

AMBASSADORS OF RECONCILIATION // 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Sermon from Pastor Jimmy Newkirk

Paul writes to the Corinthians as a known entity: he knows them; they know him. He presents his life as an open testimony to the life-changing work of Jesus Christ and reminds them that change should be evident in their lives as well.

The main idea of the text and message is that Jesus changes everything: our perspective, our status, and our mission.

What drives Paul to stand as an open book; to dedicate himself to God and to others? What's His motivation?

The "love of Christ" motivates him (v15) which means both Christ's love of us and our love of Christ.

Paul uses the word "all" three times in v14-15. To whom does this refer? Does this mean all people or all Christians?

The lifeblood, or the heart, of the gospel runs through this central truth that, in Christ, God became one with the human race. He died for all. In v15, the phrase, "He died for all *so that those who live*" clarifies that the living – that is, Christians – are a subset of "all" that Christ died for. While Christ's death was sufficient for all of humanity (God is infinite), this does not mean that all of humanity has been reconciled to God.

How can we now say we have a new perspective?

In v16-17, Paul states we have become a new creation. Now, we no longer see Jesus as our enemy (cf. Eph. 2:1-3), we see ourselves differently, and we see others differently.

What is our new status in Christ?

Oswald Chambers taught that, "Sin is a fundamental relationship; it is not wrong doing, it is wrong *being*, deliberate and emphatic independence of God." Sin separates mankind from God but it is not His desire that we remain separated. Only Jesus Christ has dealt with the core issue of sin; only Jesus has paid the debt of sin in order to reconcile and restores sinful man to a relationship with the holy God. Though sin was just a foreign to Jesus as holiness is to us, Jesus became sin (v21) in order that, in Christ, we might become righteous. Our reconciliation, our new status, and our new perspective are all from God. He was reconciling the world to Himself through Christ's ministry on the cross.

What is our new mission?

Christ has given us the ministry of reconciliation (v19). Because we see others with a Christlike perspective, and we have a new status in Christ no longer living for ourselves, we are to be "ambassadors for Christ", "pleading on Christ's behalf: 'be reconciled to God'" (v20). All persons – Christians and non-Christians alike – need to hear the gospel. Those who are in Christ need to continue growing in Christ and strengthening their relationship. Those outside of Christ need to hear the gospel in order to come to saving faith and bring God the honor and glory He deserves.