

## We are God's New Creation

2 Corinthians 5:17

**This passage of scripture is filled with *wonder* and *challenge*.** I believe if we were to really understand just what God is telling us right here it would change the way the body of Christ operates today. These words are filled with *wonder* because of what they reveal that those of us who have been saved, have been *recreated*, we are brand new *creatures* in Christ Jesus. Because of our new relationship with Christ our life will never ever be the same again.

**These words are filled with *challenge* because they also remind us that we have a new standard to live by.** Therefore, Paul deals with the reality of the Christian life.

**What is Paul saying here?** What does he mean when he says “in Christ”? What does he mean by “new creation”? What is the “old” that is gone and the “new” that has come about in the life of those who are “in Christ”?

**Look first at the words “in Christ.”** You will notice that verse 17 begins with the word “therefore” which connects what Paul is about to say with what he has just taught from verses 11-16. Namely that the gospel, which he has commended to their consciences, has brought about a change in how they view themselves, one another and even Christ Jesus. **If you look at verse 16 you will see that there was a time in the life of Paul when he viewed Christ from a “worldly” perspective.** What was that perspective? Acts 26:9-11 gives us this insight, “Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted

them even to foreign cities.” **The truth of the matter is that Paul opposed Christ as a false messiah and persecuted his followers but all that changed when he met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus.** What was that change? Turn back to 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” **Paul says that Christ became sin for him and died in his place – so that he might be reconciled to God.** Therefore there was a moment in time when Paul had a broken relationship with God. There was in fact a time in the life of Paul when He was God’s enemy. **That changed when he encountered the risen Christ on the road to Damascus and he was born again.** The origins of this broken relationship with God is recorded for us in Genesis 3. When Adam and Eve disobeyed acceptance by God was replaced by rejection and alienation from God and one another. **The innocence of Adam and Eve was replaced with guilt and shame at their sin.** Dominion over the created order was replaced by weakness and helplessness. The result of that in their lives, and the lives of all mankind ever since, has been a longing to belong – to God and to one another in community. **Secondly, man’s knowledge and sense of worth, value and significance has been replaced by a sense of worthlessness and insignificance which has led man on a pursuit of power and control over self, over others and over creation.** Basically the result has been man trying to be God. In order for this broken relationship to be restored Paul tells us in verse 21 that Christ became sin for mankind and took upon Himself the wrath of God. Paul says that reconciliation with God was through the self-sacrifice and substitutionary atonement of Christ.

**Next, look at the words “new creation.”** Paul says the “old” has gone and the “new creation” has come into the life of those who have come to faith in Christ Jesus. If you want a picture of the old look at Romans 1:28-32, “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual

immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” **That sounds a lot more like today doesn't it? Why?** It is because our society is living according to the “old man” who is eternally lost and under God's condemnation. **The “old” man has self as god. The “old” man is alienated from God. The “old” man is full of sin, guilt, and shame. The “old man” judges on the outward appearance of things because he has no inward reality of the Spirit with which to make life's decisions. He sees things from a carnal point of view. His heart, his thoughts and his desires are temporal. But Paul says for those “in Christ” such an attitude, such an outlook and understanding of life is gone – it has been replaced by a “new creation.”**

**So what is this “new creation”?** **I think the easiest way to explain it is to say that our broken relationship with God has been restored and that our status before God is eternally changed.** One set of conditions and relationships have passed out of existence and another has come to stay. **Where once we were God's enemies and the objects of His wrath we are now reconciled to Him in and through the finished work of Christ on the Cross.** I want to say to you tonight that if you are in Christ Jesus, that is, if you have been born again of the Holy Spirit, then Satan can do nothing to change your spiritual status before God. Romans 5:1 tells us that we are no longer under God's condemnation. **2 Corinthians 3:17 tells us we have freedom in Christ.** Satan can however get you to believe the lie that nothing has really changed and in the process cripple your walk with Christ. Let me share with you for a few moments some of the truths of Scripture that relate directly to who I am in Christ?

**First of all, being “in Christ” means I am accepted.** John 1:12 says I am a *child of God*. John 15:15 says I am *Christ’s friend*. **Romans 5:1 says I am justified before God.** Ephesians 1:5 says I am *adopted by God*. Colossians 1:4 says I am *redeemed and forgiven*. Colossians 2:10 says *I am complete in Christ*.

**Second, being “in Christ” means I am secure.** Romans 8:1-2 says I am *free from condemnation*. Romans 8:28 says *all things work for good in my life*. **Romans 8:35-39 say I cannot be separated from God’s love.** 1 John 5:18 says I am born of God and Satan cannot harm me.

**Third, being “in Christ” means I am significant.** John 15 says *I am a branch of the true vine*. Ephesians 2:10 says *I am God’s workmanship*. Ephesians 3:2 says I can approach God freely and confidently.

**How should I then live?** It is very easy to read through those verses and to believe them intellectually but it is quite a different matter to believe them in our hearts and to live accordingly. It is so easy to listen to the negatives concerning our Christian walk with Christ and to fail to believe in our hearts and lives that we are a “new creation.” **One reason for that is that we depend too much on our feelings when it comes to our Christian faith.** While the emotional has a part to play in our Christian life, for many Christians their faith is *too dependent* on their feelings. We actually need as Paul says in Romans 12:2 to “be transformed by the renewing of our minds.” **We need to believe what the Bible, God’s Word, says about us being a “new creation” is true no matter what our feelings tell us.** Let me ask you a simple question “Does your status as a son or daughter depend on your feelings?” Of course it doesn’t. **It is an objective fact that you are a son or daughter – feelings don’t enter into that objective truth.** However, feelings can and do affect your relationship with your parents. Let me illustrate it further. **For those of you who are married – is your marital status dependent on your feelings?** No, it isn’t and

it shouldn't be. The fact you are married is based upon a public ceremony before God and witnesses in which you made a commitment of your wills – it is an objective fact. Your marriage relationship is of course affected by your emotions but your emotions do not nullify your marriage. Just because you do not feel married does not change your marital status. It is the same with our relationship with God – the objective fact is secure and we need to believe it and we need to rest secure in that knowledge. The objective fact is not changed by your feelings but your relationship with God can be affected by your emotions. Your security in Christ is not dependent on your emotional barometer. The problem with a lot of you is that your emotions, your feelings dictate the spiritual thermometer of your lives. If you were to plot your walk with God on a graph there would be a series of highs and lows and would correspond to your emotional highs and lows. That is why we have been told to bring every thought captive under the Word of God. We need to bring every feeling captive under the Word of God. When we listen to the Word of God and not our feelings then we will begin to understand who we are and we will begin to live accordingly. When we start to bring our feelings under the control and guidance of Scripture then we will begin to be secure in the knowledge of who we are in Christ. Then we will cease to be a spiritual “yo yo” and start to walk in securely in our faith.

Another reason we fail to live as a “new creation” is because we have not believed that we are a “new creation.” For too many believers the Christian life is one of *failure*, of *disillusionment*, of *disappointment* and one in which the “old man” still seems to rule. Why is that? I think it is because while many believers have a head knowledge that they have been born again, and also a knowledge of what the Scriptures say about being a “new creation,” their hearts have never grasped nor believed the change. Their *mind* is still thinking as the “old man” thought. The problem is they have never brought their mind under the Lordship of Christ and under the influence of His Word. Their mind cannot be renewed or transformed because,

although they have been saved, they have never been willing to bring their “flesh” desires under the Lordship of Christ. The world dictates the direction of their life and they wonder why you are disappointed and disillusioned as a Christian. That is why Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:16 “...we no longer view anyone from a worldly point of view...” He wants the believers at Corinth to think with a Christian mind when they look upon someone else. He is saying that believers must choose to look at things or people as they once did because they are now in Christ and must see with His eyes, touch with His hands, think with His mind and love with His heart. What about you? Do you who are in Christ see with the eyes of Christ? Do you touch others with the love of Christ? Do you think as Christ thinks?

Finally, if we are to believe and live as “new creations” we need to soak our minds, our hearts and our lives in the truths of God’s Word. We need to constantly remind ourselves of who we are in Christ Jesus and let those truths soak into our soul so that we not only intellectually believe them but they form the very fabric of our understanding of ourselves. We need an attitude change. We need our mind to be transformed by the Word of God. You need to bring your feelings captive under the Word of God. The truth is, the reality is – it is time as those “in Christ” to believed His Word and live His Word. It is time that we built our life on the truths of God’s Word and not on our emotions. It is time to build our life on the truth of God’s Word and what it teaches us about who we are and not on the estimations, aspirations and passing glories of this world. The truth is, we limit ourselves, and God...by how we feel about ourselves, when, in fact, God has not changed towards us one iota.

Do you remember the four-minute mile? They had been trying to do it since the days of the ancient Greeks. Someone found the old records of how the Greeks tried to accomplish this. They had wild animals chase the runners, hoping that would make them run faster. They tried tiger’s milk: not the stuff you get down at the

supermarket, I'm talking about the real thing. Nothing worked, so they decided it was physically impossible for a human being to run a mile in four minutes. Our bone structure was all wrong, the wind resistance was too great, and our lung power was inadequate. There were a million reasons. Then one day one human being proved that the doctors, the trainers, and the athletes themselves were all wrong. And, miracle of miracles, the year after Roger Bannister broke the four-minute mile. And the year after that three hundred runners broke the four-minute mile!

It is not wonder that we have been instructed to think with "the mind of Christ."