

A New Creation – 2 Cor 5:14-21

2 Cor 5:14-21. We're in the middle of a Christmas series called All Things New. Because at Christmas we *give* all things new, reminding us that God is *making* all things new. Or at least it *should* remind us. Especially when people give like *this*. (Photo) A couple in Tennessee. I don't know what the story is, but somebody must have fallen asleep at the computer with their finger on the "Buy Now" button. Crazy.

But the thing is, God's even more lavish. Not only *giving* us new things, but *making* us new. Us. At Christmas, God gave us the gift of Jesus, to make of us *a new creation*.

➤ It's found in 2 Cor 5. Starting in v14. With the reason Paul and his companions talk and act like they do. [14] *For the love of Christ controls us* [he said], *because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died*; [He's speaking to believers; the church. Saying that when we believe Jesus died for our sins, it's as though we died when he died. His death was our death.] *One has died for all, therefore all have died* [all believers].

[15] *And he died for all, that those who live* [those who have life to the full and life forever] *might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised*. [Jesus died and rose again that we would too. And live like it. For him.]

[16] *From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh*. [We don't look at people or think of them according to their *physical* attributes. What they look like. What they sound like. What color of skin they have. What they own. What they do.]

Even though [v16] *we once regarded Christ according to the flesh* [as if he's just a man], *we regard him thus no longer*. [Because *he* lived for the Father more than anyone alive.]

[17] *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation* [a new person]. *The old has passed away* [our old way of living and thinking]; *behold, the new has come* [new desires, new passions, new ways].

[18] *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation*; [19] *that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation*. [20] *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God*.

[21] *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin* [God made Jesus to be sin], *so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*.

Paul ends where he starts. V21 says he *became* sin, our sin, *for our sake*. And V14 says he *died* for us; *one has died for all*. Put those bookends together, and you get this:

Jesus took on our sin and died for it (v14, 21)

Jesus took on our sin, v21; and died for it; for us; v14. Or as the Apostle Peter says it – *He himself* [Jesus himself] *bore our sins in his body on the tree* [on the cross] (1 Peter 2:24a). Every sin you've ever committed or ever will commit, Jesus took *on* himself and *in* himself, and died for. And therein lies the *foundation* of his new creation work. That Jesus died for our sin.

Unfortunately, some people don't buy it. "I don't need that," they say. "I'm not a sinner. I'm not that bad. Leave me alone." Except the Bible says *all have sinned* (Rom 3:23). And *none* are righteous; *not one* (Rom 3:10). Not even *one* person is righteous. Meaning we've not only *sinned*, but we're all *sinful*. If we're not righteous, we're sinful.

Meanwhile, God is absolutely perfect in holiness and justice and can't turn a blind eye to it. He can't and won't. Especially so because every sin is an infinite offense against *him*; contrary to his word and his way. Every time you sin, even against another person, it's ultimately against God.

And that requires payment. Punishment. In the form of death no less. Sin is that big of a deal to God. He's that holy and just. Someone has to pay for it. *We* have to.

But his love, allows for a substitute. So God sent us the gift of his Son at Christmas. His one and only Son, to die in our place. So we don't *have* to die and suffer for all eternity. It's *foundational*. Jesus took on our sin and died for it.

➤ But it only applies, if you admit, believe, repent, and receive.

You have to **admit** that you've sinned. You have to *admit* you're a sinner. That's where it starts. If you want God to make you new, you have to admit your sin and sinfulness.

And **believe** in Jesus. That he loves you and died for you. In your place, for your sin. So you could be saved from the consequences. You have to believe in Jesus and what he did.

And **repent**. Asking God to *forgive* you, and committing to *turn* from your sin; stop it. That's repentance; seeking forgiveness and turning away. *Repent and believe* Jesus said.

And **receive** him into your heart and life. To follow him as Lord. And be a part of God's family.

Jesus took on our sin and died for it, to make us new. But you have to believe. Admit, believe, repent, and receive. And I'm going to give you an opportunity to do that before we're done. To pray with me, and experience God's new creation work yourself.

That's verses 14 and 21. The bookends. And in between, we find some of these things spelled out. 4 *reasons* Jesus took on our sin and died for it. The first, is . . .

That we might:

• Receive God's righteousness and live like it (v15, 21)

V15 – *He died for all, that those who live* [those who are *saved*] *might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised*. God's new creation work in you is not meant to just keep you out of hell while you live like the devil. We're saved, to live for Christ; *for him who for* [our] *sake died and was raised*. We're saved to do what *he* wants; accomplish *his* purposes; glorify *him*.

Which is flat-out impossible apart from the righteousness of God. The power of his holiness. No righteousness, no *ability* to live for Christ. No righteousness, no strength. No righteousness, no desire. V21 again. *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*. We might have *his* nature instead of ours. His *virtue* instead of our vice. His holiness instead of our sinfulness.

Jesus took our sin, so that when we believe, we receive God's *righteousness*. The greatest exchange in all the world. Our sin, for his righteousness. Our filthiness, for his holiness. Our selfishness for his godliness. Talk about Christmas; and a new creation. The only thing left to do is live like it. Receive God's righteousness and live like it. That's the first reason he died for our sin.

The second, is that we might . . .

• **Be reconciled to God and talk about it (v18-20)**

V18 – *All this is from God [this dying, saving, exchanging, and changing], who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

Reconciliation is the removal of enmity between us and God, to bring us together. Enmity due to our *rebellion* and his wrath; for our sin. When we're reconciled, God's wrath is appeased and our rebellion is forgiven, to join our hearts.

And we need it.

1. We *need* to be reconciled.

5 truths about reconciliation. We need it, because in our sin, we're *enemies* of God; Rom 5:10. We're opposed to him. With different purposes, different methods, and different ends.

2. God does it.

Not us, but God. V18 – *God . . . reconciled us to himself. He did it. And v19 the same. God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. We don't do the reconciling, God does. By showing us mercy and forgiving our sin. And coming to us; like he did at Christmas. And cleansing us. God does it.*

3. We're not saved to sit.

Having been reconciled ourselves, v18 says that God *gave us the ministry of reconciliation*. The role of serving, for the purpose of saving. That's the ministry of reconciliation. It's anything that points people to Christ. From ushering to preaching; greeting to counseling. Loving the lost. When God saves us, he gives us a job.

4. We're meant to speak up.

V19c – *In Christ [i.e. through the death and resurrection of Christ] God was . . . entrusting to us the message of reconciliation*. Not just the ministry, but the message. Implying that we need talk about it. Speak up. Spread the word. We're not saved to sit, and we're not saved to be silent.

5. We represent.

We are *ambassadors for Christ* [v20], *God making his appeal through us*. Far from lone rangers, we're representatives. Conduits. Microphones. For God to speak *through* us in how we live and what we say.

5 truths. And if you're still at *odds* with God, if you haven't admitted your sin and received his righteousness, *I implore you* [I urge you] . . . *be reconciled*.

Third, Jesus took on our sin and died for it, that we might . . .

• **Be united with Christ and treasure it (v17, 21)**

Because it's in Christ and through Christ that so many of these things apply. V17 – *If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation*. In Christ, as in *united* with him; *connected* to him; in *union* with him. It's a phrase used all *over* the New Testament to convey a soul-to-soul *relationship* with Jesus. At the spiritual level. He in us and we in him.

Same for v21 – *He made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [in Christ] we might become the righteousness of God*. What a treasure. Jesus took on flesh and lived, to take on sin and die, that we might be united with him, and new. United with him, and changed.

➤ If you don't treasure that, you don't get it. Like having a shoebox full of old baseball cards and never looking at them. Or losing track of them like I did. My *brothers*, 6 and 8 years older than me, had collected them, and I ended up with them when they left the house. Cards from the 1960's and a few from the 50's. Roberto Clemente, Ernie Banks, Hank Aaron, Johnny Bench; I remember.

And to this day, I don't know what happened to them. Because I didn't pay much attention to them, I didn't keep track of them, and I certainly didn't treasure them. I didn't know what I had, and they were out of sight out of mind.

Make sure that's not Jesus. Make sure you *treasure* your relationship with him. And treasure *him*. For who he is and all he does.

And last . . .

• **Be a new creation and show it (v16-17)**

Jesus took on our sin and died for it, that we might be a new creation and show it. V16. Having been saved and changed, Paul says – *From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer*.

[17] *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation [a new person, a new man, a new woman]. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come*.

If you believe in Jesus, if you've admitted and repented of your sin, if you've received him into your life; you're a new creation.

The question is, does it show? Do people *see* the new creation you are? Or do some of the habits of your old nature overshadow it? A foul mouth. Wandering eyes. Bad attitudes. Drinking too much. Eating too much. What *shows* in your life? Your new nature, or your old?

I hope it's your *new*. And if it's not, I hope you admit it, and turn to Jesus. Like the couple in this video. **(God @ Work – Brandon and Angelique Gilbert)**

Summary

Jesus took on our sin and died for it, that we might be united with him, reconciled to God, and made new. If you want that, if you know you need that, pray with me right now.

Prayer of salvation

God, I *admit*. I admit that I'm a sinner. I've sinned, and I'm sinful.

But I *believe*. I believe in Jesus. That he died for my sin so I don't have to, and rose again so I can too. I believe.

And I *repent*. I repent of my sin and sinfulness. I'm sorry for it and want your forgiveness. I want to live for *you* from now on.

So come into my life. I *receive* you now as Lord and Savior. To be united and reconciled forever and ever. I admit, I believe, I repent, and I receive.

Opportunity to Respond

Prayer – Father, thank you for making us new. New creations out of old. Bless those who just prayed. Seal them with your Spirit. Protect them from the evil one. Guard their heart and spur them on.

You Are Loved