

Becoming New
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2 Corinthians 5:16-21; 6:1-2

Opening: Becoming a new YOU! Remember the TV show (2002-07) Extreme Makeover? **What was the premise of the show? What was the flaw?**

“You can take the boy out of the country, but...” You can dress an unsaved sinner in Sunday clothes, hand them a Bible, even put them in the choir, but...

- 2 Corinthians 5 is packed with great theology every follower of Christ needs to understand, claim as our own, and rejoice in DAILY!
- Let's read our six verses of focus in chapter five, then we'll look at what they say, what they mean, and how they should change us this week:

¹⁶ 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. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 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, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- When a person becomes a follower of Christ we not only get a new heart we get new “eyes” that change how we see others and how we see Jesus.
- In verse 16 Paul says salvation changes our perspective so we no longer judge others by their outward appearances or even their personality.

- If we are yielded to the Holy Spirit living in us we see others as God sees them: sinners in need of a Savior.
- A truly changed follower of Jesus sees Him as Savior and Lord.
- Verse 17 is one of those verses we should all have highlighted. "...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."
- **How is this different than a "makeover" or "turning over a new leaf?" Why would Paul have been able to testify to how this works?**

Acts 9:1–2 (ESV)

9 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord,

Acts 9:5 (ESV)

5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

Acts 9:20–22 (ESV)

20 And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." 21 And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

- There was no better example of a "new creation" than Paul himself!
- The words "in Christ" describe the status of anyone who repents of sin and trusts Christ as Savior and serves Him as Lord. A believer is literally "clothed" and covered in the righteousness of Christ.
- Regarding the words: 'old things passed away' John MacArthur writes: *"After a person is regenerate, old value systems, priorities, beliefs, loves, and plans are gone. Evil and sin are still present, but the believer sees them in a new perspective, and they no longer control him. [regarding] 'new things have come,' The Gr. grammar indicates that this newness is a continuing condition of fact.*ⁱ
- Think back to your own salvation story or that of others. What changed? Would people who knew you before be surprised at

the change or not notice any change at all? If we are truly “in Christ,” He will live in us.

Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- How can someone be changed completely from the inside out? Verse 18: “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself...”
- **What does reconciliation between two parties mean? What condition would make reconciliation necessary? What has to happen for reconciliation to take place? What is the first step?**
- One of the great challenges in sharing the gospel is convincing people they are “at war” or “enemies” with God, in fact, we can’t. Only the Holy Spirit can convict and convince someone they are enemies with God.
- Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV) tells us: ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
- God “so loved the world” that He initiated reconciliation with humanity. God didn’t declare war; He declared peace -- if only we will respond to his offer of peace.
- Verse 19 describes how God provided for reconciliation with sinners: “...in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them...”
- Then in verse 21: “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 call that “imputation” – a banking term that literally means God the Father took our sin and placed it on Jesus during the crucifixion. Jesus never sinned but the sins of all humanity were placed on Him. When we trust Him for salvation, God exchanges our sin for Christ’s righteousness.
- Psalm 32:1–2a (ESV) says, ¹ *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* ² *Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity...*”

- ESV Study Bible explains: *“In becoming sin “for our sake,” Christ became our substitute—that is, Christ took our sin upon himself and, as our substitute, thereby bore the wrath of God (the punishment that we deserve) in our place (“for our sake”). Thus the technical term for this foundational doctrine of the Christian faith is the substitutionary atonement—that Christ has provided the atoning sacrifice as “our” substitute, for the sins of all who believe (cf. Rom. 3:23–25).”ⁱⁱ*
- Wiersbe writes: *“By trusting themselves to the **reconciling** work of **Christ** alone, people pass from God’s wrath to God’s and from spiritual death to spiritual life. Then **men’s sins** are no longer counted, that is, imputed or reckoned, **against them**, for Christ has taken them on Himself.”ⁱⁱⁱ*
- Bob Utley writes: *“Sin is no longer the barrier between God and mankind, but now it is unbelief, rejection of faith in Christ, unwillingness to respond to God’s offer.”^{iv}*
- Verses 18 and 19 also tell us God has chosen to allow those of us who have been reconciled to peace with Him to be “ministers” of that same reconciliation to those who are not “in Christ.”
- Verse 20 gives us our “job description” – ambassadors for Christ.
- **What does an ambassador do? Whose message do they deliver?**
- Ambassadors have a sense of urgency in our mission. Look at 6:1-2:

2 Corinthians 6:1–2 (ESV)

Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ²For he says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

- If people really understand the consequences of NOT trusting Christ for salvation they will NOT put it off.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Sinful human beings can only be reconciled (at peace) with God by the plan of salvation He provided through Jesus' death on the cross.
- In love for humanity, God took the first step to reconcile with us sacrificing His own son to pay the price for our sins.
- Aren't you glad our Heavenly Father doesn't just offer us a makeover on the outside, or even a plan to "do better?" We should be rejoicing every day that He makes us a "new creation" from the inside out.
- A great takeaway for those of us who are followers of Christ is a convicting quote I read from Bob Utley:

'A lost world is not on the doorstep of a powerless, loveless God, but is on the doorstep of an apathetic, unconcerned church. We have the message; we have the keys of the Kingdom. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit. We have the marching orders of Jesus (cf. Matt. 28:18–20). What will we do?'^x

ⁱ MacArthur, John. The MacArthur Study Bible, NASB (Kindle Locations 285212-285215). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱ Crossway Bibles. ESV Study Bible (Kindle Locations 142354-142358). Good News Publishers/Crossway Books. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱⁱ Lowery, D. K. (1985). 2 Corinthians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 568). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{iv} Utley, R. J. (2002). *Paul's Letters to a Troubled Church: I and II Corinthians* (Vol. Volume 6, p. 242). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

^v Utley, R. J. (2002). *Paul's Letters to a Troubled Church: I and II Corinthians* (Vol. Volume 6, p. 242). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.