

"The Ministry of Reconciliation"

Part 1

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Introduction: In our studies here over the years we have looked at many different topics and we have learned much from the Word of God. One of our studies which we looked at quite a while back was on the topic of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. In that study we considered how Satan is a counterfeiter and he counterfeits the gifts which were known as apostolic gifts. These were the gifts given to the apostles for the purpose of showing the authenticity of their teaching so as to separate them from the false teachers of their day.

Satan is a counterfeiter and he will counterfeit whatever he can so as to cause confusion and lead people into a Christ-less eternity. One of the other ways in which Satan deceives people is to convince them they are saved when they are not. He will plant counterfeit Christians so as to cause much confusion within the body of Christ. This can be seen in a parable which Jesus spoke of in Matthew.

Matthew 13:24-30

²⁴ *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:*

²⁵ *But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.*

²⁶ *But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.*

²⁷ *So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?*

²⁸ *He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?*

²⁹ *But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.*

³⁰ *Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*

The Truth pictured in this parable is that Satan will plant counterfeit believers among the body of Christ and Satan plants them there with several purposes in mind. Some are planted as false teachers. Some are planted to spread strife and contention. Others are planted to confuse people about what a True believer looks like. These people will come in

and they will profess to know Jesus Christ as their Savior but their lifestyle will not be what the Bible tells us a believer's life should look like. This is where the confusion sets in. Because the person "claims" to be a believer there are people who will accept their words over what the Bible tells us a believer's life will look like.

This reminds me of something which we must never forget and that is that experience is NOT the final authority but the Word of God is the Final Authority. In other words it makes no difference what someone professes or what they claim, if their words and their claims are contrary to the Word of God then they are WRONG!

The Bible tells us exactly what the life of a believer will look like and what we are about to study tonight will help us to see this. We have been working our way through the 5th chapter of 2 Corinthians and so far in this chapter we have seen how Paul was motivated by the Judgment Seat of Christ and he was motivated by the love which Jesus had for him when he was deep into sin.

Last week when we stopped we were in 2 Corinthians 5:16 and it was in this verse that Paul revealed how Christ' love for him changed the way in which he evaluated people. This verse will connect with and lead us into what we are going to study tonight.

I. **Motivations for Ministry**

A. **Spiritual Transformation**

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:16

We looked at this verse last week but we need the context here to help us to understand the next verse. This verse looks back to verse 15 where Paul pointed to how Christ's love for him caused him to no longer live for himself> Because of that love Paul explained that he now lived his life completely committed to the cause of Christ.

Then here in verse 16 Paul explained that because Jesus loved him and died for him while he was deep in sin and while he was an enemy of God, this changed the way in which he now looked at others. It changed the way in which Paul evaluated those whom he met. Before Paul was saved he judged people out of prejudice and hate. Paul was a Pharisee and they despised those who were not of their clique. Let me show you how deep Paul's roots were in Judaism.

Acts 26:4, 5

⁴ *My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;*

⁵ *Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.*

Philippians 3:4-6

⁴ *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:*

⁵ *Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;*

⁶ *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

Now that Paul was saved his way of evaluating people had changed. Now let me make a correction on something which we looked at 2 weeks ago.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:14

At the end of this verse Paul says, "That if one died for all then were all dead". When we looked at this earlier I had interpreted this to mean that we were all dead in our sins and so Christ died for us because we were helpless and hopeless. But that is not the proper interpretation here.

Paul is stating that because Christ died for all then we all died with Him.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:15

Here Paul states that since Jesus died for all (and we all died with Him) then we should not anymore live for ourselves.

Paul stated the same Truth in Romans 6.

Romans 6:1-4

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

² *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

³ *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

⁴ *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Therefore, based upon all of this Paul tells the Corinthians in 5:16 that his new life in Christ had completely changed the way he evaluated people.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:17

Here Paul gets right down to the bottom line. He makes it clear that if anyone is IN CHRIST they are a new creature and old things are passed away and all things are become new. I want to break this verse down and help you to see what Paul is saying here.

1. **First of all to be IN CHRIST is to be saved and it speaks of our position in Christ. We were baptized into Christ the moment we were saved.**

1 Corinthians 12:13

¹³ *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

In Christ we are perfect and complete.

Colossians 2:10

¹⁰ *And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:*

Now our new POSITION in Christ then brings about a change as Paul states in this verse.

2. **Now we need to understand what the old things are that have passed away and what the new things are.**

Let me start by making it clear that Paul is not saying here that when we were baptized into Christ that we stopped sinning. We are still sinners in practice. We are perfect in position but we are not yet perfect in practice.

1 John 1:8-10

⁸ *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

⁹ *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

¹⁰ *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

Now we do need to understand that while the believer still sins, when he or she is saved the pattern of sin is broken.

1 John 3:5-10a

⁵ *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.*

⁶ *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*

⁷ *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

⁸ *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

⁹ *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

¹⁰ *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God...*

John here is speaking of the pattern of sin in a person life. This is broken when we get saved because Jesus came to take away our sins. That is to take them from our lives and from our account. This is all true of the believer.

But this is not what Paul is directly speaking of here in 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:17 again.

The word "therefore" in this verse points us back to what Paul has just said. Because he was crucified with Christ and was resurrected with Christ he now lived a NEW LIFE and in this NEW LIFE he no longer evaluated people the same as he did before he was saved.

Now here in verse 17 he is thinking beyond himself and he says, "If **ANY MAN** be in Christ he is a new creature, meaning that if any man is saved he too will view and evaluate people in a completely different way.

Example: Years ago before I was saved I met a man when I worked in DC and he was a former Washington Redskin football player. He played in a Super Bowl and loved to come up from DC and fish in the Raystown Lake. It was great to have a friend who was an NFL player. I looked at him as my "claim to fame". I have not spoken with him for a long time but I can now say that my evaluation of Jim has changed. You see now I find myself wondering if he is a believer. The football means very little but his soul is a great concern. The point is Paul was changed and he knew that ANY PERSON who was in Christ would look at and evaluate people in a completely different way. The miraculous work would work within them. It is a spiritual awakening.

Old things are passed away. I want to give you something to think about here. This is a reference to how we used to view things in our life. If we could have made a list of

important things within our lives before we were saved and placed them in an order of importance and value and then take that list after we were saved I can assure you the list of priorities would surely change. We may not throw everything out but I can assure you that after we were saved the value and importance of things on the list would change. This is exactly what Paul is talking about here.

Then he says "Behold, all things are become new". This could also read, "New things have now come". This means that as we continue our new life in Christ our evaluation and value of the things in life are constantly changing. This is a reference to our progressive sanctification which means we are becoming more and more like Jesus Christ and so eternity becomes more of our focus. The word "BEHOLD" is a statement of jubilation.

Conclusion:

I will leave you with the words of Albert Barnes on "new things":

"Things in view of the mind. The purposes of life, the feelings of the heart, the principles of action, all become new. The understanding is consecrated to new objects, the body is employed in new service, the heart forms new attachments. Nothing can be more strikingly descriptive of the facts in conversion than this; nothing more entirely accords with the feelings of the new-born soul. All is new. There are new views of God and of Jesus Christ; new views of this world and of the world to come; new views of truth and of duty; and everything is seen in a new aspect and with new feelings. Nothing is more common in young converts than such feelings, and nothing is more common than for them to say that all things are new. The Bible seems to be a new book; and though they may have often read it before, yet there is a beauty about it which they never saw before, and which they wonder they have not before perceived. The whole face of nature seems to them to be changed, and they seem to be in a new world."