

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We love to get new stuff, don't we? We get a little rush when we get something new, whether it's big or small. New house. New car. New TV. New computer. New cell phone. New bike. New clothes. Even a new pen can get you excited. (Even flowing gel with solid, non-smearing lines. It's awesome!)

But above and beyond all these new things, I know something new that you all crave: you. Don't you all crave a new you? What are your weaknesses? What are your character flaws? What are your shortcomings? If I asked you to list all things you wished you could change about yourself, would turn in an empty sheet and say, "I've got nothing. I'm good. Everything about me is exactly as it should be." I doubt anyone would do that.

I bet you'd find some things. I put together a list of things you may see in your old you that you would love to see different in a new you. You might say:

- I wish I had more patience.
- I wish I was more outspoken
- I wish I were more focused.
- I wish I could see the big picture.
- I wish I were a better planner.
- I wish I were more of a free spirit.
- I wish I was more discerning.
- I wish I was more accepting.
- I wish I worried less, could get over my guilt, wasn't so lazy, was less selfish, had more self-control, was more kind, more optimistic, had a stronger faith, prayed more regularly.
- And the list could go on and on

In so many ways, don't you wish you could have a new you? Don't you wish you could trade in your old, flawed self for a brand new you?

In the word of God before us today, our God teaches us exactly that: How you can get a new you. Let's read this whole section, and we'll then go back and take a closer look:

**2 Corinthians 5:14-21 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

The key verse of this section of Scripture is this: **If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.** Let the impact of that passage fully hit you. In Christ there is a new you. Not overhauled. Not improved. Not refurbished. New. Changed. Different. "I have a new car." Doesn't mean, I waxed

it. Got a tune up. Not even, I did a ground up restoration. I have a new car means a different one in new condition. When God says you are a new creation, he means fundamentally, totally different.

And he doesn't say that when you are in Christ you *might become / will evolve into / will gradually improve until you become / will in someday be /* a new creation. No, it says you *are* a new creation!

### **How God made us new.**

How does this happen?! First... why does it even need to happen?

God created us holy and perfect but humans didn't stay that way for long. Back in the Garden of Eden our first parents were put in a situation where they were forced to choose sides. God said not to eat from a certain tree in the Garden. Satan in the form of a serpent lied to them and told them that God was holding out on them. Something incredible would become theirs if they would just eat. Which side did they pick? Satan's side. And with that, what was good and right and perfect and true and living became bad and wrong and corrupted and a lie and dead. Adam and Eve lost their relationship as children of God. They lost the eternal life God created them to enjoy. Adam and Eve passed on this dead nature to their children... on down the line to you and I today. When I started today, I listed the things we'd like to change in our nature. Those things rang true with you, didn't they? You and I recognize that we're broken. You need a new you.

Because we are dead and broken and corrupt, and our nature is unfixable, God took action. Because of our wrongs and our rebellious attitude toward God, we owe him. We owe him big time. In fact, our debt before God is a mountain that we could never chip away at. For our disobedience we owe God our life. The only sufficient payment that can be made for us is life. We must die. But these beautiful words of Scripture teach us that God imputes to us what is not our by nature.

**“We are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ... not counting men's sins against them. He reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”**

Although the necessary payment for our debt of sin is to give up our lives now and forever, God loves us and doesn't want us to die and be punished in this way. So what did he do? He sent ONE who died for all. Because that substitute died for all, it's as if all died for their sins. The one being talked about is, of course, Jesus Christ. Jesus, the holy, perfect substitute willingly went to Calvary's cross. He was mocked and spat upon and whipped within an inch of his life... because we should have been mocked, spat upon and whipped. Nails were driven through his hands and feet, because they rightly should have been driven through our hands and feet. Jesus agonized as he was abandoned by the God, because we should have agonized abandoned by God. Jesus died, because we should have died for our sins.

**One died for all, and therefore all died. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ... not counting men's sins against them.** Reconciled means to take two people who are enemies and make them friends again. God completely changed our status before him. We are no longer enemies of God because of our selfish, rebellious, disobedient living. But in Christ Jesus we are made friends with God. He no longer counts our sins against us.

**God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** Jesus is the one who had no sin. He became sin *for us*. He became what he was not... a sinner... so that we could become what we are not: saints, holy, forgiven and right with God. In him we become the righteousness of God. In him, we are what God is looking for! In Christ Jesus, we are a new creation.

Yes, the old physical material is still there. The outward appearance is the same, but the heart is new, our identity is new, our status before God is brand new. Our attitude regarding our

relationship to God has been completely transformed and is brand new. Although in outward appearance, we the living ones appear the same, by means of God's principal of imputation, I am counted as having died (by Christ's death) and I live a borrowed life... that of the risen Lord Jesus.

I love how Martin Luther put it in this prayer: **Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness, I am your sin. You took on you what was mine; yet set on me what was yours. You became what you were not, that I might become what I was not. Amen**

Now listen, because you have this new status toward God gifted to you by God, this has some deep implications. I want to briefly talk about three things that have changed now that you are a new creation... now that there is a new you.

### 1) New attitude toward Christ.

Paul said, **"Though we once regarded Christ [with a worldly point of view], we do so no longer.** Before his conversion, the way Paul looked at Christ was as a temporal savior. And lots of people saw him that way. Jesus, the Christ, was one who might free them from Roman oppression. He was one that might heal them of their diseases. He was one who would give them a free lunch. When these things didn't materialize like they hoped, they decided to kill him. They had a worldly attitude about Christ.

We sometimes struggle with that too. We try to make Christ into a temporal savior. When I'm sick, Jesus must make me better. If I lose my job, Jesus must find me a new one. If someone wrongs me, Jesus must make them pay. If I'm almost out of money, Jesus must provide me with more. What is that attitude but looking at Jesus as a temporal savior?

But when we trust in Christ Jesus we are a new creation. We recognize Jesus for who he is: an eternal Savior. We recognize that in this sinful, broken, passing world, we are going to suffer. I might not have health restored. I might lose my job and not be able to find another one like I want. I might live in poverty or go bankrupt. The wicked might seem to prosper. But in the midst of this all I have the firm consequence that Jesus has conquered my eternal enemies. He paid my full sin-debt. He defeated Satan. Death will not hold on to me, and I *will* inherit eternal life!

So the new you does not look at Christ like the world does. We see him as he truly is. Our Substitute and Savior who restores us to a right standing with God, by imputing on us the holiness God is looking for.

### 2) New attitude toward self.

No self-loathing. No discouragement. No more improving the old you. The old you gone in Christ Jesus and the new you has been created in you. That is your true identity! Can you vividly imagine this? Your old, dirty, corrupted, broken, ugly nature is taken and nailed to the cross together with Christ. See it suffer. See it die! Now imagine the glorious, resurrected Lord Jesus, and the new you rising from the grave with him. That nature is placed in you by God.

So the Christian life, now, is not one where you try to improve you dead part of you. Rather, it's a striving to live according to the perfect, glorified nature that is *already* in you. The power to live this way is already in you! God put it there. So our life is one of putting down the old self and living according to the new-you. **"And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."**

This is a new way of thinking about yourself. No longer does the universe revolve around me, and my needs, and what's in it for me, and what's good for me, and what makes me happy. Now our universe revolves around Christ. You live for him. That's the new you.

So this means you have a **new focus and purpose to your life.** **"God gave us the ministry of reconciliation: We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us."** Has anyone ever asked you, "So what do you do for a living?"

Have you ever answered, “I am an ambassador! For Jesus Christ.” That is your new identity. It’s your new purpose for life. You are Christ’s ambassadors! God has made a new you, and he wants to do that for countless others. God wants to work through you to make other people new as well.

The next time Satan leads you to self-deprecation, or to beat yourself up, or tries to destroy your self confidence, close your ears to those lies. The truth is this: The new you is amazing. You are holy in God’s sight. Your whole life is now one lived for him. You are important... because you are an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. You are. That is the new you.

### **3) New attitude toward others.**

Briefly, the last thing I want to talk about is your attitude toward others. Paul said, “**So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view.**” This means we’ll look at people differently. We don’t take our old attitude about people and modify it a little or reinforce it a little here and there. Our approach to others is new and the opposite as before. According to the flesh, how do we measure others? We consider his social, political, financial standing, education, age, health, nationality, sex, etc. NEW way of looking at others: people who according to God’s judgment have died with Jesus, whose life belongs to Jesus. Some of the people I meet know this (like at church here, for instance.) Some of the people I meet don’t yet know this fact, and I as Christ’s ambassador need to share it with them.

Would you practice that this week? As you look at others this week, whether in your home, at work, driving around in the car, at the grocery store, wherever... consciously think: This is a person God values so highly that his Son died on a cross for him or her. Will that cause you to treat people differently? If you consciously, continuously remember God’s self-sacrificial love for the people around you, might you also start to have new attitude and Christ-like love for everyone around you?

Friends, this is a transformational teaching. Literally. I hope you walk out of here today with a clear picture of the new you! Your old sinful self died with Christ. You have a new creation in you that rose with Christ, and it is holy and perfect in God’s sight. I don’t send you away today saying, “You can change!” I send you away with the comfort, “You already are changed!” God already has created the new you. A new identity. A new status before God. A new purpose in life. A new way of thinking about Christ, about others, and about yourself. Congratulations, because connected to Christ all of you go home today with a brand new... YOU! Amen.