully chooses his words. He does not say Jesus was made *to be a sinner*. Jesus never became a *sinner*, but He did become **sin for us**. Even His becoming sin was a righteous act of love, not an act of sin.

- Jesus was not a sinner, even on the cross. On the cross, the Father treated Him as if He were a sinner, yet all the while, sin was "outside" of Jesus not "inside" Him and it was not a part of His nature (as it is with us).
- "Christ was not guilty, and could not be made guilty; but he was treated as if he were guilty, because he willed to stand in the place of the guilty. Yea, he was not only treated as a sinner, but he was treated as if he had been sin itself in the abstract. This is an amazing utterance. The sinless one was made to be sin." (Spurgeon)
- "I do not say that our substitute endured a hell, that were unwarrantable. I will not say that he endured either the exact punishment for sin, or an equivalent for it; but I do say that what he

endured rendered to the justice of God a vindication of his law more clear and more effectual than would have been rendered to it by the damnation of sinners for whom he died.” (Spurgeon)

- “We obviously stand at the brink of a great mystery and our understanding of it can only be minimal.” (Kruse)

c. **He made Him:** We note that well. This was the work of God Himself! The Father and the Son (and the Spirit as well) were in perfect cooperation in the work on the cross. This means that the work of atonement on the cross was *the work of God*. “If God did it, it is well done. I am not careful to defend an act of God: let the man who dares accuse his Maker think what he is at. If God himself provided the sacrifice, be you sure that he has accepted it.” (Spurgeon)

d. **That we might become the righteousness of God in Him:** Jesus *took* our sin, but *gave* us His **righteousness**. It is a tremendous exchange, all prompted by the love of God for us!

- “Not only does the believer receive from God a right standing before him on the basis of faith in Jesus (Phil 3:9), but here Paul says that ‘in Christ’ the believer in some sense actually shares the righteousness that characterizes God himself.” (Harris)
- **The righteousness of God:** “What a grand expression! He makes us righteous through the righteousness of Jesus; nay, not only makes us righteous, but *righteousness*; nay, that is not all, he makes us the righteousness *of God*; that is higher than the righteousness of Adam in the garden, it is more divinely perfect than angelic perfection.” (Spurgeon)
- “The righteousness which Adam had in the garden was perfect, but it was the righteousness of man: ours is the righteousness of God.” (Spurgeon)
- This is the whole truth of justification stated simply: Our sins were on Jesus, and His righteousness is on us. And, “As Christ was not made sin by any sin inherent in him, so neither are we made righteous by any righteousness inherent in us, but by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us.” (Poole)