

2 Cor 5:16-21 - Building Your Faith – July 18, 2021

Text (ESV)

¹⁶From 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. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Questions to Consider

- Consider what you know about the cultural and social context of Corinth in the first century. We learn a lot about the Corinthian church just from Paul's two letters to them. What are some parallels from that context to our own?
- People will often use the term "post-Christian" to describe the social, cultural, and religious landscape of our world today. What does that phrase mean to you? Would you agree that our context is aptly described as post-Christian?
- These verses pick up after Paul writes about being compelled (or controlled) by the love of God. As a result they no longer regard anyone "according to the flesh." If "according to the flesh" is no longer the lens through which Paul "sees" people, then what lens is he using? What might it mean to regard someone "according to the flesh"?
- Verses 18-21 seem to be taken or adapted from an early Christian credal statement on Jesus' death (i.e. a statement about what Christians believe about Jesus and his death). On the back of this sheet or elsewhere, note down all that Paul says about Jesus and his death in these verses. For example, what did Jesus do? What happened on the cross? What affect did the cross have on others?
- The "we" that Paul is referring to throughout this passage is Paul and his ministry companions (esp. other apostles). Taken narrowly, then, Paul writes that the ministry of reconciliation was given to Paul and the other apostles/ministry leaders. From what you know from other Bible passages, do you think this can be (or should be) taken broadly to understand that *all* Christians are given the ministry and message of reconciliation?
- Paul is encouraging those who are already Christian to be "reconciled to God." Since Christians are justified (i.e. put right with God) at conversion, how can Christians be in a position needing to be reconciled to God?