

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

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[0 : 00] Just take your Bibles, open with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. We will be finishing up the fifth chapter this morning, 2 Corinthians chapter 5. Our text will be verses 16 through 21.

I will go back and read verses 14 and 15 because we need to see them so that we know while we get to verse 16. So if you are physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God this morning, found in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. We will go back and read verses 14 and 15 and we will focus in on verses 16 through 21. The word of God says, For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died.

And he died for all so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore, from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him in this way no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature.

[1 : 12] The old things passed away, behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

Namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. And he has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. As though God were making an appeal through us, we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

You may be seated. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 16 through 21. It is my prayer that I will at least begin to expound just a little portion of this scripture.

[2 : 13] It is so deep, it is so wide, and it is so wondrous that I believe that no message alone can ever convey all of its meaning. It is that way with the majority of scripture in which we get to it, no matter how long we spend on a text, no matter how long we expound the text, and we look at the text, and we study the text, we are touching, but quite often, the tip of the iceberg, so to say.

We've seen this reality lived out in other portions of scripture, and it has direct application to this one. It is so packed with so much truth, so much glorious truth, that I want us to understand just a bit of it.

And may God open our hearts, and may He open our minds, and may He illumine our eyes, and open our ears, so that we may see, and we may hear what it is the word God is telling us. We have been looking and seeing what Paul is talking about living his life of ministry, living a missional life, an intentional life, a direct life for the glory of God unto Christ.

He is calling the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians to live out an authentic faith. He has taken a direct pause in his discourse of defending his own love for that church, and he has shown them how to live an authentic faith, that is, to live a life of missional living intentionally.

It is to live, to be used of the Lord Jesus Christ for His glory and His glory alone. We have seen in all of this that the application is not just to those who are in vocational ministry, but rather it applies to all those who are called and captivated by Christ.

[3 : 48] We are captives of Christ. He has called us captive from the depth of sin. He has won the victory. He has put us before Him in processional array.

We are being put on display so that others may see Him and not see us. No matter where you're at, no matter where you work, no matter where you live, no matter where you recreate, no matter what you do, you are a captive of Jesus Christ, the Lord and Savior.

You are a representative being put before the parade, before the coming King who comes on His white horse. You are there so that others may not see you, but others may look to the King that is coming, that they may see the one who is victorious.

They don't need to see that you've overcome it all. They just need to see that you've met the one who's overcome it all. They need to see you living in such a way that you are a fragrant aroma of Christ unto God.

You will stink to some and you'll smell great to others, but that's okay, because it doesn't matter what man thinks of you. You are put forward that the world may know you've had an encounter with Jesus Christ.

[4 : 53] And they want to know it authentically, and they want to know it accurately. And the only way we'll do it is if we live it intentionally. And Paul has been saying that so much so here, starting in chapter 2, the end of chapter 2, 3, 4, 5, and we'll get into chapter 6 as well.

But I want you to see what it looks like to live out the great change. Living the great change. The great change occurs for us in verses 14 and 15.

We are compelled by the love of Christ. That is, the love of Christ has so moved us. The love of Christ for us has so changed us. The love of Christ towards us has so guided us that we've come to this great understanding.

That Christ has given himself for us. And therefore, since he's given himself for us, friend, this is why we know it's not just vocational, because this has the application for all. That Christ has given himself for us so much that we no longer live for ourselves, but for him who died and rose again on our behalf.

Now, the last time I checked, that wasn't just for the pastors. That wasn't just for the missionaries. It takes just as much salvation to save the sinner who never does anything publicly as it does the one who stands behind the pulpit.

[6 : 07] It is such a glorious salvation. The wonder of it all is that he saves any. The wonder of it all is not that he puts us in an occupation that people can see.

The wonder of it all, the wonder of wonders, is that we are saved at all, and that the Savior has died for us, and therefore he calls us to live for him.

We have a life of change. I don't know how long you lived for yourself, but Paul would say elsewhere, you've lived it long enough. You've spent enough time living for yourself.

You say, well, pastor, I've been a believer longer than I was an unbeliever. Well, good. You lived long enough as an unbeliever. For praise God, you get to love as a believer in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

I have just reached that point just a couple of years ago where I can say I've walked as a follower of Christ longer than I walked as a rebel of God. Praise God that that was long enough.

[7 : 05] You say, well, I'm just a few years into it. Well, praise God, he's called you out of it. If it was a few years or it was a multitude of years, Paul says you've lived that way long enough.

Now live differently. There is this great debate that goes on around Christian circles. There are these great talks of what does salvation really look like.

Is it just enough to believe in Jesus Christ or do you have to have the lordship of Jesus Christ? And we're not here to dictate all of that, but I will find one thing in scripture. I've never seen in scripture someone who genuinely believed in Jesus Christ whose life didn't look different.

I've never seen it. People that argue that way say, well, what about the thief on the cross? Well, the thief on the cross, he didn't have the opportunity to live it, but praise God, you do. Don't base your salvation upon instantaneous moments that happened throughout history.

Don't base your salvation upon burning bushes that burned once but weren't consumed or crowing roosters that crowed once and never crowed again or talking donkeys that talked once but never talked again.

[8 : 08] Base it upon the authority of the word. I'm about to start preaching. Base it upon the authority of the word of God. And when you read Genesis to Revelation, there's never one. No, not one.

As Andy Griffith would say, never one. That never looked different after they had an encounter with holy God through Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Their life was changed. And what does it look like to live out that change?

Paul tells us in these verses. The first change, my friend, is a change in perception. It is a change in perception. Since we know that those in Christ no longer live for themselves, but they live for him who died and rose again on their behalf.

Who do you live for? You live for Christ. Therefore, your perception has changed. He says, therefore, since we no longer live for ourselves, therefore, since we live for him who died for us and rose again, therefore, from now on, we recognize no one according to the flesh.

Here is the perception. You see people differently. You see people differently. When we meet Jesus Christ walking down the road, oh, one of my favorite sermon series I ever preached, I believe I preached it here, was called the untouchables.

[9 : 34] That Jesus touched the untouchables. You can go through the Gospels and you find him touching the untouchables. The lepers that were supposed to say unclean, unclean, and everybody got away, he touched them.

The woman with the flow of blood who could not go into the temple, she touched him and he touched her back. The dead who were dead and buried and nobody was supposed to touch them. He touched them. He touched the untouchables.

He dealt with the undillables. He dealt with the unlovable. He was there and he had interaction with all people, from the greatest of society to the lowest of the dregs. He dealt with each and every individual.

He was not a discerner of people. He was a discerner of people, but he was not a discriminator of people. What we understand is our perception of people changes because we no longer recognize anyone according to the flesh.

We are not overwhelmed by who they are materialistically. We are not underwhelmed by what they do not possess materialistically. We are not blown away by their position and we are not shunned away because of their humility.

[10 : 37] This is why Paul could say there is neither Jew nor Gentile nor male nor female. He wasn't saying that the distinctives didn't remain. He said the distinctives don't matter.

It doesn't matter what you are. I perceive you as Christ perceives you. He says, and we no longer recognize Christ this way, though we once knew him this way. Paul would say, as many Bible scholars agree with here, not that Paul ever met Jesus.

We know he met him in the spiritual realm in the Arabia wilderness. We know he met him for three years in the school of the desert with Christ teaching him, but he never knew him in the flesh, walking with him in those three and a half years of public ministry.

He didn't know him in that way, but he knew of a Messiah that would be of the lineage of David that he expected to reign upon over the Roman Empire. He knew of a Messiah that the Jews expected that would be according to one way in the flesh, and Jesus busted those doors wide open.

He wasn't the Messiah they expected. He wasn't the one that they were looking for. He was so much more. He is all that and then some. He says, now we see him as he is.

[11 : 44] Now we see him that one day he will have a reign. Now we see that one day the rod of scepter of iron rule will rest upon his shoulders and never depart. We know that he has the keys of David. We know that he sits upon the throne of David, but we're not just looking for him to do it here.

We're looking for him to do it everywhere. We see him as he is. Why? Because your perception of other people changes. Friends, you can't see people the same way anymore.

I'm going to just caution you here. If you are ever overwhelmed by somebody and underwhelmed by others, then you are not seeing them as you should. That is, people are people.

We recognize and even rejoice in the beauty of God's creative work of diversity. I love it.

I love the fact that none of us in this room are exactly the same. I love the fact that when you walk in this world, this world is full of people who look different, act different, talk different, and they are different.

[12 : 48] And I love the fact that God is the designer and he knits them together in their mother's womb before we ever knew them. We should never be pushed away by someone's differences. Now, we're not talking about choices here.

We're talking about God-given differences. We should not be pushed away by someone's God-given design that looks differently, behaves differently, and maybe lives a little differently than us in the way that God has put them culturally, nationally, or ethically.

Those things don't matter. If it was up to me, the church would represent what we see in heaven.

Oh, I've had that conversation with you before, right?

I've been places where I'm the minority. I've preached at places where I was the minority. I've went to conferences where I was the minority. And I've had people say, oh, we need diversity in the churches. And I'm the first to raise my hand among those who say it and say, well, then show me how.

Show me how. Because I want that. I love that. I embrace that. I rejoice in that. These realities that we understand. Friend, listen. We cannot perceive people differently.

[13:50] We need to see them as Christ sees them. And if there's any prejudices within our heart, and it doesn't have to be racial prejudice, I mean any prejudices within our heart, then we need to check our hearts and see where we're at.

You say, well, when we come to these, we no longer recognize anyone according to the flesh. It doesn't matter if they're wealthy, popular, famous, or worldwide known. Or if they're the lowliest of lowest and humblest and nobody's ever heard of them.

It doesn't matter. Not a respecter of persons. We need this. I think we need to be careful. I'll tell you, as a pastor, when I first began to attend major pastor events and things of that nature, and I would go to these big conferences, and sometimes I would find myself a little overwhelmed by individuals that I would meet.

I'd have the opportunity to meet well-known pastors. I'd have the opportunity to meet pastors that had written a lot of books, and I've had the opportunity to meet a lot of different individuals, and I'd find myself just kind of streaking back a little bit.

Not that I would ever kind of say, oh, that individual is awesome and great and all these other things, but I would just kind of feel like, well, I don't need to really talk to them or anything. And I got over that. You know how I got over that? It's because the Lord and Savior who saved me is the same Lord and Savior who saved them.

[15:01] And I got over this whole respecter of persons. I respect the individual, but I do not want to recognize them according to the flesh. If God grants one success, great. If God grants another, not.

The greatest heroes of the faith that you ever tell me of and the greatest heroes of the faith that I'll ever meet are those who labor in fields unknown, unheard of, unseen, and unrecognized, and they labor effectively, and they do it consistently, and they stand up each and every week, and they proclaim, and thus saith the Lord God.

Those are the men that I shake their hands and say, tell me how you have done it. We understand this. We have to be careful how we see people, not just in church circles, but in the world circles. Why? Because we have a changed perception. We see them as Christ does it. They are souls who are in need of a Savior. That's it. They need to know the Savior, which means Paul would say that we, there's no longer Jew, nor Gentile, nor Greek, nor barbarian, nor slave, nor free man, nor male, nor female.

And James would say it this way, if a man comes in with a golden ring, and you put him on the front, and another one comes in with nothing, you put him on the back, you've been a respecter of persons. We need to see that each and every individual needs the Savior.

[16:14] We see them differently. Number two, there is a changed person. When we live out this great change, we understand there's a changed person. He says, in verse 17, therefore, if anyone is in Christ.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ. What we understand here is that there is not a condition upon the person, but there is a condition upon the position.

So it doesn't mean that some people who are in Christ are made new, and others are left the way they are, but it says that if anyone is in Christ, anyone means everyone. So whoever is in Christ, it is not the person that makes the difference, but rather it is the position.

So whoever is in Christ can claim the rest of this verse, right? That if anyone is in Christ, look at what it says, he is a new creature.

Some translations say he will be, and we need to be careful there because in the original Greek language, it does not imply a future tense. It implies in its tense something that has already happened.

[17:20] He is a new creation. It has already taken place. In Christ, you are new. In Christ, the old has passed away. What does it say? He says, the old things have passed away.

Behold, new things have come. The moment you come to Jesus Christ, you are a changed person. You need to understand that. Everything about you changes. Now, I believe that God knits us together with our personalities.

He gives us our giftedness. He gives us all these things. He, redemption, he does not change our personalities. Sometimes he reigns it in just a little bit, right? Sometimes, you will never know. Some of you say, pastor, you're a little crazy. And you'll, pastor, sometimes you, you'll never know the restraint that I have to have at the pulpit to allow the Lord to reign in some of my personality. And that's okay because that's who I am.

But I understand this thing that he redeems us as he made us, but he makes us new. That is, the old man is cast off. Behold, we own the new man.

[18:19] We are a new creation. It is a changed individual. And the word there is that if anyone is in Christ, it is a new creation. And it speaks to the creative work of the creator.

You didn't create anything and therefore you cannot create the new thing inside of you. It is something that is done externally to you. The God of creation creates a new person inside of you in Christ.

And what a glorious thing it is. You are a changed person. Not only do you see people differently, you yourself are different. There is something about you that you never once had.

It bears fruit that you never once knew of. You have a love that you cannot understand. You have a peace and a patience and a goodness and a faithfulness and a gentleness and all these things that are fruits of the spirit.

Naturally, we are not loving. We love ourselves, but naturally, we are not loving individuals.

Naturally, we are not very patient. Some of you are more patient than others, but we're not patient.

Naturally, we're not good because all of our righteousness, Paul would say, is like filthy rags in the sight of a holy God.

[19:21] So goodness is not a natural overflow of who we are, but in Christ, we are made new. In Christ, we are a new creation. In Christ, because of the position we now possess, all things have become new.

The old has passed away. That's glorious. You need to remind yourself that if you are in Christ, friend, and if you are in Christ, you are a new creation. You don't have to live the way you used to live.

You don't have to do the things you used to do. You're no longer held captive by them. Those old things, they're passed away. They're dead and gone. Sure, you pick them up every now and then. You look at them and go, oh, there it is. See, around my shop at home, I have a bunch of old tools. I like old tools. I like to use old tools, and I like to slow down every now and do things the hard way. It's maybe not the best way, but every now and then, I'll be doing it the way I think. I'm kind of getting back to the old days. You know, things were a lot slower back then. Well, every now and then, I'll pick up an old tool, and your pastor's wife will say, are you ever going to get done?

[20:23] Instead of using a hand saw, what about a chainsaw? Instead of using an axe, what about a table saw? What about doing it because you got new things over here? Today is not the day for the old things.

Sometimes things have to be done a little quicker. In our life, we have the new thing in Christ, but we like to pick up the old thing every now and then and think we can go back. There's a reason it's no longer in use.

There's a reason it doesn't exist. There's a reason there's nothing nostalgia about the old me and the old you, right? There's a reason it has been cast off. Friend, leave it alone.

Don't pick it up. Don't put it on the shelf. Don't put it on the wall for everybody to see it. It is dead and gone. Bury that thing and leave it alone because you're a new creation, right?

Let it be. Just let it go, friends. You don't need it anymore. You can cast it off in Christ because you are new. We're a new person. We have been changed.

[21:20] We don't have to be that. You say, oh, pastor, I can't help it. No, you can't help it on your own, but in Christ, you don't have to be that way. In Christ, you're no longer that person. Don't let the devil tell you that's who you are.

Remind him that's who you was, but then you met a Savior and the Savior did something new.

Remind him that you were like Nicodemus who went to Jesus in the middle of the night. You didn't need to enter your mother's womb a second time, but you were born again.

Something happened. Something changed. That new nature is inside of you. He'll let it be. Leave it alone. You don't need it anymore. You are a changed person and you need to live out that change. Let the old stay dead. Sometimes we do too much CPR on the old man when Satan says, oh, you want to go back, you want to go back, you want to go back and our Savior says, it's dead. Leave it be. Let the old lie. We are a changed person. We have a changed perception because we are a changed person which gives us a changed perspective and that perspective is pertaining to our salvation.

[22 : 30] Look at what the word of God says. Verse 18. Now all these things are from God. Now this is what you need to understand. You will not see people differently on your own.

You have what the Romans used to call the sit in limb beam, your situation in life. Your life circumstances will dictate how you see your world regardless of whether or not you know it. So how you were raised, how the society you grew up in, the circumstances that surrounded you will always dictate how you see things. From the parenting that you experienced as a child to the situation of your home, these things are inevitable.

They happen. Your life situations and life circumstances will not change. You cannot go back and change that. You cannot make them new. You cannot do anything about them.

It is what it is. So you will not see people differently on your own. You will not become a new person on your own. Paul says, but all these things are from God.

[23 : 37] So we need to get a different perspective. We need to see this salvation doesn't depend upon us. You say, Pastor, you preach this all the time. Pastor, you're always bringing this up.

That's because I cannot open Scripture without seeing it there on the pages. And if it's in the Word of God that many times, maybe we ought to keep repeating it that many times, right? If it continuously brings it up, if it's continuously highlighted in Scripture, then it would be foolish to ignore it.

Look at what he says, but all these things are from God. Now we're changing our perspective. I'm not telling you you need to see people differently. I'm not telling you you need to be a new person. But I'm telling you that in Christ, because of what God has done, you can be and you are. Quit looking so much at yourself. Right now, your pastor's wife and I are reading a couple of books. Well, I say we're reading a couple of books. This is something that has been notorious throughout our marriage. Almost 26 years in marriage, when we read, I read audibly and she sleeps soundly. That's how it happens.

[24 : 36] Okay? It's been going on ever since then, but you've got to give her credit. She was the first person that ever encouraged me to read through Scripture. I was a non-believer the first three years of our marriage.

And she said, I think we ought to read the Bible together, two chapters a night. And I said, well, I think you're right. I didn't know much. I was a young lad at that time. I said, we'll start in Genesis and we'll go to Revelation. That makes a lot of sense for a new believer.

I don't counsel anybody that way, let alone an unbeliever. And she said, well, two chapters a night. She said, you read and I'll read. I said, okay. That's how we did it. We were very young when we got married. I would read the first chapter and before I got through the first chapter, she'd fall asleep.

So I said, well, she can't read the second chapter, but to keep us on track, I'd read the second chapter. Next night, she said, okay, you read, I read. I'd read the first and she'd go to sleep. The best sleep she's ever had, right? So I read through the Bible.

She slept through all of it, but that's okay. God used that over the years to bring me to himself and that discipline that's built in. Well, right now, we're reading two books. We're reading books on prayer.

[25 : 32] I'm reading a modern book and I'm reading a classic book. I'm gonna tell you, we've been reading a modern, I let her pick out the book and she said, let's read the new one. So I'm reading the new one and going through it and last night, we read another chapter and she was still awake through that one and I finally told her, I said, I'm going to get the classic.

I'm going to get this one. We're going to read a chapter out of this one. Not that I differ, but when you had to pay a little bit greater expense to publish a book, they meant something, right? So I opened up the classic and I read it and I read the introduction.

I asked her this morning, I said, did you hear it? She said, I didn't hear any of it. I said, well, I got more from the introduction than I did two chapters of the other guy. You know why? Because the other guy keeps talking about everybody else. This man's talking about Christ.

I want it to be about him. I could care less how other people pray. I could care less what other people write about. Show me what the word of God says about the Savior. Show me what the Bible says about God.

He says, but all these things are from God. I'm going somewhere. Stay with me. He says, you need a different perspective. You don't need to see salvation from your own point of view.

[26 : 36] You don't need to see what he's done for you. You just need to see what he has done. Look at what he says. He reconciled us to himself through Christ.

He reconciled us to himself through Christ. There's this great reconciliation. Stay with me. I'm almost there. This reconciliation, to reconcile, means to make a change of heart or a change of direction.

So if you are at animosity with one another, to be reconciled, something needs to change.

Husbands and wives, you know exactly what I'm talking about. You have an argument. Oh, we've never had an argument.

Oh, somebody's lying, right? You have an argument. You have a disagreement. You want to be reconciled with one another. Well, you need to change. You got to change your heart about the matter. You need to change your mind about the matter.

And you need to change your habits about the matter. And then you're reconciled. But the Bible says that we had to be reconciled to God. And it says that God reconciled us to himself.

[27 : 35] Why? Because we, man, cannot reconcile himself. You cannot change anything about you. You cannot make your life better. You cannot make it good.

And you cannot make yourself righteous. There's enough religion, lowercase r, enough activities out there for you to try it out. And one thing I have seen throughout history and one thing I've seen in my own life, no matter how much you change, you just can't do it.

Friend, you're going to fail. You're going to stumble. You're going to mess up. You'll never give of enough. You'll never be enough. Your goodness is always woefully short.

You cannot change directions or change your heart because naturally you'll always go back to the old way. So you can't change yourself. So you can't be reconciled by your own efforts.

And God does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He is holy. He is, as the scripture says, holy, holy, holy, thrice holy.

[28 : 35] God does not need to change and God will not change. So here's the great chasm. You cannot change and God is not going to change.

But God reconciled us through Christ. He changed us. When he would not change himself because he must not change himself, he doesn't need to change himself.

There's nothing about God that needs a change of direction. It is man who has went the wrong way. And God has changed us through Christ.

You couldn't do it. I couldn't do it. There is no effort and no work of our own. But praise God, he did it for us. Through Christ, he has reconciled us.

He has changed our hearts. He's changed our minds. He's changed our direction. And he's brought us together with the Holy God. Namely, it says in verse 19 that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

[29 : 37] How? Not counting their transgressions and trespasses against them. Not counting their trespasses against them. And he has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Oh, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

Sure, but he changed you. He didn't count your sins against you. He didn't count my sins against me. But yet he, we'll get to it in just a moment, the last verse. Don't forget about it. But he brought us back to himself.

Oh, what a different perception and perspective here. See, we see salvation differently. You need to understand this in scripture and I want you to get it right here and make it as clear as we can.

If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, it's not because one day you made a decision to change. If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, it's because one day God saw fit to change you and reconcile you to himself.

As long as you see it that you made a change and you decided to accept Jesus Christ and it's all about you and you see salvation all about yourself, then all of your praise and all of your glory will be given to your decision.

[30 : 44] But when the moment you realize that God changed you by not counting your sins against you and he changed me by not counting my sins against me, then all praise and all glory must go to him.

It is absolutely essential how we perceive salvation. It really is.

And when we come to this changed life, we see the reality that God changed us. You'll never see people differently on your own. You'll never live differently on your own.

But in Christ, because God, the great glorious creator of all of heaven and earth, saw fit to change you and to change me, we are now different. It is a changed perspective.

Fourth and finally, because of this, we have a changed passion. We have a changed passion. One thing that I have noticed as a pastor, had a chance to talk to a, not, he's not younger in age, but he's younger in the ministry pastor than me this week.

[32 : 01] Great friend, great fellowship I was having with him and I asked him, I said, brother, how long you been preaching? How long you been pastoring? He said, about three and a half years. I just left to that. I just wanted to know. There's a big difference between being three and a half years in the ministry and being 18 years in the ministry.

I can testify to that. God shows you things and he shows you more about yourself than he does about the congregation. Right? He shows you more, there's more revelation for the pastor about who he is than there is about the church and who they are because at three and a half years in the ministry, you think you have everybody else in the pulpit figured out.

I mean, everybody in the pew figured out. By the time you get to year 18 where I'm at, you figured out that everybody in the pew may be all right. It's the guy in the pulpit that needs to change. Your focus changes. You begin to see things differently.

I'm not sitting here telling you you're all right. I'm not smiling and telling you there's nothing wrong because you need to be changed. But you begin to see things, your passions begin to be different and you begin to understand these realities and you learn things.

I've seen things over the years that those who think salvation is all about a decision they made, then their passions quite often remain the same. that is, if they think they will change directions and they'll add Jesus to the mix then they will stay passionate about the things they've always been passionate about.

[33 : 20] And then those who understand that God intervened in their life and changed their heart and changed their mind and they begin to see salvation accurately, their passions begin to change.

Why? Because look at what it says. Verses 18, 19, and 20, and 21. After saying all these things are from God, Paul says that God gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

And then in verse 19 it says, and he has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Primarily, those who know the reality that God has changed them in spite of them and called them to himself cannot quit talking about it.

They meet people they say, oh, I'm too far from the Savior. I can never be good. And they say, well, let me tell you about a Savior who's not waiting on you to get better. Let me tell you about a Savior who will make you better. They begin to talk of a Savior and of a God who can change them in spite of themselves.

They begin to be passionate about it. And then Paul says in verse 20, therefore, since we have had this word committed to us, therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ.

[34 : 32] As though God, now look at the passion here, as though God were making an appeal through us, we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Paul says, I'm an ambassador and I'm begging you to be reconciled to God. Why? Because an ambassador has no motives of his own. An ambassador to a foreign country is only there to represent the hierarchy of that country.

He is only there as an authoritative figure as it is backed by the country that sent him or her to that place. That ambassador has no self-interest. That ambassador cannot make any self-decisions.

That ambassador can only do that which was dictated to them from the country which they represent. Paul says, we are ambassadors of Christ. Why? Because we no longer live for ourselves but for him who died and rose again for us, right?

Christ begins to dictate how we live our lives. We are representatives in a foreign land. We're not home in this land. We're not making ourselves a place in this land but we are here in this land but we're not here to use this land however we want to see fit.

[35 : 41] We're only here to represent the king who put us here, right? We begin to have a greater passion. We begin to have a greater purpose. We begin to live a little bit more intentionally. If we have a job in this land and we're doing this, this or that then we're here because this is where Christ has put us.

He wants us to show Christ at that job. He wants us to show Christ in that recreation. He wants us to show Christ where we're at. We are ambassadors for Christ. And then, and I'll conclude here, he gives us the gospel in verse form.

Verse 21, He made him who know no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

Oh, if we can't get passionate about that, I don't know what there is to get passionate about. God, who could not change, who would not change, who need not change, made Jesus Christ who knew no sin.

He didn't just, not only did he just not sin, he didn't even know sin. Get it, friend? He knew nothing of sin. He knew nothing of the stench of sin. He knew nothing of the temptation of sin.

[36 : 50] He knew nothing of the desire to sin. He knew no sin. And he who was perfect in holiness and righteousness and perfection, he who fulfilled all the law, God made him who was perfect to be our sin.

He didn't just put our sin upon us, he made him the representative of our sin so that we may not just become righteous, but we can have the righteousness of God.

We can be the God-given righteousness of God in Christ. He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we may become the righteousness of God.

And if that does not stoke your fires and if that does not make you passionate, friend, I'm going to ask you, has your life been changed? changed. Because we need to live out this great change.

And with that comes the reality that there was one who knew no sin, but he became my sin. And he became my sin so that I might become the righteousness of God for his glory and his alone.

[37 : 55] And I might live my life for that purpose until he calls me back to himself. And we see that for us here in this passage. Let's pray. Oh God, we thank you. God, we thank you so much for this day.

So thankful for the opportunity of gathering. God, we are humbled. We read this text. We see the admonition of scripture.

Lord, there's much change that needs to take place in my own life. So Lord, may you have your perfect way. May you continue to mold me and shape me for your glory and honor. And may it be for yours alone.

And we ask it in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[40 : 34] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.