

A New Creation in Christ

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[0 : 00] And that's on page 1181 in my edition of the ESV Bible. It's Paul's letter to the Philippians on chapter 3.

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. Look out for the dogs. Look out for the evildoers.

Look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the real circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

As to the law, a Pharisee. As to zeal, a persecutor of the church. As to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

[1 : 03] Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things. And count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.

And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law. But that which comes through faith in Christ. The righteousness from God that depends on faith.

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection. And may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. That by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Amen. And we pray that God will open up our hearts to receive his own word. And that he'll bless it to us. We're going to sing together in this time in the new version. The Sing Psalms version of Psalm 19.

You'll find it on page 23 in the Sing Psalms books. Psalm 19 is the Sing Psalms version. We're going to sing from verse 7 down to verse 13.

[2 : 13] The perfect law of God revives the soul of man. His statutes, which are sure, make wise the simple one. The precepts of the Lord are right and fill the heart with great delight.

Psalm 19, verse 7 to 13. We're going to stand once again to sing. The perfect law of God revives the soul of man.

His statutes, which are sure, make wise the simple one.

The perfect law of God, and he says, God, make me have come as high asilly.

Shed light on what we see. The fear of God is pure and lost eternally.

[3 : 28] The standards of the Lord express His perfect truth and righteousness.

The fire for work and hope, that much pure hope they are.

The money from the home, and money sweeter far. They bore the servants of the Lord in healing and His great reward.

Who can discern His laws, forgive my hidden sin. Keep me from well-good deeds, may they not do within.

And then I shall lead thee from them, and yield their soft and treasured shame.

[4 : 48] Amen. Our second reading is 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians on the fifth chapter. We're going to read the whole of the chapter. Paul is here reflecting on the decay of his physical body.

But that reflection leads him to look to what is ahead. And here is how he puts it at the beginning of chapter 5.

And here is the developing thought as the chapter unfolds. For we know that if the tent which is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked.

[6 : 09] For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage.

We know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is also known to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not what is in the heart.

[7 : 26] For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God. If we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this, that one has died for all, therefore all have died.

And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised. 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.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

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.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

[8 : 44] For our sake, he made him to be sin. He knew no sin, that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Amen. And once again, we read these words, praying that God will open up our hearts and make us receptive to them. We're going to once again join together in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we give thanks that we can dwell upon the issues that surround us as a congregation and as individuals, as Christian people, who want to see your name glorified.

Our prayer, like the prayer taught to the disciples by the Lord, as your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We pray for the day when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. And to that end, we pray for the success of the gospel.

[9 : 47] And we are aware that that success is not a matter of force. It is not a matter of professionalism or methodology. It is your spirit who accompanies the great message of the gospel, the life-changing word of the cross.

And as it reaches into people's hearts, and as hearts are opened by the power of your spirit, men and women are transformed and made into a new creation.

Gracious God, we pray for the gospel as never before. We ask, Lord, for big things this evening and pray never to be content with little things.

We pray, Lord, that you will encourage us in prayer because you are the God of the impossible. And so we can pray the impossible. We pray for those we know this evening who aren't yet Christians, who aren't yet following Jesus as far as we can discern.

People in our families, people who are friends of ours, relatives of ours, people who live in our community and in other communities and away from us, people who we have been praying for, perhaps for years, asking that you will so work in their hearts that you will draw them to commit themselves to Jesus Christ by faith.

[11 : 10] Lord, we pray that again and again and again. We ask, Lord, not to give up praying for those we know who as yet haven't come to faith in Jesus.

We don't know what goes on in people's hearts, but you do and you're able to not only work in their hearts to create within them that sense of the reality of where they are, but also you're able to work from the outside, arranging by your providence those coincidences in which people get to hear the gospel in which a word is said in season and in which they come by the amazing power.

Sometimes in that still small voice they're able to come to the Savior. And so, Lord, we pray for the gospel for people we know and for people we don't know. The millions and indeed the billions all over the world who have yet to hear of Jesus and we pray that you will bring them and that you will reach them and that you will give us to pray that the gospel, that your spirit will be poured out in great power.

Our Father in heaven, we are often reminded by the Bible that the time is short, the days are evil. We are to redeem the time because the days are evil. So give us to do this, O Lord, by concentrating on the things which are above and the things which are before us and what lies in the future, the new heaven and the new earth that one day will be revealed to us that right now is being prepared by the Lord.

Our Father in heaven, we pray for the troubles as we so often do. But, Lord, we have been reminded as never before of the troubled areas of the world.

[13 : 03] And we think, O Lord, of the latest tragedies that we have become aware of. We think, O Lord, of the many who are in bitterness and in sadness and devastation this evening at having lost loved ones.

Those, we pray for the families who have lost loved ones in the plane crash in Ukraine. But we also remember, Lord, where there is war.

We think of the Gaza Strip this evening. We think of the families there who have lost loved ones. We think, O Lord, of the trouble, the complexity, the turmoil, which seems not to have any answer whatsoever.

It is so complex. And where there is such bitterness and where there is such resentment and such historic hostility. Our Father in heaven, we pray for those who are involved in rescue operations.

We pray, Lord, for those who are involved in investigation and in justice and in politics. For those, Lord, who are our leaders and the leaders of Europe and the states.

[14 : 09] And we pray, Lord, for the Russians and for the people in Russia as well as the people in the Middle East, for Israelis and Palestinians. And, Lord, we could go on for ages this evening remembering people groups, Lord, particularly where there are historic conflicts.

Our Father in heaven, we pray that you will turn war into peace. And we pray for the success of the gospel. Our Father in heaven, we think of those known to us who are suffering at this moment in time, those who are connected with our congregation.

We think of the Martin family, for Anne and the family. We pray, Lord, that you will uphold them this evening, that you will draw near to them where they are, that you will give them an extraordinary sense of your own presence with them.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you for all that really was to this congregation, for the support that he was, and for the genuineness of his Christian walk and for his love for the Savior.

Our Father in heaven, we pray that you will bless his witness for days and years to come. Our Father in heaven, give us to count our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

[15 : 25] Give us, Lord, to be reminded once again that we do not know what a day or an hour may bring. And so we turn to your word now and we ask that your word will speak to us as never before, for we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Before we turn to that chapter, we're going to sing together in Psalm 40, the traditional version. It's on page 259, Psalm number 40, from the beginning to the end of verse 5, the first six stanzas.

page 259, Psalm 40, I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear length to me. He did incline my voice and cry to hear.

Verse six verses, from the beginning to the end of the verse marked five, I waited for the Lord my God. We'll stand to sing. Amen. I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear and then to me he did incline.

my voice and cry to hear. He took me from the fearful pit and from the fiery pit and on the roar he set my feet he established in my way.

[17 : 17] He put a new song in my mouth and he shall see it and shall fear and on the Lord rely.

O blessed is the man who's trust upon the Lord rely.

fürsake Tony.

O Lord Christ, O many are The wonders thou hast done Thy gracious thoughts to us were found Above all thoughts are gone If order none can recommend To thee in heavenly bread And seek of them I would be o'er And can be number one

We're going to turn back to that second reading, 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

[19 : 38] I want us to look together at the passage between verses 14 and verse 17. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, page 1163, verse 14.

For the love of Christ controls us or compels us because we have concluded this that one has died for all therefore all have died and he died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

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. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. These words were written by a man called Paul.

His name wasn't always Paul. His original name was Saul. And Saul was perhaps the most religious man who ever walked the face of the earth.

[21 : 08] He was a Jewish man. He was a Pharisee. He was a religious leader. He wasn't just a normal run-of-the-mill religious leader. He was the most zealous, enthusiastic, single-minded religious leader that you could ever hope to meet at that time.

If anyone could have earned their way into God's favor by their own efforts or their own religiousness, then this man Saul could have walked it.

Until, that is, the day that he met with Jesus Christ. When he was traveling on the road to Damascus, where he had every intention of arresting followers of Jesus and taking them off to prison.

He hated the Christian church. He hated Jesus' disciples because he basically hated Jesus himself and all that he stood for.

And so, with a single mind and with a whole heart, he was traveling on that road determined to wreak havoc on those who followed Jesus.

[22 : 26] And it was then, when he was on his way to Damascus, that something extraordinary happened. Something that changed his life forevermore.

There was, first of all, a light from heaven, a light that was brighter than anything he had ever seen in the past. And it was so powerful that it drove him off his horse, it knocked him off his animal and drove him to the ground and he heard the voice speaking to him.

Saul, Saul, Saul, why, why are you persecuting me? And, of course, you can read the story in Acts chapter 9. We don't have time to go into it.

It's a fascinating account of one of the most extraordinary transformations that ever took place in the life of any individual because that man, from being a determined persecutor of Jesus, became the most dedicated follower of Jesus and the most determined preacher of Jesus.

But when he met with Jesus, he was struck blind. I'm not exactly sure what the circumstances were, but he was blind for a number of days.

[23 : 40] That is, until he reached Damascus and there was a man called Ananias who was commanded by the Lord to go to him and through Ananias his sight was restored. But that blindness, as much as anything else, it was a kind of symbol of the newness of life which Saul was about to enter into.

The old life was now a thing of the past with all its religiosity and with all its dedication and with all its sincerity and fervor.

It was a thing of the past. All his attempts to be right with God by himself, by his own doing, it was all a thing of the past. Now, it was as if he had emerged out of the blindness and out of the darkness into a new life.

Now, when a person is converted, it's not always like that. In fact, very few times that there is a dramatic conversion. I would put it to you tonight, there's only ever been one real Damascus Road conversion and that was the one I've just told you about.

Nonetheless, there are some people who have unusual conversion or unusual circumstances relating to the change that takes place in their life when they come to follow Jesus.

[25 : 04] But I think from most people, it's a gradual awareness of what Jesus has done for me in the gospel in his death and it's a gradual transformation.

I don't know how it was for you. If you're a follower of Jesus tonight, I'm sure that we all have different stories, different circumstances by which God has come into our lives and turned us around.

That's the important thing that from now on I serve God, I love God with all my heart and God is the very center of my being.

But in any case, Paul could say literally from his own experience that he emerged out of darkness into the light of the gospel.

So for the apostle Paul, everything was now new. His motives were new. His objectives were new. His priorities were new.

[26 : 03] What lay at the center of his being was a new direction. That is because, of course, that Christ was now the center.

But that meant also that there were things which had to be left behind. And that's why he says in verse 17, he describes the person who belongs to Jesus.

If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come.

I'd like us to reflect on some of what he says here between verses 14 and verse 17 in the light of these words. And I would like us to reflect on them in terms of the old and the new.

What's a thing of the past and what is now become new. Whatever our experience has been, we can all say if we belong to Jesus, if we're in Christ tonight, that the old person that I once was is a thing of the past.

[27 : 09] My life now is not the same as it was. It's not what it should be. I'm changing and I'm growing all the time in my understanding and hopefully in my likeness to the Lord as the Holy Spirit works within me as a Christian.

but I'm certainly not the person I once was. I want us to see first of all that the blindness of the past in the apostle is a thing of the past and in came the light of the gospel.

Now I said to you before that his blindness was physical blindness the day that he met with Jesus on the road. but his transformation was also another kind of deeper blindness from blindness to light and he tells us about that in chapter 4.

He's able to write with authority when he says in chapter 4 verse 4 he says in their case when he's talking about the world around him in their case the God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

So what he's saying here is that the old blindness the darkness of the past has gone and now the light of the gospel has flooded into my heart and now I am a new creation.

[28 : 40] I think I perhaps have to explain myself when I talk about when I try to refer to verse 4 in chapter 4 when he says that the blindness of the world is because the God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

What that means is that the reason that you're not a Christian this evening is because the God of this world has blinded your eyes to make you unable to see the reality of God and the reality of your accountability to God.

Now I'm sure that as you listen to that if you are listening this evening perhaps some of you will take great exception to when I say that. But it's not me that's saying it. This is the Bible who says this.

The God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers. Perhaps you're saying well nobody's blinded my eyes. I came in here with open eyes. I have an understanding. I have a reasonable mind.

I'm an intelligent person. I've got so many letters after my name. I work in a successful place. I've been successful. I didn't get what I am tonight by being blind.

[29 : 52] In fact you're quite offended at the very suggestion. But I'm not talking about your place of work. I'm not talking about your success or your intelligence.

It's not a matter of intelligence. It's nothing to do with intelligence. This is to do with the reality of God and your relationship to God. And here is the way things are.

the reason that the world tonight sits in darkness is because they are blind. Let me prove it to you. If I went out to the world this evening, if I went out and if I went and started talking to people on the streets this evening about Jesus, there would be a resistance.

There would be a reluctance. There would be a turning away. I know it. I've seen it. And you have as well. with very few exceptions. And the answer that you'll get as soon as you bring up the subject of Jesus is something like this.

Well, life is a mystery. You say to people, well, do you not ever wonder why you are in this world? Why you've been placed in this world?

[30 : 56] What significance you have in this world? Do you never wonder about the questions that you ask yourself about why are you you? Why are you not just, you're not just a blob of flesh?

You're not just a product of millions of years of time and chance. You are you. You are an individual with your own name and with your own personality and your own background and everything that surrounds you.

You are you, an individual. Why is it that you are you and you're not someone else? And as soon as you start asking that question, the answer you're likely to get is, well, that's all a mystery.

And what they're really saying is, I'm actually quite happy to live in a mystery and the reason they're saying that is because it's quite convenient for it to be a mystery because as long as the meaning of life remains a mystery, then you think you are not accountable to anyone.

Isn't that the case? So it's quite convenient to live and to make the most of life and to be happy and to make the most of everything that that we have in this world and all the opportunities that there is in this world because we're told we only live once.

[32 : 08] So why get bogged down with all the complexities of religion, all of that stuff that belongs to the past? We live in a technological age in which science has replaced religion.

But that hasn't taken away the questions, hasn't it? Has it? It hasn't answered the basic question, why are we here? What is the meaning of life?

Now I'm going to challenge you this evening. I'm going to challenge you by saying this, do not accept ignorance as the answer to that question.

Do not accept. I was always led to believe that mysteries were there to be solved. But it seems to me that the world we live in, they quite like the mystery. They quite like the darkness.

You see what I mean? Darkness, blindness. It's a willing blindness. It's a blindness in which many people are happy to exist in that blindness because as soon as you begin to think of God, you think, I'm accountable to God.

[33 : 06] I don't want to think any more about God. That's the real problem, isn't it? With the Apostle Paul or Saul of Tarsus as he was then, he was so obsessed with pleasing God by his own efforts.

That was his blindness. And for many other people, for many people across the world, religion is their blindness. They refuse to think for themselves and to ask the question, is my religion the truth?

That's all I'm asking tonight. Maybe there's someone here tonight from another religion. You're very welcome. You're more than welcome. But I would ask you tonight, this is a place where we try and face the truth about ourselves and about God.

I'm asking you, is your religion, maybe you think I'm being disrespectful. All I'm asking you is this, is your religion the truth? You say, well is your religion the truth? Yes, I believe it is.

Why do I believe it is? Because here is this man who's done something that no one else has ever done. He's risen from the dead. He's bodily, physically, historically risen from the dead.

[34 : 11] Now that's an impossibility. And that's the reason I'm a Christian tonight. because this Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, has risen from the dead.

And his resurrection is the key to my understanding as to why he came into the world and who he was. That he came in to set me free from my guilt and my sin and to give me everlasting life by his death on the cross.

And that's what Saul of Tarshish discovered. And the day that he discovered that the blindness of his religion, it just disappeared.

And all of a sudden, as he puts it himself, the light of God, the light for God who said, let light shine out of darkness has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Let me ask you this tonight. Would you not love to find the truth for yourself? Would you not love? Are you one of these people that just is quite happy to accept the mystery of life without really wanting to know the answer?

[35 : 16] I couldn't live like that. I seriously couldn't. I'm asking you tonight to don't stop until you discover the answer to that question.

Don't stop until you discover the truth of God in Jesus Christ. And the day you do, you will be able to say with the Apostle Paul, the God who said, let light shine in darkness has shone in my heart to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Well, the second transformation is this, that Paul was motivated by new motives. The darkness had gone, the light had come in. That's the first transformation. That's the first old and new.

Now there was something else in which he tells us in verse 14. For the love of Christ controls us. Because we have concluded this, that one died for all.

Paul was now motivated by a new power, a new objective. And that objective was to make Jesus known because the change that had taken place in Paul's life, he wanted to take place in other people's lives.

[36 : 32] So as soon as he became a Christian, he wanted other people to have Jesus as well. So out goes the old. What was the old motive?

Well, zeal. Zeal was the motive. He tells us, that's why we read Philippians chapter 3, verse 6. He's reflecting on his old life. And he says, this, this, the kind of guy I was.

Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh, also, he was the most self-confident person that ever lived because he truly believed if ever there was someone who was sincere, it was Saul of Tarshish.

The problem was, was that he was sincerely wrong. If anyone else, he says, thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day. All the boxes were ticked for him as a Jew.

Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews. As to the law, a Pharisee. As to zeal. Zeal. A persecutor of the church.

[37 : 34] As to righteousness under the law. Blameless. Now, there's nothing wrong with zeal as long as that zeal is there for the right reasons.

If you're motivated by good things, there's not, even Jesus, we read, was zealous. Remember when he went through the temple courts and when he drove out all the money changers and those who were selling animals, making a fast buck on the back of other people's poverty and keeping them held within this notion of being right with God by their own sacrifice and at the same time making themselves rich.

Jesus went through the temple courts and he drove them all out and it says that zeal for your house has consumed me. But Jesus' zeal was very different from the kind of zeal that you find in the world around us and perhaps you find in you and I this evening.

Maybe you don't think you're a zealous person. Maybe you're a quiet, timid, shy person. Well, that's as may be but there are other people who are fired up by something.

That certainly was the way it was with Saul of Tarsus who's one of these people who once he once he got his bit within the teeth that was it.

[38 : 54] He wouldn't stop until he achieved his objective. And that's because it was allowed the problem with his zeal was because he allowed it to act on wrong motives and then it became dangerous.

People even lost their lives because of zeal. You find it all over the world this evening in wrong political motives, wrong religious motives. you find the wrong kind of zeal all over the world this evening.

But now what's happened to him is that the zeal, the misplaced zeal that he had in the past is now replaced by another power which is entirely different.

What does he tell us? He says, now it's the love of Christ that controls us. that's what drives me. A totally different impulse and influence all together.

When he says that by the way, does he mean my love for Jesus or Jesus' love for me? Well, I believe that the answer is the latter and that's because he goes on in verse 15 to describe the effect of Jesus' death.

[40 : 07] concluding, therefore, that one has died for all and therefore all have died. So when he says that the love of Christ controls us, he's thinking of the same as he thought about in Romans chapter 5 when he said this, that here is where God's love is displayed in that Christ died for the ungodly.

In other words, tonight, if you want the ultimate demonstration of the love of God, you go to Calvary. You go to where God sent his son into the world to die for sinners, for people who are guilty and hopeless and enslaved and bankrupt and dead and blind.

And yet, these were the people that God so loved that he gave his only begotten son so that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

So it's the love of Jesus, the love by which Jesus gave himself on the cross that now compelled the apostle Paul.

That word controls, it's a much stronger word than that. It's a word that means keeps us all together. In other words, that he could never get away from this love.

[41 : 43] It wasn't just a love that drew him at first on the road to Damascus and he forgot all about it. It was a love that stayed with him for his whole life. He never got over why Jesus should love a person like him.

Have you ever got over that? Think about your own life. Think about the mess that you've made of your life. Think about all the resolutions that you've made and all the promises you've made to yourself and all the stuff that goes on in the secret of your heart that God knows that nobody else knows.

Think about your own deceitfulness and your own wickedness just as I do. I'm no different from you. Why should God love a person like me? Well that for me remains the biggest mystery in the world.

Why should God? And yet that is precisely what has happened. Now as far as Paul was concerned he never ever lost sight of this. He never got over this love. Every day he would think of the truth that God loves me and that one thing is for sure although that I sometimes let him down and I act wrongly and I say wrong things and I do wrong things and I wonder from time to time as a believer and yet nothing he says Romans chapter 8 nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus neither height nor depth nor principality nor power nor things present nor things to come nor death nor life nothing nothing I know this I am persuaded says Paul would you not love to have that confidence this evening not in yourself but in the love of God in Jesus Christ I want to share that love with you this evening I want to tell you that that love is displayed on the cross for all to come look at what he says here here's another question for the love of

Christ controls us because we've concluded that one has died who's the one Jesus Jesus has died for all what does that word all mean what does that word all mean does that mean everyone in the world and therefore does that mean that everyone in the world irrespective of who they were what they've done how they've lived is going to be saved and going to go to heaven well if that's what it meant the Bible would contradict itself because there are other places in the Bible that clearly spell out that the only ones who are saved are those who have come to Jesus in faith Jesus himself says this is the work of God that you believe in the one whom he has sent he says in John chapter 3 the last verse he says he who's believed has everlasting life he who believes and that means receives Jesus but he who does not believe is condemned already because he has refused to believe in

[44 : 46] Jesus so there's a clear demarcation a line of separation Jesus himself says that on the last day there will be those divided between the sheep and the goats the ten virgins the five wise the five foolish if ever there was a message where there is that final ultimate separation it's the gospel message so when Paul says one died for all he can't possibly mean that every person in the world regardless of who they are will be saved eventually what he means is that all those who hear the gospel and who trust in Jesus Christ I mean it depends on the context in which you use a word isn't it if I was to say it's very simple if I was to say tonight if I was to describe the service tonight to someone an hour from now and say everybody went home after the service well obviously that doesn't mean everybody in the world went home after the service even although I've used the word everybody the context always determines the meaning of the word and the context here is that instead of all of us having to die and pay the penalty for our own sin

Jesus took our sin upon himself and he comes to us this evening and he invites you with a free genuine invitation to come and follow him so that you will be amongst those who are the all the all who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ the third transformation in this passage is that out goes self and in comes Jesus out goes self and in comes Jesus look at verse 15 he died for all Jesus died for all that those who live look at this those who live might no longer live for themselves but him who for their sake died and was raised so what is he saying there he's actually

I find this quite fascinating because I believe that he's always looking back on his own life and I find that this is a window into the old Saul of Tarsus remember what I said before the Saul of Tarsus was possibly the most religious man that you ever met if you looked at him from the outside you would think well nobody can touch him for devoutness for dedication if ever there was a man who believed thoroughly that he could win his way into favour with God or keep himself in favour with God by his own efforts and his own good works then it was Saul of Tarsus but here Paul is saying actually deep down and it's only when I came to faith in Jesus that I discovered this for myself I was actually living for myself and that makes sense doesn't it if you knew tonight let's imagine that you could be right with God by doing your best imagine that this evening that all you have to do is to go home and from now on that you have to do your best and if you do your best then

God will accept you at the end of the day that's not the gospel by the way I'm just saying imagine imagine that was the case Joe would happen I know it would happen in my life anyway I would have good days and bad days and on the good days on the bad days I would want to just gloss over all the bad stuff that I had done said well it's not as bad as so and so it's not as bad as someone else read the newspapers look at the telly all these murderers and abusers and violent people I'm not like that whatever bad stuff I do well it's nothing like what they do so I'm surely I'm okay that's the first thing I'd do but on a good day I'd go to my bed and I would think yeah that was great I really did it today I really got it do you know what I'm doing God doesn't figure in that at all it's me it's me that's done it and there are millions of people like that in various different contexts and they actually believe that at the end of the day they compare themselves with other people and they think because I'm not as bad as someone else it's a form of pride and Saul of

Tarsus was like that I live to myself there are all kinds of ways in which you can live for yourself ask yourself the question this evening who do you live for what do you live for what's your motivation what's precious to you what's the number one in your life ask yourself don't tell anybody else you don't need to tell anybody else but tell yourself and be honest with yourself deep down when everything else is stripped away the truth is you live for yourself don't you until God changes your life that's the way it's going to be but when God does change a person's life everything changes the self is taken away it's put to one side self goes third what did Jesus say he says if anyone comes after me he has to deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me and tonight the choice is either

[50 : 37] Jesus first or me first that's the bottom line Jesus first or me first which is to be which is it to be but then the fourth transformation I see the time is going past the fourth transformation is out goes human values and in comes God's perspectives look at verse 16 it's a very strange verse from now on therefore we regard no one according to the kind of verse that in this chapter there are key verses verses that stand out by themselves like for example if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation and for the love of Christ controls us and for your sake he made him to be sin and you know sin these are the verses that are our favorite in this but we always have to remember that all these words they come in a certain context verse 16 is a strange one isn't it we're tempted to gloss over it but we're not going to from now on therefore we regard no one according to the flesh even though we regarded

Christ according to the flesh we regard him thus no longer what does that mean it means it's all to do with the way not only that you look at yourself we've looked at that we've confessed that if we don't follow Jesus we're following ourselves we're putting ourselves in the first place but if you're not a believer this evening your perspective of other people is a wrong one as well and when you become a believer your perspective is all changed and here's the way in which Paul describes it when I became a believer my whole view my perspective of other people it changed completely now there's a particular reason why he's saying this I'll tell you that in a minute but let me give you an example of what I'm talking about our opinion of people is shaped by the values which the world around us places on importance isn't it you think tonight of the famous people that there are in this world people who are well known to everyone who are household names either because they're football stars stars or because they're singers or because they're movie stars and modern media has meant that we all know who these people are and we have a particular view of people according to their importance

I suppose the same is true in a kind of a microcosm as well in people who are important to you in the local community and so on and so forth our opinion is shaped and is formed by the way in which the world thinks imagine for example let me give you a ridiculous example you think of some great celebrity right so let's think of someone off the top of my head Brad Pitt imagine he walked in here this evening imagine he walked into church this evening I can tell you that every head would turn and you probably most of you wouldn't listen to a thing and the word on the street would be not what the chapter was but did you hear that Brad Pitt went to Stornway Free Church on Sunday night why is that it would be in the Gazette on Thursday it would be in La tomorrow why is that because we have a particular view of importance and fame and celebrity and I suppose the world has always been like that whether it's political leaders as it would be in some eras or today it is the important people are those who are the film stars and the singers and the musicians and the sportsmen and women of our day and there was a particular reason why

Paul was saying that because there were some in the church in Corinth that were telling Paul you know you really don't have it you don't have the charisma that is needed to be a church leader you don't have the polish you don't have the personality you don't have the x factor and he didn't you think of the apostle Paul because he's such a well-known preacher as some big guy who has a great presence about him a loud voice a commanding voice and he would hold the attention of an audience for for hours because of his gift and his ability well when he comes to describe himself it's the very opposite and it's important that way because the gospel is entirely different from the way in which the world does things the gospel operates by God's power and God's power alone and often as Paul said he takes the weak things of this world the things that are despised the people who nobody knows about the non-entities of this life and these are the people who God uses to do great things in the world so be encouraged ordinary Christian be encouraged you and your small corner and I in mine that's who

God is going to use there were people there in Corinth who were saying who were trying to spread poison throughout the church telling people in the church that Paul wasn't worth listening to because he just didn't have it he didn't cut it and Paul says you're right I don't cut it I don't want to have it all I want is Christ and him crucified all I want is to make him known and if people are going to believe through that word then it is only because God has operated in what I say and God has made them his own that's the power of the gospel so now he says even although I used to do that I used to I used to want to be famous I used to want to be the best Jew that ever walked the face of the earth I wanted people to look up to me I wanted people to recognize me and they did but now he says my whole perspective of people is completely different the truth is if somebody walks into that building as soon as they walk into that building whatever position they have in ordinary life they become exactly the same you know why that is because they're exactly the same in the eyes of

[57 : 26] God as anyone else and everyone needs to know the Lord needs to come to know the Lord as their savior and it's the same with Jesus says Paul even although we once regarded Christ according to the flesh what does that mean some people actually say suggest that when Paul says that it means that it infers or suggests that Paul actually had seen Jesus he had observed him he had watched him he had listened to him now that's not impossible it could be that Paul was around at the time of Jesus I find it hard to believe that he wasn't but nevertheless I don't want to speculate too much some people speculate that he was the rich young ruler who Jesus loved when he looked he loved him

I don't know we don't know but whether he did or not he certainly knew about Jesus and there was a time in his life where the more he heard about Jesus the more he hated him that's what it meant that he regarded Jesus according to the flesh he was probably a threat to him it's possible that that Jesus was the kind of person as he was to the same kind of threat as he was to the rest of the Sanhedrin at that time because no one spoke like Jesus spoke no one spoke like Jesus and such was his hatred towards Jesus and he probably was one of those who rejoiced when Jesus was put to death and when his body was laid in the tomb and he was one of those who was most irritated when word emerged three days later that the tomb was empty and that the followers of Jesus were now beginning to preach that Jesus had risen from the dead and what was even worse is that thousands of people were listening and believing that Jesus was now raised from the dead and that was about the time when Saul of Tarsus made it his ambition to eradicate completely this new this threatening way this message that he hated so much but now that's the way he looked at

Jesus according to the flesh but now everything was changed the old was gone the new was come because on the road to Damascus he discovered that Jesus truly was the son of God and everything fell into place over time he suddenly understood why it was that God himself had taken on flesh and had taken our nature to himself and had given himself on the cross and that was because it was impossible to be right with God any other way just as it is tonight impossible to be right with God any other way there is no other name under heaven amongst men whereby we must be saved and Paul went on to articulate in the most exquisite terms why Jesus came and why he died on the cross and what took place on the cross none more so than the last verse of this chapter which explains in a nutshell

Paul is able to encapsulate in one sentence the whole gospel he says this God made him Jesus who knew no sin him Jesus the son of God God himself in the flesh God made him to be sin that's what happened on the cross God placed the guilt of our sin upon his own son so that in him we might become the righteousness of God how do you look at Jesus this evening what's your opinion of him what do you think of him do you know about him have you read the gospels that's where you start can I invite you this evening if you've never thought about what I'm talking about this evening then make this the first day of the journey pick up the

Bible start reading and ask that God will make him known to you and open your eyes and if you do know about Jesus tonight and if you for any reason if you if this is the moment at which you have that you finally realized that your life up till now has been godless in which God has been pushed out to the margins he's there at arm's length so that when you need him you think you can go to him and pray to him about crises and all the rest of it that's not the way it's to be God has to be at the heart God wants to be at the heart because he wants that peace with God to be yours he wants eternal life to be yours he wants the newness of life to be yours he wants you to be in heaven with him one day let's bow our heads in prayer our father in heaven we pray that your word will speak to us this evening we pray that the gospel will reach into our hearts and that finally we will come to the cross and that we will know for ourselves that our sins have been paid for by the

[63 : 45] Lord Jesus Christ Lord give us that faith to look to Jesus in his name amen we're going to sing together in psalm number 85 it's on page 113 page 113 psalm 85 and it's verse 4 to the end of the psalm psalm number 85 verse 4 God our saviour now restore us from us turn away your rage will your anger burn against us will it last from age to age will you not again revive us so that we may rejoice in you show us Lord your covenant mercy your salvation grant anew psalm 85 from 4 to the end page 113 we're going to stand to sing it on sm■■ together could you ound in you for means so thatayan could you can see

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.