

Rev Murdo M Campbell - 2 Corinthians 5:17

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Preacher: Guest Preacher

[0 : 00] Well, if we could this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, then Paul's second letter to the Corinthians in chapter 5, second Corinthians 5, and if we just take as our text the words of verse 17.

In Corinthians 5, verse 17, well-known words to many of us I'm sure, but Paul says there, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

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

Behold, the new has come. Now, in the society and the world that we live in today, I'm sure that we're all aware of the push that's made by advertisers and companies.

They present to us all their, you could say, superficial products because there are shops and they promote books and DVDs and they have all these things on how to exercise and how to cook low calorie foods and how to think positively and how to give up smoking, how to have a good life, how to have a healthy lifestyle.

[1 : 27] And each of these products, they all promise to us that they will change our appearance and they will change our life and they will renew our life. But the reality of all these changes is that although many of them are of great benefit to us and they're very helpful, but the problem is they're all superficial.

They're all about the outward appearance. They're all about how you look and how you're perceived by others and they go no deeper than the surface. But you know, when we come to this version, second Corinthians, Paul reminds us that when the Lord works in our life, none of it is superficial because when the Lord works in our life, he works from the inside out.

When God works in our life, we become an entirely new person in Christ. But you know, the interesting thing is that even though we're bombarded by the world to adopt this superficial lifestyle and this have this appearance and be accepted by society, even though the world is bombarding us with this, in Paul's day, it was the church.

It was the church that was promoting this superficial religion of acceptance and appearance. Because when Paul wrote second Corinthians, the Corinthians were being overrun by false teachers and false teaching.

And the false teachers, they were teaching what they were teaching was that in order to be this proper Christian, you had to be of a certain class. You had to have a certain amount of knowledge and you had to have a certain level of wealth.

[3 : 07] In order to be a Christian or in order to be termed a Christian, you had to be worthy of such a title. And you know, at the time Corinth, it was a wealthy seaport city.

It had made its fortune by being this key trade route on the Mediterranean. And as with every wealthy city at the time, there were always these different classes of people.

There were those who were rich and educated and there were those who were poor and uneducated. And as you can expect, there was a divide between the classes. There was this divide that was superficial.

It was all based upon appearance and acceptance. And despite Paul's first letter to the Corinthians that was very doctrinal and it was trying to address divisive issues in the church, the false teachers had disregarded the first letter and they had undermined Paul's teaching.

And instead of preaching Christ, they continued to promote this superficial Christianity. But you know, as Paul addresses the second, the Corinthians in a second letter, and as he addresses the false teaching that they're being bombarded with, he reminds them that when the Lord works in our life, his work doesn't depend upon what kind of person we are.

[4 : 27] It doesn't depend upon our wealth, our class, our education, our gender, our appearance, our age, our race, or even our past.

No Paul reminds us here that the Lord is able to work in anyone's life. The Lord is able to make anyone a new creation.

And no one is exempt, he says, for whatever reason. And that's what Paul says here. Or if anyone, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the oldest passed away, behold, the new has come. And what this Paul emphasizes that the Lord is able to work in the life and heart of anyone. And my friend, when the Lord works in your life, he gives to you a new position.

He makes you a new person, and he assigns to you a new purpose. When the Lord works in your life, he gives you a new position.

[5 : 33] He makes you a new person, and he assigns to you a new purpose. And they are our three headings this evening, a new position, a new person, and a new purpose.

So we look first of all at this new position, a new position. He says, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold, the new has come.

And notice the words, if anyone is in Christ. Now it's often said that large doors swing on small hinges.

And in the Bible, large theological truths, they swing on small words. And you can't get much smaller than the word in Christ.

But with this small word, Paul is reminding us that everything we are as Christians, and everything we have as Christians is because we are in Christ. We are in union with Christ.

[6 : 34] There is this union, this mystical marriage that exists between Jesus Christ and the Christian. And because of that union that exists with Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ provides for us every spiritual blessing in heavenly places.

One theologian put it this way. He said, union with Christ is the fountain head. And from that fountain head flows the Christians every spiritual blessing.

From the fountain head flows, he says, repentance and faith, pardon, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance and glorification.

And this means that every spiritual blessing, it's all bound up with the Christians union with Christ. And you know, Paul, he loves this concept of union with Christ.

He talks about it in almost every letter that he writes. And he's emphasizing how precious our salvation is because of our new position in Christ, our union with Christ.

[7 : 43] But you know, we also have to remember what Paul doesn't say here. Because Paul doesn't say if anyone is in church, they're a new creation. He doesn't say if anyone reads their Bible, if anyone went to Sunday school, if anyone prays, if anyone is a minister or an elder or a deacon or a church member.

No Paul says if anyone is in Christ, they're a new creation. It's a new position. Because to be in Christ is to believe in Jesus Christ.

To be in Christ is to be committed to Jesus Christ. To be in Christ is to have repented of our sin and turned from it and turned to Jesus Christ for our salvation.

To be in Christ is to have put your entire trust upon Jesus. It's to be washed in his blood. It's to be clothed in his righteousness. And it's to be made a son or a daughter of our heavenly Father.

My friend to be in union with Christ is to be committed and to be connected to Jesus Christ. And maybe I don't know your situation for all of you tonight, but maybe before you disqualify yourself completely.

[8 : 57] Remember this is for anyone. Paul is saying therefore, if anyone is in Christ, this new beginning, this new you, he says, is for anyone.

If anyone is in Christ, there are new creation. But you know, Paul draws our attention to our new position in Christ. Because that wasn't always the case.

We weren't always in Christ. None of us started out life in Christ. Because the truth is we all started out life in Adam.

And when you look at Paul's letters, that's the teaching he emphasizes over and over again, that everyone in the world, they are either in one of two positions.

They are either in Adam or they are in Christ. And what Paul teaches us is that there are only two types of people that God sees.

[9 : 54] Those who are clothed in the sin of Adam, or those who are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. There are only two types of people who come to church, those who are in Adam or those who are in Christ.

And of course, Paul teaches this because we need to come to the realization that being in Adam, it leads to death. First Corinthians 15, that's his first letter to the Corinthians.

Paul put it so succinctly to the Corinthians. He said, as in Adam, all die. But in Christ shall all be made alive. And what Paul is showing us is that when we are in union with Adam, when we are in Adam, we receive everything that Adam received at the fall.

We receive physical death, spiritual death, and separation from God. And that's our starting point. We were all born in Adam, conceived in guiltiness and sin.

And all that was true of Adam was true of me and you. Because when Adam sinned, we sinned. When Adam fell, we fell. When Adam was subjected to death, we were subjected to death.

[11 : 06] When Adam was condemned, we were condemned. When Adam was cursed, we were cursed. Romans 5:12 says, as by one man's sin entered into the world and death by sin.

So death passed upon all men, for all have sinned. And you know, this is just the teaching of our catechism. All mankind descending from Adam by ordinary generation sinned in Adam, in union with Adam, and they fell with Adam in union with Adam in his first transgression.

We fell with Adam because we were in union with Adam. And that was our starting position. But Paul says, when we repent of our sins, when we confess Jesus to be our Lord and our Savior, and when we commit our lives to Jesus Christ and walk in the ways of righteousness, we're given a new position.

We're no longer in Adam, but we're now in Christ. We are in union with Christ. And when we are in union with Christ, this is the wonder of it, we receive everything that Christ has.

And you know, this is how close and how intimate our union with Christ really is. Because when we are in Christ, Paul says, you look at all his letters, he says, we are joint heirs with Christ.

[12 : 30] He also says we have an inheritance in Christ. We are accepted before the Father in Christ. We are righteous in Christ. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Paul says to the Ephesians, you are chosen in Christ, you're redeemed in Christ. Your old self has been crucified with Christ. You've died with Christ.

You've been buried with Christ. You've been raised with Christ. You've been seated in heavenly places in Christ. We have life in Christ. And because we're in Christ, his life is now our life.

And all that belongs to Jesus Christ is ours because of our new position in Christ. And you know, my friend, there is no better position to be in than to be in Christ.

To be in Christ, because to be in union with Christ is to have everything. But to be outside of Christ is to have nothing.

[13 : 42] As in Adam all die, but in Christ all are made alive. And so Paul is reminding us here that when the Lord works in your life, he gives to you a new position.

But secondly, we see that when the Lord works in your life, he makes you a new person. He makes you a new person. Read this verse again. He says, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. And so in this verse, Paul emphasizes that the Lord is able to work in the life and heart of anyone.

The Lord is able to give anyone a new position in Christ. And the Lord is able to make anyone a new person in Christ.

But when Paul says that the Lord is able to make anyone a new creation in Christ, he's emphasizing that the work which the Lord does and the change which the Lord performs, it's not superficial.

[14 : 45] It's not an exterior or an outward transformation. The change and the transformation, it's all inward and it's all spiritual. Because it's a transformation of our heart, our mind, our soul, our will, and our character.

And Paul says it's not a partial change. It's a complete change. It's a complete transformation. And what Paul is saying to us is that when you are a new person in Christ, it's not a renovation of the old person.

It's not even a reformation of our old heart, mind, soul, will, and character. No Paul says it's a complete demolition. It's a demolition of the old person.

Right to the foundation. And then it's a new build. Because he says again and again, the old man, he's dead and buried. But in Christ, he says, you're a new creation. You're not a renovation. You're a new creation in Christ. And this is what Paul is stressing to us that when we are a new person in Christ, we are made new.

[15 : 57] And that word new, it means new of a totally different kind. New of a totally different quality. New of a totally different value.

You are a new creation, not a renovation. And what Paul is emphasizing is that if anyone is in Christ, he or she is a brand new person.

Yes, you'll have the same body and you'll have the same family and the same job and the same hope. But in the inside, he says, on the inside, there's an entirely new you.

And this is what it means to be born again. Paul is teaching here just the new birth. And he's not only emphasizing the need to be born again. He's also reminding us of what happens when you're born again.

Because when you're born again, as Jesus says, you enter the kingdom of God. And that was the teaching of Jesus given to Nicodemus about the new birth.

[17 : 01] You remember that nighttime meeting in John chapter three where Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. And Jesus said to Nicodemus that unless someone is born again, they cannot enter the kingdom of God.

And as you read in John three, Nicodemus, he struggled with this concept. He couldn't understand how anyone could be born again when they're old. Nicodemus couldn't understand how someone could be a new person when they're an old person.

Of course, we know that Nicodemus was only thinking in physical terms, but Jesus was talking in spiritual truths. Jesus was speaking about the need to have this spiritual birth.

Because when Nicodemus asked Jesus, how can a man be born when he's old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb? Jesus answered Nicodemus and said, unless someone is born of water and of the spirit, they cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of flesh is flesh, but that which is born of spirit, the spirit. And Jesus's point was that when we're born again, when we're made a new person in Christ, we're made brand new.

[18 : 18] We experience a new birth and a new beginning and it's all a work of the Holy Spirit. It's a spiritual birth. And that's what Paul is saying here, that our spiritual birth, it brings this radical change in our lives.

Our spiritual birth makes us a brand new person. And this change says Paul, it's so dramatic, so powerful, so radical, so fundamental that without it we cannot be saved.

Because this spiritual birth, this new birth, this new you, it's from death to life. It's from darkness to light.

It's from the old to the new. And that's what Paul is saying here, the old passes away and all becomes new.

And you know, when we experience the new birth, it doesn't just affect certain compartments and certain areas of our life.

[19 : 20] The new birth should affect every area of our life. My friend, when we are birthed into the kingdom of God, that new birth doesn't just affect our little religion box.

It doesn't just reschedule our timetable to include church twice on the Lord's Day and the prayer meeting during the week. No, when we are in Christ, when we are a new creation, when we experience the new birth, when we're birthed into the kingdom of God, that new birth should affect every area of our lives.

Because when everything is made new on the inside, it should affect us personally. It should affect our heart, our mind, our soul, our feelings, our conscience, our will, our affections.

My friend, when we're birthed into the kingdom of God, it should affect everything. Every area of our lives, it should affect our relationships, our marriage, our friendships, our home, our family, our children, our job, our conversations, our money, our lifestyle.

Our new birth is so dramatic and so effective that it should affect everywhere we go, what we do, what we say, how we think, how we act.

[20 : 44] It should affect every area of our lives. Because when we are in Christ, everything should be about Christ.

He is to be first, we are to be last. He must increase, we must decrease. He must have the supremacy, we must experience submission.

He must have the honour, and we must have humility. Because when we are in Christ, it's not about us, it's all about Him.

And it's always about Him. Because when we are in Christ, we have died to sin, we have died to self, we have submitted our lives to Jesus Christ, and we live under His Lordship.

And this is what Paul means when he says, the old, it passes away. Because when we're a new person, it's not just that we were, we're not the person we once were.

[21 : 41] When we're a new person in Christ, it means that the old person has died. The old man is dead. The old self is dead.

The old Adam in you is dead. Yes, there's this constant battle that goes on with the flesh, but the old things have passed away.

And this word old that Paul uses here in verse 17, it's where we get the word archaeology from. And as you know, an archaeologist is just someone who digs up things from the past.

They dig up fragments of history, bones from long ago. And with that, Paul is saying that when we are in Christ, our old life, it's ancient history.

It's in the past. It's gone. It's dead. It's buried. And in order to stress the deadness of our old life or the old person or the old things that we used to enjoy, Paul says the old things, they've passed away.

[22 : 49] Which means to die. That's the phrase we often use to describe someone who has died. We say that they they passed away. And that's what Paul is saying that happens when we become a Christian.

Our old self, the old man, the old life, the old lifestyle, the old person dies. It passes away. It perishes. It vanishes.

Because when someone when when anyone is born again, when you are born again, the old person dies and your old heart is taken away. Your old values are gone.

Your old pursuits, they perish. Your old loves and your old desires, they're no longer dominant.

Your old beliefs, they're buried. Your old passions, they're gone.

Your old priorities, they're gone. Your old practices are gone. Your old plans are gone. It's all a thing of the past. It's ancient history. That doesn't mean you become sinless, of course not.

[23 : 49] But it does mean that your desire for these things has completely changed. The reality is we all know that we battle with the flesh.

The temptations are there. They're always causing this conflict in our lives. And it was the great apologist C.S. Lewis. He once said, the devil is a grave digger.

And the devil will dig up your past and he will dig up what you once were. But you must always remember that God has buried what you once were in Adam.

And you need to remember that God has buried what you once were in Adam. And so as a Christian, you are now alive in Christ.

You've been raised with Christ. And this is what Paul wants us to see for ourselves. That it's a glorious thing to be a new creation in Christ. But what Paul makes clear here is that in order to be a new creation, both the old things have to pass away and the new things have to come.

[24 : 59] Because if the new things come and the old things don't pass away, then we're contradicting ourselves. We would be hypocrites.

But that's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible doesn't teach the Christian to be a hypocrite. The Bible doesn't teach the Christian to live as if the new things have come and still hold on to the old things.

The Bible doesn't teach us to love God and do us we please. Because when you're in Christ, when you're a Christian, there must be this passing away, this deadness being pushed away from us.

And then the coming of the new. And you know, the interest and the desire for the new, it must far outweigh the interest and the desire for the old. And that's why Paul says this little word, behold.

The old is passed away. Behold, the new has come. And by using the word behold, Paul is saying to us, this is amazing.

[26 : 01] This is wonderful. This is this is stunning, he says, when the Lord works in your life, the old things, they not only pass away and die.

The new things, they come. And these new things, he says, they're not only new when they come. They're not only new on the day of your conversion.

Paul is emphasizing here, they're new every day, every day. And you know, this is what's amazing. This is why he says, behold, what's amazing is that when you're a Christian, is it not the case you don't get tired of following Jesus.

You don't get bored of being a Christian. Because he's new, he's ever new. He's new every day. His mercies towards us, as Jeremiah reminds us, they're new every morning.

When we read our Bible, when we sit to read our Bible and to pray his words to us, yes, they're old, but to us, they're ever new.

[27 : 11] New every day. And you know, the wonder of it all is that when we are made new in Christ, we are being renewed day by day.

And this renewing as Paul teaches throughout his letter, this renewing, it will continue not only in this world, but also in the world to come, will be made more knowledgeable of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

My friend, when the Lord works in your life, he not only gives to you this new position, and he not only makes you a new person, but lastly, he also assigns to you a new purpose.

A new purpose. So a new position, a new person, and a new purpose. Look again at verse 17. He says, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The oldest 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.

[28 : 21] So Paul reminds us in these verses that when the Lord works in your life, you are a new creation in Christ. And when you're a new creation, you're given a new position.

You're made a new person. And he says, he goes on to say in verse 18, that our new position, and the fact that we're a new person, it's all from God because Jesus Christ has reconciled us to himself.

And Paul says that because Christ has reconciled us to himself, we're no longer in Adam, we're now in Christ. And because we have this new position, because we're a new person, he says we have now a new purpose.

We have a new purpose. And Paul says that our new purpose is that we have received the ministry of reconciliation. Christ reconciled us to himself and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation.

And in verse 19, Paul explains what that means. He says, 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.

[29 : 34] And so as those of us who are Christians, we have a new position. And as those who are a new person, we also have a new purpose. We have been entrusted, as Paul says, with the ministry and message of reconciliation.

Therefore, therefore, he says in verse 20, we are ambassadors for Christ. We are representatives of Christ. God making his appeal through us.

What's the appeal? We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. And with that, Paul is saying that as those who are now in Christ, we have a new purpose.

And our new purpose is that we are ambassadors for Christ. We are representatives of the King. We are to be witnesses for King Jesus.

That's our new purpose. That's our new ministry. And our message is in which God is making his appeal through our witness. He's making his appeal through our witness.

[30 : 39] And he's making his appeal, you could say, through our confession and even through our profession. God is making his appeal through us to those who are still in Adam, those in our homes, those in our families, those in our workplace, those who are still in Adam.

And our message, we implore you, we beg you, we plead with you, be reconciled to God.

Because why? Say, in verse 21, for our sake, he made him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

And so as a Christian, that's our new purpose. That's our new ministry. That's our message. Be reconciled to God.

And you know, thinking about it, that's the message that comes when you sit at the Lord's table together. You're pleading with those behind the fence. Be reconciled to God.

[31 : 43] We beg you. We implore you on behalf of Christ. Be reconciled. Come into the fold. And that's our ministry. That's our message.

And the message and the ministry, it's not to be delivered by pulpit. It's to be delivered by person. Our character, our conduct, and our conversation.

That's to be the means by which we fulfill our new purpose. That's how we fulfill our ministry and deliver our message. Our character, our conduct, and our conversation.

Because as those with a new position, and as those who are a new person, we have a new heart, do we not? A heart that loves God and a heart that beats for the things of God.

We have a new mind. A mind that thinks like Christ because we're drawing in from His word. We look at the world differently to the way we once did. We also have a new perspective.

[32 : 44] It's an eternal perspective. We know that we're only passing through. We know that here we have no continuing city, but we await the one that is to come.

And we know that we await the one that is to come because we have new eyes. We have eyes that were once blind and closed to the gospel, but now we can see.

We have new ears. Ears that were once deaf to the sound of the gospel and deaf to the preaching of God's word that it was penetrating no deeper than the surface.

But now as a new creation in Christ, we've heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest. We have a new perspective.

We have new eyes. We have new ears. We have a new mouth. A mouth from which once came cursing and blasphemies and vanities.

[33 : 36] But now the Lord has put a new song in our mouth. Why to magnify our God and to bear witness to Christ to be an ambassador for Christ.

We have new feet that once walked according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air. But now we have a new direction. We now walk towards God to the things of God to the house of God to the people of God and to the word of God.

We walk in a new direction. It's all new. We have a new purpose. We have a new ministry, a new message. And that ministry and message is to be delivered, my friend, by your character, your conduct and your conversation.

Because when the Lord gives to you a new position, when he makes you a new person, he gives to you a new purpose.

And you know, when you have a new purpose, there's also a new product. You begin to bear fruit in your life.

[34 : 44] Fruit that is to be obvious to others. There to see the new position you have. There to see that you're a new person.

There to see that you have a new purpose. There to see changes in your character, your conduct and your conversation. And because of that change, they will know through your life and through your witness that your message to them is, we beg you, we implore you, we beseech you.

In Christ's stead, be reconciled to God. My friend, if anyone, if any of you are in Christ, then Paul is saying, this is the new you.

This is the new you. This is what the Lord has done in your life. He's given you a new position. He's made you a new person and he's assigned to you a new purpose.

And if this describes you, then your position and your place is at the Lord's table this coming Lord's day.

[36 : 07] May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord our gracious God, we marvel and we wonder at what Christ has done for us.

We give thanks to thee for that beautiful union that exists between the Christian and their Savior. And that we have this great promise that he will never leave us and he will never forsake us.

We thank thee O Lord that as Paul reminds us that it is Christ in you, the hope of glory. And Lord we bless thee and we praise thee that he has begun that good work in us and he will bring it on to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.

Bless us Lord together in our fellowship one with the other. Help us we pray to bear one another's burdens. Help us to spur one another on.

To keep pressing towards this mark of the high call of God in Christ Jesus. O Lord watch over us we pray. Guide us and keep us.

[37 : 15] And help us to stand on the side of Christ for time and for eternity. Do us good then take away our iniquity. Receive us graciously for Jesus' sake. Amen.