

The Love of Christ Changes Us

II Corinthians 5:16-17

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Introduction: We begin today the New Year of 2023. What does this year have in store for us? Fortunately we can't see what the future holds, but as the song writer said, "We know who holds the future." If difficult times come our way, Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians gives us Scriptural comfort in our times of spiritual crisis. When Paul was tempted to despair, pressured into despondency, & subject to discouragement, he found solace & encouragement in his relationship with God. Paul is able to declare confidently in chapter 4:1, "*Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.*" He adds later, "*For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day*" (4:16). He gave 3 reasons why he did not give up or throw in the towel: (1) Divine mercy received; (2) Divine power recognized; & (3) Divine focus reported. Such reality of Christ's love is developed by Paul in verses 14-21. The love of Christ is that which compels (:14-15), completes (:16-17), & commands (:18-21) Paul as well as us. In these verses we learn of Paul's inward motivation (:14-15), his spiritual transformation (:16-17) & his outward exhortation (:18-21). Note with me this morning the love of Christ that completes, that is, love which changed Paul from a simple head knowledge of Christ (:16) to a sincere heart belief in Christ (:17). Note "new things for the New Year!"

I. Changed from a **simple head knowledge** of Christ (:16)

A. Paul's previous human assessment > "*man after the flesh...*"

1. **Men** are judged based on:

- a. Their person (physical appearance) - see I Samuel 16:7 & cf. II Corinthians 10:7.
- b. Their position (social standing).
- c. Their power (political strength).
- d. Their prosperity (material wealth) – see James 2:1-13.

2. **Christ** is judged based on:

- a. His person - Isaiah 53:2, "*For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, & as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; & when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.*"
- b. His position - Matthew 9:10-11, eating with publicans & sinners.
- c. His power - Isaiah 53:3, "*He is despised & rejected of men; a man of sorrows, & acquainted with grief: & we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, & we esteemed Him not.*" (see also Matthew 27:42).
- d. His prosperity - Luke 9:58 (borrowed home, donkey, tomb, etc.).

"...in his pre-conversion days (Paul) had judged Jesus by external considerations in the light of the prejudices of his upbringing, & had concluded that it was impossible that one born in such obscurity, living in such restricted circumstances & dying such a humiliating death, could be the Christ that the Jews were expecting" (Tasker).

B. Paul's present divine acknowledgment > "*yet now henceforth...*"

1. Seeing **mankind** from God's perspective:

- a. No respect of persons - Romans 2:11, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25.
- b. No race, class or gender distinctions - Galatians 3:28 & Romans 10:12.

2. Seeing **Christ** from God's perspective:

- a. The Son of God - Acts 9:3-6 & cf. John 3:16.
- b. The Savior of the world - Acts 26:22-23 & cf. I John 4:14.

II. Changed to a **sincere heart belief** in Christ (:17)

["*in Christ*" - see Hughes, p. 202 & "Being in Christ not only changes a man's eternal destination, it changes the man!" (Mazak)]

A. Results in a new creation ("*creature*") - "*he is a new creature*" >

1. Speaks of **redemption** - we are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. See I Peter 1:18-19.
 - a. The price of redemption: Ephesians 1:7 - the blood of Christ.
 - b. The purchase of redemption: I Corinthians 6:19-20 - the life for Christ.
2. Speaks of **regeneration** - we are regenerated by the power of the Lord. See Romans 1:16.
 - a. The Spirit of the Lord - Titus 3:5 (& cf. John 3:3-7).
 - b. The Word of the Lord - I Peter 1:23-25 (& cf. Romans 10:17).

B. Results in a new "conversation" (conduct) - "*old things are passed away*" >

1. The **emphasis** of the verb tense - past (aorist).
 - a. Speaks of a definite moment in the past.
 - b. Refers to the point of salvation.
2. The **effect** on the life - "*passed away*."
 - a. "...the distinctions, prejudices, misconceptions, & enslavements of the former unregenerate way of life - assume the character of pastness" (Hughes).
 - b. "...old thoughts, old principles, & old practices are passed away" (Henry).

Has there been a change in your conduct? conversation? companions? character?

C. Results in a new consecration - "*all things are become new*" >

["*Behold*" - "This response of delight & wonderment cannot fail to be evoked in the hearts of those to whom the miracle of God's new creation is revealed" (Hughes).]

1. The **emphasis** of the verb tense – perfect.
 - a. "Have come" - "...continuing implications of the new things which salvation brings" (Maz.).
 - b. Refers to the progress of sanctification.
2. The **evidence** in the life - "*new*" - Having experienced the new birth (John 3:7), one should:
 - a. Exhibit a new name > Revelation 2:17, 3:12 (& see Acts 11:26, "*Christians*").
 - b. Exalt a new master > Romans 10:9.
 - c. Exercise a new man > Ephesians 2:15, 4:24; I Timothy 4:7; & Colossians 3:10.
 - d. Express a new song > Psalm 40:3 (consider its source, substance, & success).
 - e. Exclaim a new message > II Corinthians 5:19-20.
 - f. Expect a new home > I Peter 1:4-5.

Conclusion: How do you see Jesus Christ this morning? Is He simply a well-known religious figure, a great teacher, a willing martyr? Is your concept of Christ limited to a simple head knowledge? Or have you been changed, regenerated by His love? Do you have a sincere heart belief in the One Who loved you, & gave Himself for you? Having experienced the new birth, are you exalting a new master? Are you exercising a new man? Are you expressing a new song? Are you exclaiming a new message? Are you expecting a new home? Paul declares, "*Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*" This little verse speaks of salvation, transformation & sanctification. Consider the illustration: "The Touch of the Master's Hand." Is that true of you this morning? If there is no evidence of this new life in Christ, consider seriously the challenge of Paul given in chapter 13, verse 5, "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*" If you are not certain of your relationship to Christ & want to make sure of your eternal destiny, come today & be reconciled to God. Begin this New Year as "*a new creature*" in Christ!