



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V23 N37 September 12, 2021

NOT OF THIS WORLD

"Emissaries of the Cross"

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Evangelism

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:8



How do Christian values change the world?

How do you change the world? There have been countless nations, armies, leaders, philosophers, poets and gurus who have attempted to radically change their world. Political revolutions, religious movements and technological advancements have all had their hand at dominating the globe in order to bring it to a better place. Most of these players have failed and many have become forgotten relics in the dustbin of history.

Yet, in the long line of attempted world changers, a crucified itinerant preacher and those who followed him have brought more change and lasting influence than any other figure or movement in history. Tom Holland, author of *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World*, makes the claim: "The moral and imaginative upheaval that saw Jesus enshrined as a god by the same imperial order that had tortured him to death did not bring to an end the capacity of Christianity for inspiring profound transformations in societies. Quite the opposite. Already, by the time that Anselm died in 1109, Latin Christendom had been set upon a course so distinctive that what today we term 'the West' is less its heir than its continuation. Certainly, to dream of a world transformed by a reformation, or an enlightenment, or a revolution is nothing exclusively modern. Rather, it is to dream as medieval visionaries dreamed: to dream in the manner of a Christian."

Holland had rejected much of the Christianity he learned from his mother and the Anglican Church. Yet concerning his later studies in history, he could not escape the influence of Christianity upon his own interpretation of history: "The more years I spent immersed in the study of classical antiquity, so the more alien I increasingly found it. The values of *Leonidas*, whose people had practiced a peculiarly murderous form of eugenics and trained their young to kill uppity *Untermenschen* by night,

were nothing that I recognized as my own; nor were those of Caesar, who was reported to have killed a million Gauls, and enslaved a million more. It was not just the extremes of callousness that unsettled me, but the complete lack of any sense that the poor or the weak might have the slightest intrinsic value. Why did I find this disturbing? Because, in my morals and ethics, I was not a Spartan or a Roman at all. That my belief in God had faded over the course of my teenage years did not mean that I had ceased to be Christian. For a millennium and more, the civilization into which I had been born was Christendom. Assumptions that I had grown up with—about how a society should properly be organized, and the principles that it should uphold—were not bred of classical antiquity, still less of 'human nature', but very distinctively of that civilization's Christian past."

Holland further summarized: "To live in a Western country is to live in a society still utterly saturated by Christian concepts and assumptions. This is no less true for Jews or Muslims than it is for Catholics or Protestants. Two thousand years on from the birth of Christ, it does not require a belief that he rose from the dead to be stamped by the formidable—indeed the inescapable—influence of Christianity. Whether it be the conviction that the workings of conscience are the surest determinants of good law, or that Church and state exist as distinct entities, or that polygamy is unacceptable, its trace elements are to be found everywhere in the West. Even to write about it in a Western language is to use words shot through with Christian connotations."

Even without success in political or powerful systems, Christians and their values can change peoples and cultures. Christians can proclaim the good news of Jesus and serve as examples of virtue and practitioners of compassion and righteousness. Christianity has done so for ages. It can continue so even today.



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline the phrase that shows *comparison* in v. 16.
- Draw a line connecting the repeated words in v. 16.
- Circle "this way" in v. 16. Draw an arrow to its referent earlier in the verse.
- Double underline "new creation" in v. 17.
- Circle all the words *associated with* reconciliation in vv. 18-20.
- Put brackets around *what* God is reconciling in vv. 18-19.
- Put double brackets around the *agency* of God's reconciliation in vv. 18-19.
- Place a box around each occurrence of "we" and "us."
- Highlight the message of Christ's ambassadors in v. 20.
- Draw a line connecting the occurrences of the word "God" in vv. 18-21.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What was the “worldly point of view” about others and about Christ that was no longer regarded?
2. In Christ’s “new creation” what was discarded as “old” and what was embraced as “new”?
3. What connection do you see between the “new creation” of v. 17 and the description of what we become in v. 21?
4. What is included in being “reconciled to God”?
5. What is involved in the ministry of reconciliation?
6. What is the connection between being an ambassador of Christ and being involved in the ministry of reconciliation?
7. To whom are we to be reconciled? How does this change our outlook on life?
8. What is driving Paul’s emphatic plea in verse 20 (consider vv. 11-15)?
9. Whom is God making to be sin so that we can be made righteous? To what Old Testament passage may v. 21 be alluding?
10. What connection do you see between “new creation” in Christ and being “Christ’s ambassadors”?

Commentary On The Text

Saul of Tarsus, later known as Paul, was an amazing man. He was a Pharisee of the highest order (Php 3:5-6). He was also a Roman citizen. He was a scholar, was multi-lingual and was zealous for his Jewish faith, even to the point of apprehending those thought to threaten it. On one such apprehension mission to Damascus, Paul's life was forever changed by an encounter with the risen Jesus (Ac 9:1-19). The chief persecutor of Christians was now one of them. This radical reversal caused a lifelong problem for Paul – the problem of “regard.”

Because of his faith in Jesus, Paul was now of “no regard” among Jews. Once esteemed as a Jewish leader, he was now regarded a heretic. Once converted, Paul also faced a situation of “no regard” among Christians. Because he was previously a persecutor of the church, Paul was not trusted by Christians. After Paul did gain “trustworthy” status among Jesus followers, he was often disregarded because he was not one of the Twelve Apostles. Paul wrote most of the New Testament, but was still considered without authority by many in the church.

Second Corinthians was written to those in Corinth who still held Paul in low regard. Many did not accept him as an apostle and thought his current persecution was a sign of God judging him. Paul. He was caught between the “rock” of hatred from Jews and “the hard place” of suspicion from Christians.

Second Corinthians 5 showcases a number of arguments Paul uses in defense of his authority in Christian ministry. Paul identified his longing to be “home” with Christ as proof that his suffering was not in vain (vv. 1-10). Paul then outlined the motivation for his ministry – “the love of Christ” (v. 14). Paul detailed the life changing power of his ministry in a detailed description of reconciliation (vv. 16-19,21). Paul then described how he understood his calling – an ambassador for Christ (v. 20). Even though despised by many, Paul saw himself as being used by God “as though God were making his appeal” through Paul. Paul could survive the “hits” to his regard from his audience, whether Jewish or Christian, as long as he knew from where his highest regard ultimately came.

Paul was well acquainted with the “regard” game. At one point, even he held Jesus in low regard (v. 16). But now, being “in Christ” Paul had little regard for human regard. “In Christ,” Paul now saw a new creation that brought a new identity to those who believed and a new way of living for the faithful (v. 17).

Paul knew from his own experience of reconciliation that all people, regardless of heritage or position, needed reconciliation with God that only God can produce (v. 18). “Reconciliation in the New Testament sense is not something which we accomplish when we lay aside our enmity to God; it is something which God accomplished when in the death of Christ He put away everything that on His side meant

estrangement, so that He might come and preach peace. To deny this is to take St. Paul's Gospel away root and branch. He always conceives the Gospel as the revelation of God's wisdom and love in view of a certain state of affairs as subsisting between God and man . . . The serious thing which makes the Gospel necessary, and the putting away of which constitutes the Gospel, is God's condemnation of the world and its sin; it is God's wrath, 'revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men' (Rom. 1:16-18). The putting away of this is 'reconciliation': the preaching of this reconciliation is the preaching of the Gospel" (J. Denney, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The Expositor's Bible, 211).

Paul highlighted the apex of reconciliation with the imagery of Ambassadorship. “Here Paul expresses the well-known role of the ‘apostle’ within Judaism (the *shalia*), whereby an envoy from the Sanhedrin or High Priest would ‘represent’ to a distant synagogue decrees and judgments of the sender, with the authority of the sender. Appropriate to a Greco-Roman readership, Paul states this in the culturally familiar terms of a group of envoys representing a nation or of a legate representing the emperor. Such delegates – Jewish or Greco-Roman – came with the authority of the sender, in his place, to secure his interests. It is this role that Paul is reasserting to the Corinthians. He is an envoy of Christ, the Messiah of God; Paul is his apostle. In that period, to reject the representations of an envoy was to reject the one who sent him” (Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, 309).

Paul included all believers in Jesus in this assignment of ambassadorship. As all believers are reconciled to God through Christ (v. 18), so all believers are considered ambassadors (v. 20). As an ambassador of Christ, Paul had all the “regard” he needed to fulfill his mission. Paul made a difference in his world even if that world had little regard for him.

Social media has thrust upon us a new category of identity – *influencers*. Influencers typically do not hold any official office or credential. They do not typically manufacture anything. Yet “influencers” are seen as important marketing agents for lifestyle choices. Influencers do not have a seat at the table of traditional power structures, but people in power are careful to take note of influencers. Popular influencers are mostly interested in celebrity. While Christians may shun accolades, Christians can influence culture by the choices they make and the love they share with a world needing reconciliation with God.

Like Paul, we may feel rejected by our culture and devalued by systems of power. Yet, we should not feel hopeless in a society of disregard. As ambassadors of Christ, we can deliver God's message of reconciliation and offer the hope of a new creation, where old traditions and systems of oppression can be exchanged for a new life of freedom, joy and peace. We can determine to press on, changing the world, one life at a time, regardless of countless rejections.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 16 **worldly point** “In Greek, literally, ‘after the flesh,’ meaning ‘according to human standards.’ As an educated Jew, Paul was looking forward to the Messiah. But the Jews of his time were looking for a political Messiah, a powerful person who would free them from Roman rule. Instead, Jesus had died, even suffering the Romans’ most cruel punishment: crucifixion. Because Deuteronomy 21:23 says ‘anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse,’ the Jews considered dying on a cross a sign of God’s disapproval. According to human standards, Jesus was an insignificant man who died like a criminal” (Bruce B. Barton and Grant R. Osborne, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, LABC, 354-355).

v. 17 **new creation** “Christ is the divider of history. Paul also never uses the noun ‘creation’ (*ktisis*) to refer to an individual person (see Rom 1:2, 25; 8:19-22, 39), and the concept of a new creation appears prominently in Jewish apocalyptic texts that picture the new age as inaugurating something far more sweeping than individual transformation—a new heaven and a new earth. The translation ‘there is a new creation’ would mean that the new creation does not merely involve the personal transformation of individuals but encompasses the eschatological act of recreating humans and nature in Christ” (David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, NAC, 286-287).

v. 18 **ministry** “Paul has already used the word ministry (*diakonia*) and ‘minister’ (*diakonos*) in the previous context to refer to his own ministry of the new covenant in contradistinction to Moses’ ‘ministry’ of the old covenant (cf. 3:6, 7, 8, 9; 4:1). Here, too, he implies a typological comparison to Moses. Both Philo and Josephus portray Moses as ‘reconciler’ (*katallaktēs*, *diallaktēs*), in the sense that he intervened before God on behalf of the people after the golden calf incident (Exod. 32:11-13). Paul sees himself as being commissioned with a similar ministry of reconciliation and mediation” (James M. Scott, *2 Corinthians*, UBCS, 137-138).

v. 19 **sins** “The word translated ‘sins’ by the NIV is ‘transgressions’ (*paraptomata*). Transgressions are not simply sins that one commits in ignorance. Transgression is deliberate sin, doing what we know to be disobedience to God. This defiant mutiny is far more serious and created what seemed to be an unbridgeable gulf between us and God. But God wiped clean the register of transgressions through Christ’s

death. The files containing the records of our shortcomings and offenses have been deleted” (Garland, 294).

v. 19 **reconciling** “Paul used the term ‘reconciliation’ (*katallassō*) to sum up the message he declared. This is essentially a term of relationships. It denotes the repairing of the broken relationship between God and humankind caused by human sin. Separation between God and humanity forms Paul’s backdrop against which his Good News shines brightly, since God has in Christ taken steps to restore the fractured relationship. This event is centered in the death of his Son, who took the sinner’s place and died to bring men and women back to God (see Rom 5:1-11). Yet there is more than just the personal restoration to God, vital as that is for Paul. There is a cosmic dimension in which the entire universe is affected (see Col 1:15-20). And there is a horizontal application, since Christ’s death led to the breaking down of ethnic and religious barriers that divided the world (Eph 2:11-22)” (Ralph P. Martin and Carl N. Toney, *2 Corinthians*, CBC, vol. 15, 318).

v. 20 **ambassador** “Paul does not consider being an ambassador of Christ an onerous task but an enormous privilege to become part of God’s saving enterprise in the world. He does not worry that he must pay his own way. He does not complain because he had been imprisoned so many times, suffered countless beatings, and had endured stonings, shipwrecks, and deadly dangers from his countless journeys. He did not travel first class but frequently wound up hungry, thirsty, and exposed to the cold (2 Cor 11:23-28). He did not endure these things for personal glory or reward but because God shone in his heart and gave him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6)” (Garland, 297-298).

v. 21 **God made him** “Having emphasized in 5:18 and 5:19 that God took action to enable rebellious humanity to be reconciled to him, Paul now explains just how what Christ did could accomplish this objective. The idea that it was God’s ‘will’ for someone without ‘deceit in his mouth’ to be caused ‘to suffer’ and in effect become ‘a guilt offering’ in order to ‘justify many’ and ‘bear their iniquities’ as God’s ‘righteous servant’ had long before been penned in Isa 53:10-12. Most likely, the early church had connected Isaiah’s Suffering Servant with Jesus very early on” (William R. Baker, *2 Corinthians*, The College Press NIV Commentary, 240).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Being reconciled to God through Jesus Christ dramatically changes us. We should live as representative ambassadors, allowing God to speak through our changed lives, to compel others to also be reconciled to God.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

When you think of missions, what comes to mind? For years my brain went straight to starving children alongside the road in Africa. You know the image I'm talking about? This felt like the norm and the people who needed help. While it is true that these kids need help, what is also true is that evangelism is not only for kids in Africa. Evangelism happens all over the world, every single day, by every believer of Jesus because being on mission is what we are called to do. Missionaries who go overseas are great and serve an incredible purpose, but you can easily be a missionary right in your own town! Every place you go should be your mission field. The grocery store, the park, even your own home. Your greatest ministry will always be your family, and when you see your home as a mission field, it will always remind you of this purpose. Sharing the gospel with your family, showing them what it means to look like Jesus, and teaching them how to live life on mission will be revolutionary for you and your family. The call we have received from Jesus in Matthew 28 is to go and make disciples. This is your mission, and as you teach your children the gospel, they will in turn become missionaries and will be able to help make disciples, as well. Isn't that incredible? So, let me encourage you to fight for the gospel to be made known everywhere you go!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.

1. What happens to those who believe in (are in) Christ?
2. What does reconciliation mean?
3. What does verse 20 say believers are?

What Do You Think?

What does an ambassador do?

What Do You Do?

How can you be an ambassador for Christ this week in your school? Activities? Neighborhood? Write it down and do it!

CORE COMPETENCY: Evangelism

I share Jesus with others with my words and actions .

MEMORY VERSE: Acts 20:24

"However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given to me – the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME _____

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE _____

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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