



**2 Corinthians 5:14-21** - <sup>14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

***You're a new creation!***

*-Reconciled to God*

*-Compelled by Christ's love*



*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!  
(1 John 3:1)*

Growing up as the number 12 child in a family of 14 kids, I know a thing or two about hand-me-downs. Big brother grew out of his t-shirt and jeans? Guess who gets to wear it now? Me! My aunt and uncle just dropped off a big black garbage bag full of clothes that don't my cousins anymore? It's like Christmas – Part 2! Once, when I was in about 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade, my older brother went on a Spring break trip with some friends, and he came back with a huge box of free promotional t-shirts; a whole box of exactly the same t-shirts. There was a stretch of time in my childhood (longer than I'd care to admit) where I just rotated through that box of t-shirts, and I thought it was the coolest thing. I know a thing or two about hand-me-downs. But sometimes, I would get a brand new t-shirt or pair of pants, and it was pretty exciting. It's not like the new clothes were any warmer or more stylish or all that much different from the hand-me-downs, but to have something new was exciting. Because just getting something new is just plain exciting! We love getting new things, don't we? A new house, a new car, a new computer, a new phone. Even something small like a new pair of socks can add more joy to our day than it really probably should. We love getting new stuff. But do you ever think that maybe our love of getting new stuff betrays a deeper desire for something new – a new you?

The calendar has turned to January once again, which means it's time to at least play along, watch, and wait as statistically 92% of New Year's Resolutions will falter and fail. A great majority of New Year's Resolutions seem to revolve around this desire for something new; a new you. But whether you want to save a few dollars or lose a few pounds – a tighter budget or a tauter beltline won't bring about the "new you" you're looking for. No resolution or budget or diet will be able to fill the gospel-shaped hole in our hearts. Only Jesus can do that for you. Only Jesus has done that for you. That's what the Apostle Paul wants to impress on us today – You are a new creation! You are reconciled to God. You are compelled by Christ's love.

Paul writes, **If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!** You are a new creation – a whole new you! But why the need for a new you? When God created the world, he created human beings as perfect creations living in perfect harmony with their perfect God. But then came the devil's whisper, a little lie, a small bite, and earth shattering consequences. Adam and Eve fell into sin and ever since that day this world and the people in it have been a slaves to the vicious cycle of sin and death...sin and death. Ever since that day, the once perfect relationship with a holy God has been completely destroyed. The prophet Isaiah said, **"Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you."** Do you see what that's saying? Every time you put anything or anyone ahead of God and his Word, you're driving a wedge between you and God. Every time you disrespect authority or even have a hateful thought, the insurmountable chasm grows. Every time your mind or your mouse wanders into territory that degrades God's gift of sexuality meant to be celebrated within the confines of marriage, the separation, the estrangement, the enmity with a holy God only grows. This is what sin does. It destroys relationships – between people, but infinitely more dreadful, between us and God. What God had intended to be a perfectly peaceful and harmonious relationship with us, his human creatures, we've broken. And because of that, we rightly deserve God's eternal punishment.

If that's what we deserve, because of our sin (and it is), then what a shocking thing we hear in 2 Corinthians 5. **All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.** God *reconciled* us to himself – what once had been two warring and opposing sides – are once again brought into a perfect coexistence. But how? What about all the sin that stained our eternal record before a holy God? **The wages of sin is**



**death**, and we're still standing. So what gives? **For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.** When Jesus died for the sins of the world, it's as if the entire world died. That truth carries with it a complete reversal of our status before God. Think of it this way: if someone got the idea that you were dead, but you weren't, that would change everything for you. If somehow, in the cloud storage or in the government's vast computer network, they ever got the idea that you died, it would change everything for you. You would have the legal standing of those who are dead, which could have some perks. If you owed back-taxes, the IRS wouldn't come knocking on your door to collect a debt, because you're dead. If you had been sentenced to serve time in jail for some crime you committed, no one would hunt you down and drag you to prison, because you're dead. Death brings a complete change of status. Paul says, **one [Christ] died for all and therefore all died.** As far as God is concerned, it's all over. Sin's just wages (death) have been paid in full in the death of Jesus Christ. The condemned humanity has become the forgiven humanity. The guilty sinners have been declared "not guilty" for Jesus' sake. The eternal death sentence that stood over the heads of each and every sinner has been reversed in Jesus.

And in case we didn't get it the first time, Paul says it again. **God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us. The very thing a holy God can't stand, the thing that deserves death and his justice requires him to punish, the thing that sickens him and fills him with holy rage – that's what he makes his only begotten Son, for you. God needed to punish sin. So he would gather all sin of all time to one terrible spot to and pour out his full wrath against it – who would've thought that one terrible spot would be the body and soul of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Jesus became sin itself for you. Do you see what that means? Your lust, your lies, your addiction, your pride, your temper, your unfaithfulness, your laziness, your gossip, your slander, your idolatry is nailed there on the cross; to be killed, crucified, and buried as the Son of God, Jesus Christ dies and rises in your place. Sin needed to be punished and paid for. Instead of demanding that awful price from you, your God put it all on his Son, your Savior. *Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, and I am your sin. You took upon yourself what was mine, and you have given me what was yours. You became what you were not, and have declared me to be what I was not.* You have been given the robe of Christ's righteousness to wear every day of your life. And that robe isn't the thread-bare hand-me-down, because you don't have a bargain basement kind of salvation. To reconcile you to himself cost the eternal God everything – it cost him his one and only Son, Jesus. That's love – the love that reconciled you to God; the love of Christ that now compels you. Compels us to do what?

Love we show to others is usually proportional to the love they've shown to us. If I'm checking out at the gas station and find myself a buck short of my total and you hand me a dollar, I'll shake your hand. If I'm out of town for a while and you get my mail and water my plants, I'll give you a restaurant gift card. If you pay my rent for a year, I'll kiss your feet...don't believe me? Try me! You see how the love we show is often conditioned by the love we've received. So how about this one – the Son of God leaves behind the eternal, unending praise of angels and swaps it for some moos, baahs, and bleats as he's born in a stable; he leaves behind his almighty throne of power in heaven and trades it for a nothingness existence in a backwater province of a hostile world. And most of all he makes the most unfathomable exchange of all – he trades his perfect, spotless righteousness before God and takes in its place all of our sins and pays for them by suffering the wrath of God, so that you and I would never have to. Talk about love! You give me a dollar, I'll shake your hand. You take care of my stuff, I'll buy you a gift card. But you lay down your life for me, you take away my sins, you suffer the hell I deserved? There is nothing I wouldn't do for you. You're a new creation! So now what?



[God] has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. Everything in my life as a new creation ultimately seeks to glorify God and proclaim his message of reconciliation as his ambassador. Think about that...God uses you as a representative! You might be thinking, "He could've picked a better ambassador," and you'd be right – at least based on the way we usually think about qualifications. But look again and see the types of people God calls for his purposes: The LORD God wants to bring a powerful empire to its knees in repentance, so why not send an army of great and persuasive prophets to preach? Instead, he taps Jonah, who heard his assignment, turned tail, and ran. Jesus is going to hand pick twelve devoted followers to spread his word. Why not head over to the religious elites and those who've been trained in the Scriptures every day? Instead, whom does he call in the gospel lesson today? Fishermen! God has a message of reconciliation that applies to every person on this planet. Why not put that all-important message on the lips of angel messengers who will light up the sky and make the earth shake? Instead he co-opts your lips and your lives. He magnifies the message of his grace through the messengers he chooses. Even the Apostle Paul, arguably the greatest missionary of all time, knew his human limitations. In the previous chapter (2 Corinthians 4), Paul referred to himself as a "jar of clay." Cracked, crushed, perplexed, and weak looking. But that didn't matter. What mattered was the treasure inside that frail pottery – the gospel. "God could've picked a better ambassador," we think. But that's not the way God thinks. He chooses to bring his glorious gospel message of reconciliation to the world through you and me – sinners who deserved nothing from God, but who have freely received everything in Christ.

So share it! **From now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view.** As new creations, we see in our fellow human beings, not just flesh and bone, but eternal souls for whom the Son of God shed his blood. They've been reconciled to God through Christ, and they need to know it, too, otherwise it won't do them any good. **Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.** So speak the good news as Christ's ambassador! Do you know someone who says she's 'done with church'? I bet you do. You're a new creation, so you can be the one who tells her that God isn't done with her – his reconciling love, his new mercies, his forgiveness, all for her. Do you have a neighbor who feels like God is so distant and so far-removed from my life? I bet you do. You're a new creation, so you can be the one who tells him that God isn't far-removed. In fact, he is so close, he took on our human flesh to be our brother and bear our sins. Do you have a church that longs to share the gospel with more people right here in this town? I know you do. You're a new creation, so you can be an ambassador for Christ as you joyfully jump in and pray for God's blessings on our ministry here. Why? Not because you have to, but because we're new creations. Christ's love compels us, and we couldn't think of doing anything else than sharing that love with others. So, rejoice and give thanks this New Year and each new day that in Christ you are reconciled to God; you are compelled by his love. You are a new creation!

Amen

*To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore!*

*(Jude 24-25)*