

How to Live for Jesus
2 Corinthians 5.16-21; 6.1-2
May 13

In 2 Corinthians 5.15 Paul affirmed that by the death of Christ, believers should then live "for the one who died for them and was raised" (CSB). What does it mean for a believer to live for Christ? Paul describes living for Christ utilizing the adjective "new." The emphasis is upon a life that is "new" in kind – a new kind of life.

How did Paul describe the “new kind” of life that a believer is to live for Christ?

First, living for Jesus means possessing a *new outlook* regarding evaluating people (2 Cor. 5.16). The broader context of 2 Corinthians 5 is helpful in understanding Paul’s meaning. Outsiders have infiltrated the church of Corinth. These self-proclaimed Christian leaders have bragged on their ministry and attempted to downgrade Paul’s ministry. These interlopers made two accusations against Paul. First, they examined his outward appearance – a literal translation for appearance is “face” (v. 12) rather than looking on his heart (v. 13). Second, they accused Paul of being “out of his mind (v. 13).

In response, Paul provided a theological rationale rather than a physical or behavioral basis for evaluating people. Paul ministered to all because Christ loved all and died for all (2 Cor. 5.14-15). Because of Christ's love for all and death for all, Paul refused to evaluate people from a "worldly perspective." As a Jewish rabbi living in Jerusalem, it is historically probable that Paul observed Jesus in the flesh during one of Jesus' trips to Jerusalem. Paul evaluated Jesus as a failed, deceptive Messianic claimant from a worldly perspective. Because of Jesus, Paul can never see people the same way. He has a *new outlook* regarding how he understood people.

Second, living for Jesus means an individual is a *new creation* (2 Cor. 5.17). Paul proclaimed, “The New has come”! (2 Cor. 5.17). Paul has described aspects of this “newness” in the preceding verses. Because of Christ, Paul has a New view of self (v. 15), a New view of other people (v. 16), and a New view of Christ (v. 16). In Christ, a New day has arrived. The New Covenant has been instituted. Every believer is a New Creation. Christ created a New Community of people united in Christ. The New age promised by God in the Old Testament has arrived. The Greek term translated “new” has the connotation of “freshness.” “Freshness” characterized each day for a believer.

Third, living for Jesus means the responsibility of all Christians to proclaim a *new message* (2 Cor. 5.18-21). Because of the new creation, God has given every believer a ministry of reconciliation (v. 18) and a message of reconciliation (v. 19). The concept of "reconciliation" derives from the realm of personal relationships. Everything is from God – the new outlook on people, new view of self, new view of Christ, new age of salvation, new covenant, new creation, and the new community of faith. The Newness has come because God has reconciled sinful humans unto Himself.

Paul's vibrant theology of reconciliation can be summarized as follows.

First, the necessity of reconciliation lies in the reality of human sin and rebellion against God. Human sin results in a rupture or enmity in the relationship between an individual and God. (Rom. 5:10). A state of reconciliation between God and humanity involves God “not counting their trespasses against them” (2 Cor. 5:19). As a result, believers are delivered from the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9).

Second, God is the initiator of reconciliation rather than humans. In Paul’s usage of the verb, God is the subject – the one doing the action. Reconciliation flows from the love of God (Rom. 5:8). Humans, therefore,

cannot create peace with God. Paul used a past tense form of verbs (called an aorist) to describe the reality of reconciliation.

Third, Christ is the agent of reconciliation. Paul stated that reconciliation between God and humans is through Christ (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18). 2 Corinthians 5:21 explain the how of reconciliation: "He [God] made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that [purpose] we might become the righteousness of God in Him." The phrase made "to be sin for us" is interpreted in two major ways. First, since the Greek term "sin" in the Greek Old Testament can describe "sin offering" (Lev. 4:24; 5:12), some understand the phrase regarding Isaiah 53:10 – You make Him a sin offering. Second, the statement likely means Christ bore the consequences of sin, an idea expressed in Gal. 3:13. The major point is that Christ identified with humanity and died as our substitute (for us). The purpose of His substitutionary death was that we might receive God's righteousness by union with Him.

Fourth, believers are ambassadors of the message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20). Although Christ accomplished reconciliation through His death on the cross, believers must serve as ambassadors beseeching sinner on half of God "Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). Christ died in our place to reconcile humans with God; believers proclaim the message of reconciliation in Christ's place.