

A New Creation

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[0:00] Verse 16. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

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.

Well, as I'm sure you know, one of the central features of Paul's theology is the phrase in Christ. It occurs frequently throughout the writings of the apostle.

You'll find it in his epistles in different contexts. And to be in Christ for Paul is very much a central feature of salvation, of both its formulation in Christ before we were born and of our experience of it as we come to Christ and come to know him.

And it would be wrong for us to think that the phrase in Christ is a phrase that begins to be real for us, to be true about us when we come to put our faith in Christ.

[1:15] In Christ is something that begins back in eternity. You go to Ephesians, for example, chapter 1 and verse 4. This is how Paul gives thanks to God the Father who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

In other words, not only before we existed, human beings, but before the world existed, God's people, God's chosen people, God actually had his elect people placed in Christ so that he would actually come when he came to this world to die for them, to rise again from the dead for them, represent them as being in him.

They are carried in him through all that he himself achieved for them. And you can see how Paul goes on to speak about that in Ephesians as well.

Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 5 to 6. Again, you see he's saying there, he has raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

In Christ. In Christ being chosen in him. In Christ when he died on the cross. In Christ when he rose from the dead. God's own people that were chosen in him before the world began are in him as he comes into the world, are in him as he dies on the cross, are in him as he rises from the dead, are in him as he ascends up to heaven.

[2:54] You can see from that that that's a covenant connection, a covenant in Christ. We didn't actually exist ourselves as actual human beings living the life we now live, but we were found in him spiritually, federally, covenantally.

Even from eternity into his work for his people in this world. And then when you come to Ephesians 2 verse 10, Paul carries this forward into our actual experience of salvation.

For we are his workmanship. He's talking about being saved by the grace of God, not our own doing, but it is the gift of God. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works. In other words, he's talking now about God's creative work within his people, within us actually as human beings in this world. He creates in us the life that we have by virtue of being rooted in Christ from all eternity.

But we come to actually have life from him when God creatively works by his spirit to bring us to life. In other words, regeneratively, regeneration.

[4:11] You see, all of that as it follows through from eternity itself in Christ chosen into Christ's work in the world in him. And in him as he rose from the dead and then created in him unto good works.

And that's how the apostle regards that string of facts and of wonderful truths that are the portion of his own believing people.

And that really brings us to the text this evening, where he talks here about being in Christ, where he says, we regard no one according to the flesh. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

And Paul likes to compare. You'll find it back in chapter four as well. He has to compare the actual creation of the world, of the universe by God.

He compares that to the work of creating us a new spiritually in Jesus Christ. And chapter five here speaks of the experience of us coming to know Christ.

[5 : 19] We've come to know Christ, as we've seen there in chapter two, by God's workmanship taking place within us in a union with Christ.

That's what it comes to as we experience what it is to know Christ. And that's why he now really says that because of all this, we who live might no longer live for ourselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

In other words, he is saying that we don't exist for our own sake. Christians don't actually exist to please themselves. The end of their life, the purpose of their life is for his sake.

It's to bring glory to him and to the Father. And he draws two conclusions from that. First is that we regard no one according to the flesh, even including Christ himself.

We regard him thus no longer. That's the first conclusion. See the word therefore there. From now on, therefore, follows that we regard no one according to the flesh.

[6 : 24] We'll need to look at what that means. And secondly, the second conclusion. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away.

Behold, the new has come. So that's the first thing he speaks of here. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh.

What is it to regard someone according to the flesh? What do these words according to the flesh means? Because he comes to apply them to how we regard Christ as well, or how we come to know Christ.

Therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Because of what's taken place in our regeneration, because of God's work within us, that we are his workmanship, it has changed our whole perspective on life.

To actually have something seen or regarded according to the flesh really means to assess something with an unregenerate mind. To assess something in our unconverted lost condition.

[7 : 29] To assess, indeed, according to worldly standards. We don't judge, he says, anymore by worldly standards. We don't take the standards or the ways of the world looking at things to be how we see through the prism that we see the world.

It's not the world's own standards, but it's Christ. It's from the perspective of being in Christ. It's not wealth.

It's not social status. It's not gender issues. And indeed, you go to Romans 8 and you find very clearly that the apostle is saying, here is the mind of the flesh, the carnal mind.

And it's indirect enmity to the mind of the spirit, to the regenerate mind. To the mind that knows Christ now in a way that's different to how we knew him before.

That's the great distinction between the Christian and the world. That's what makes up the essence of the difference. That we do not regard things according to the flesh the way we once actually did.

[8 : 37] In other words, being in the flesh or seeing things according to the flesh is the way that our minds and our conclusions are governed by our unregenerate lost condition.

How we treat people, the kind of language we use in conversation. Whether we self-deny or not.

All of these are issues and many other things that have to do with the mind and what kind of mind we've got. If we've got a carnal mind, the mind that we have before we are regenerated, before we are actually coming to know Christ for ourselves.

Well, of course, that's the mind of the world. The fleshly mind. But he says, from now on. From the point of coming to know him.

From the point of being a new creation in Christ. We know no one according to the flesh. And he doesn't leave it there. He goes on to say, even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh.

[9 : 45] We regard him thus no longer. He's even going as far as to say, this is how we once, and he includes himself in it. He's saying, we regarded Christ according to the flesh.

Now, he doesn't mean by that physical sight of Jesus. We don't know if Jesus, if Paul ever saw Jesus physically or not. Perhaps he did.
Perhaps he didn't. Maybe he had opportunities to see him. But we're not told for sure. There's nowhere that tells us one way or the other whether he saw Jesus physically or not.
But it doesn't matter because that's not what he's talking about. What he's talking about is a spiritual assessment. A spiritual sight and assessment of Jesus.
And the way Paul is writing to the Corinthians here, obviously, is not the way he once saw Christ. And you've only got to go back to Acts, for example.
[10:40] He writes similarly many places. But let's just take how he speaks there, how Acts speaks of Saul as he was then Saul of Tarsus. Look at Acts chapter 8 and verse 1, where the execution of Stephen is spoken about in the previous chapter.
Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem.
And then you can leap forward to chapter 9 and verse 1. Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
And then comes the great change. On his way, on this journey and on this mission that he was so zealous about, going to create more havoc for believers, Jesus met him.
As he went on his way, a light from heaven flashed. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And he said, who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.
[12:06] You see, the Lord instantly put his finger on the problem with Saul. He was looking at things according to the flesh. He was hearing about this Jesus, even if he had never seen him.
But what he heard about him, he didn't like. He didn't like these followers of Jesus. He thought he was an imposter. He thought it was a threat to real religion, as it was then with the Jewish people. And he was concerned that others would not follow in this way. Until Jesus said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.
And he later came to describe this when he was speaking to Agrippa. Remember, near the end of Acts there in chapter 26.
He came to 26 and at verse 12, when he was there speaking with Agrippa. Agrippa had him there to interview him. This is what he said to Agrippa. In the course of his talk with Agrippa, he said to him, the king knows about these things.
[13:13] To him I speak boldly, for I am persuaded that none of these things has been done in a corner. And he had been speaking there about how he had once persecuted the church, same as he did previously in his defense otherwise as well.
And in all of that, you can see Paul's reflection. And there is Luke's account of it in the book of Acts. He once saw Jesus according to the flesh.
He hated him. He thought he was an imposter. It would be better for the world, certainly for the Jewish people to be rid of him.
But now he says, even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. In other words, what Paul is now saying is, to know Christ according to the flesh is really equal to not knowing him at all.
Or knowing him only knowing certain facts about him. But not knowing him personally. Not knowing him in a personal relationship with him. Not knowing him by trusting in him.
[14:29] Not knowing him in such a way as to love him and depend upon him and serve him and worship him. That's where he is now, though, as he writes this to the Corinthians. From now on, therefore, we regard Christ thus no longer, even though we once did.
And you can apply that in some measure, as I can, to our own experience. We may never have been persecutors of the church. We may have had a very civil relation to the gospel, in fact. Maybe even an appreciation of it. But you know in your heart of hearts, you tonight who are a Christian, you who are following Christ, you whose life has been changed by him. You know that there's a radical difference between how you then saw him and how you now saw him.
Or how you saw him before your conversion, even if you had a measure of respect for him. And how you came to see him after he changed your life. You once saw him according to the flesh.

But from that moment that your life changed, even if it was a gradual change, very unlike in many ways what happened to Saul of Tarsus.

[15 : 35] Nevertheless, the change is real and it's radical. It's a change from looking at life, looking at the world, looking at yourself, looking at Jesus, looking at the gospel, looking at the church according to the flesh.

And looking at the church and looking at the church and looking at it very differently. Looking at it from the perspective of being in Christ, not outside of him.

And isn't that what persuades you? That going to remember him in the Lord's Supper is the least you can do. To express your thanks for that change that you know he has brought into your life.

A change that perhaps none of us can adequately describe to others. And this is one of the things that I'm sure bothers some people that have a thought of going to the Lord's table.

And know they need to meet with the elders, with the Kirk session. And have questions about that, that they perhaps don't feel adequate to do that. How are you going to explain this what's in your heart now to the elders?

[16 : 39] Perhaps you won't be able to do it adequately at all. Maybe you won't get the words. Maybe you'll stumble through it. Be persuaded of this. The Kirk session knows if a person has changed or not.

And whatever hesitation you might have tonight in coming to the Kirk session in order to make it known that you are now in Christ and not looking at things according to the flesh.

Let the Lord take care of that. The change in your life is obvious, not just in terms of how able or not you are to speak about it.

But in the way that your life is now lived. And it's not lived according to the flesh. But according to the pleasing of God and to the pleasing of Christ.

That's the burden of your life. So that you no longer live for yourself, as verse 15 puts it, but for him who for your sake died and was raised.

[17 : 47] We regard no one according to the flesh. Our confidence, friends, is not in ourselves. And the more we go on in the Christian life, the more we can assuredly say that our confidence is less in ourselves now than it ever was.

Because the more you learn of yourself and the more you learn of Jesus, the more you come to be persuaded that you must live in dependence upon him.

In dependence and reliance upon what he has done for you. In dependence on his spirit that he has placed within you. And that in order to live to his pleasing, you live by his power.

We know no one any longer according to the flesh. And secondly, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away. Behold, a new has come. Now, there's a really interesting and significant emphasis in Paul as well. Not just in Paul.

[18 : 51] You find it elsewhere too. The new creation. It's right back into the Old Testament. Remember Isaiah 65 and verse 16.

Just read that. You'll be aware of it, I'm sure, yourselves. Where he talks about a new heavens and a new earth. Where Isaiah, in chapter 65 and verse 17, in his prophecy, prophesied as follows.

Where God, through Isaiah, was saying, For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. And the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create. For behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy and our people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people.

There is God saying, here is the future. Things are bleak in the days of Isaiah. And this is carrying Isaiah's mind and through Isaiah the mind of the people forward into the future.

[19 : 56] And I create, he says, a new heavens and a new earth. Now, that's not going to be actually completed until the whole creation has been brought once again to be the new heavens and the new earth.

And, of course, that's what you find in 2 Peter, chapter 3, and at verse 13. Where the creation will be restored to a pristine condition in Christ or through what Christ has done.

And the interesting thing is that each regenerate individual. You see what he's saying here?

Everyone, anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. If you think of that, the whole of the creation restored and renewed.

Sin is no longer a part of it. There is no pain, no suffering, no darkness. None of those things. These things are all gone. They're all vanished at the end of the age.

But every individual believer, meantime, is a microcosm or a miniature of that whole creation that's going to be finally renewed and restored.

[21 : 06] If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. He's part of that overall redemption that issues in a new creation by the power of God in Christ.

And he says here, if anyone is, every individual who has come to know the power of Christ, who has come to be brought to know Jesus as their Savior, they are a new creation.

They are a reflection of the new heavens and the new earth, of the created order. They themselves are a miniature of it. Tonight, in Christ, you are such. You are a small fragment, but important fragment, of this overall new creation that God is bringing about and will accomplish finally and bring to its completion.

You see what he's saying here? The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. The old has passed away.

What we actually wear prior to our regeneration. The flesh, sin, lostness. All of that is now gone.

[22 : 21] Yes, you know there's still sin in your life. You need to come for washing daily to the Lord. But you are nevertheless in Christ. The old has been done away with.

You're not what you wear. Isn't that what John Newton was saying in these verses shortly before he died, where he was thinking about the fact that he was not what he should have been, what he was, was not what he would want to be.

I am not what I should be. I'm not what I would like to be, what I would want to be. But I thank God I am not what I was. By the grace of God, I am what I am.

See, that's the great thing. I'm not what I was. I don't belong to the old world of sin and lostness. I belong to the new creation.

I am a new creation. And you see, this word behold is such an important word in the context. Behold, the new has come.

[23 : 25] The old has passed away. Because that word behold is the means by which Paul exclaims his sense of wonder and of joy. You have to dwell on that word behold because it carries its own emphasis and its own meaning.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, wonder story, amazing. The new has come.

And be better translated, all things have become new. All things were once old to me. I saw everything according to the flesh. I saw nothing there really worthwhile.

Nothing really there to attract me. But then the change came. And now old things have passed away. All things have become new.

And you come to the Lord's Supper to express your sense of wonder and your sense of praise. That you form part of this great movement of redemption in Christ.

[24 : 33] He's given you so much that is new. And the tenses that he uses here are important. The old has passed away. The old passed away.

The tense he uses there is something that's done and that's it. And then he goes on. All things have been made new. Or have become new. And that's the kind of tense that in the New Testament means something happened.

But it continues in being. And will carry on. The old has gone. The new, all things have become new. And that's how they remain.

What has he given you? He's given you a new heart. He's given you a new song. Like the words of the psalmist. He put a new song in my mouth.

Our God to magnify. Why is it new? Because it belongs to the new creation. It belongs to that new order. To that new relationship with God. And with Christ. With the Father through him.

[25 : 35] He's given you a new family. Here is your family. That doesn't mean you neglect, of course. None of us neglect our natural family. But nevertheless, we are adopted into the family of God.

And we come to share with God's redeemed people. All the things that belong to us. As a spiritual family. A new heart. New knowledge of him. A new song in your mouth.

In your heart. A new family. And he's given you a new home. Your home. Before you came to know him. As you saw all things according to the flesh.

Your home was in death. In the grave. In the lost eternity. You were the children like the children of wrath. As he puts it. As others were.

Now. All things have been made new. And you've come to enjoy. Belonging to a new home.

[26 : 36] That's awaiting you in heaven. As Peter put it. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why is he blessed? Why is he praising him? Who according to his abundant mercy.

Has begotten us again to a living hope. By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled. And unfading that's kept in heaven for you.

Who are kept by the power of God. Through faith unto salvation. Ready to be revealed in the last time. That's what's properly yours in Christ.

That new home. That new home in heaven. That lasting wonderful inheritance. No wonder he's saying. Behold. All things have been made new.

Everything about you as a Christian is new. Even though you still await perfection. And won't have it until you finally appear with Christ in glory.

[27 : 34] So in Christ. He's saying if anyone is in him. He is a new creation. You no longer look at things. According to the flesh. You look at things.

From the point of view of. A new creation. I often wonder. Though it's not recorded for us. What was Noah's. Reaction. When he stepped out of the ark.

When the flood was over. He knew what the world was like. Before he went into the ark. It was corrupt. All flesh had corrupted itself on the earth. So the Bible describes it.

But then God. In his destructive power. And judgment. Swept the earth clean. As it were. And the world. While it was still.

Of course. In many ways. The same physical world. Nevertheless. When Noah came out of the ark. In many ways. It was a very different world. In many ways. In many ways. He was coming to a new chapter.

[28 : 32] In his own life. It was in many ways. A new heavens. And a new earth. Although. Not of course. In the spiritual sense. We've been thinking of it. But. It perhaps gives you. Something of an idea.

As to why. The apostle is really. Saying. Behold. All things have been made new. That you. You could say. That that was really. Noah's. Perspective. On the world.

He was coming into. Now. That God. Had actually cleansed it. All things. Had been made new. The old world. Had disappeared. Even though.

It wasn't. A perfect world. As it soon. Showed itself. Even. Shortly. After that. But all things. Have been made new.

So how does that relate? To the Lord's Supper. Then. Let me just conclude. With that. Well. Being a new creation. Is something.

[29 : 27] That involves. Being within. The new covenant. Provisions. That God has made. With his people. Remember. Back in Jeremiah. Jeremiah 31.

It's an easy. Verse to remember. Jeremiah chapter 31. And verse 31. Where. The apostle. Where the prophet. There. Looking ahead. To the future. Behold.

The days. Are coming. Declares the Lord. When I will make. A new covenant. With the house of Israel. And the house of Judah. Not like the covenant. That I made. With their fathers. On the day. When I took them. By the hand. To bring them out. Of the land of Egypt. My covenant. That they broke. This is the covenant. That I will make. With the house of Israel. After those days.

I will put my law. Within them. I will write it. On their hearts. I will be their God. And they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one. Teach his neighbor.

[30 : 19] And teach his brother. Saying know the Lord. For they shall all know me. From the least of them. To the great. To the greatest. Declares the Lord. And I will remember their sin.

No more. That's the new covenant. And how did Jesus. How did Jesus set. Or institute the Lord's Supper. Well one of the things he said. Was when he took.

The cup. He said this cup. Is the new. Covenant. In my blood. And Paul picks that up. In 1 Corinthians 11. The warrant we usually read.

For when we come to. Observe the Lord's Supper. As we do. That he. The very things that Jesus. Had passed on to him. Is what he had taught.

The Corinthians. Now that he. Regarded this cup. This cup of wine. As emblematic. In a covenantal way.

[31 : 15] Of the blood of Christ. This is. The new covenant. In my blood. You see you belong. To the new creation. So you belong to the. Circumstances of the new covenant. To the relationship of the new covenant. That you have with God. In Christ. And the. Lord's Supper. Is the. The covenantal meal. Of the new creation. And it will remain like that. Until it's replaced. By the marriage. Supper. Of the lamb. You have it in Revelation 17. Verses 7 to 9. And who is it for? Who is the Lord's Supper for? It's not for an elite. It's not for a small. Group of superior people. It is for. [32 : 15] Anyone. For everyone. Who is a new creation. It's for everyone. Who knows the Lord. No longer after the flesh. For everyone. Who is in Christ. A new creation. Do this. He said. In remembrance. Of me. May God bless. These thoughts on his word. To us. We're going to conclude. Now this evening. Singing in Psalm 32. Psalm 32. Who is a new creation. What is the creator? Who is a new creation. The spiritual creation. God bless. In the beginning. I want to yori.

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