

2 Corinthians 5:11-21 Early Morning

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[0 : 00] Please join me in prayer. Father God, thank you for this Sunday where we have confessed together as one body of your!

And Lord, we pray that on this Sunday we may continue upon the generations that have worshipped you and that we ourselves may receive your word and may also extend it to others. We pray all this in your name.

Amen. Please be seated. Thank you. I must confess, I just want to point out to Sarah. She's my housemate at our community house, amongst six others.

I would not be here if it was not for her. She woke me up just in time to come. So if you see her afterwards, please say thank you, because this would not have been possible without her.

So, yes. For this morning, I would like to invite us to think about reconciliation. As in when there's been a time of disagreement and a tear between two people and there is a desperate need for restoration.

[1 : 05] Now, we practice reconciliation in our own lives when we have either been wronged or when we have wronged others. And while reconciliation in our own lives restores, in today's passage, Paul asks the Corinthians to consider how reconciliation between themselves and God not only restores, but how it also transforms their relationship with God and their view of reality.

So let us dive into the passage. In 2 Corinthians, Paul's wish for the Corinthians to reconsider their understanding of reconciliation flows out from his concern that has begun to stir within the community.

In earlier chapters of the epistle, Paul spoke about certain peddlers of the word and those who depended upon their authority by letters of recommendation.

Paul continues to address these issues in verse 12 when he criticized how these false teachers boast about outward appearances and not about what is in the heart.

These false teachers had misled the Corinthians to perceive and understand people by what they could see. To perceive and understand people by what our senses could observe.

[2 : 33] By what we can see, hear, or touch. And to say that this was all there was to a person. This perspective was one that even Paul himself confesses to have once held.

In verse 16, he confesses that he and the other apostles had once regarded Christ according to the flesh. When the disciples saw Jesus hanging on the cross, dead and defeated, they were at an utter loss.

When Paul himself, once a persecutor or the persecutor of the church, he saw the cross as proof of the ultimate failure of a heretic who claimed to be the Son of God.

By all measures, according to the outward appearances and according to the flesh, Jesus was weak and shameful. He was to be rejected.

But this is the very point that Paul is trying to reveal to the Corinthians. Both the Corinthians and the apostles had rejected Jesus when they only understood the world around them on a superficial level.

[3 : 50] By only what they could see. But now, Paul explains once again in verse 16 that all of this has changed for him and the apostles forever.

That all those who believe in Jesus no longer regard anyone according to the flesh. But if anyone is in Christ, they are indeed a new creation.

How can Paul make this claim? Well, it's because they bore witness to Jesus' ministry of the forgiveness of sins.

Not only that, he had promised them that those who were in him were also in and with the Father. And he fulfilled this promise on the cross.

It is on the cross that Jesus fulfills this promise and the apostles are led to believe and confess wholeheartedly that one has died for all.

[4 : 48] Therefore, all have died. And he died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who's for their sake died and was buried.

It is on the cross where Jesus, the Son of God, fully takes on our human nature of sin and holds all of creation within himself.

Our complete inability to reconcile our sins to God and our desperate need for him are on full display there. And as Jesus dies on the cross, taking on God's just punishment for the sins that we have fully deserved, we and all of our sins die in and with him there as well.

But the cross is not only about death and punishment. To look at the cross is to see newness of life and reconciliation.

As Paul beautifully expresses in verse 21, he says, For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[6 : 06] It is on the cross where God's love for us is fully expressed, and we see him as the crucified Savior. And it's on the cross where there is the great exchange.

Jesus takes on our sins so that we may be forgiven, and we receive his righteousness through the Holy Spirit. There is a cosmic transformation as God has reconciled all of creation to himself through Jesus.

God reconciles our very selves, our families, our neighbors, and all those around us, wholly and completely through him. And as those of us who are a new creation in Christ, we no longer live for ourselves according to our old lives.

Before, we only understood others by what our eyes could see, and only admired those that we approved by what we could see. But now with Jesus, we see according to his eyes.

We see that all those that are fleeting and of the flesh have passed away, and that all people have been transformed into a new creation in him.

[7 : 27] Once again, as those of us who have received this gospel of God's grace through Jesus, Paul appeals to the Corinthians, do not receive the grace of God in vain.

To not forget what Christ has done for us, and to return to understanding the world as we once did. These same words call out to us as well.

They warn us not to forget how our reality began and was transformed through the resurrected Jesus. That it is in light of the resurrection that we are called to live as Christ has done for us.

To love and serve others sacrificially. And especially to rejoice when doing so. Because Jesus has first done it for us, and we become more and more like him when we reflect him in our lives and our words.

This gospel we have received reveals how all things have been made new in Christ, and that the indwelling Holy Spirit breathes this new life in us, and sustains our communion in him.

[8 : 42] The Spirit reminds us that as Christ has reconciled us to God, we are also called as ambassadors of reconciliation. Of God's reconciliation, and of the same reconciliation we are called to in the world.

Therefore, this new life we live as those in Christ changes how we view all of reality. It changes our perspective of ourselves, of others, and of God.

Let this be so. Amen.