

The New Creation Point of View

(2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2)

May 20, 2007

There are two ways of viewing the world. One is from the way the world sees things, the other is the way the Lord sees things. And if you want to see things the way the Lord does, you see all things through the cross of Jesus.

I want to show you a video that dramatically shows the difference.

VIDEO: The cross or the crowd.

In this passage today, I want to start by zeroing in on 5:16, because if we understand what Paul says there, the rest will all make sense:

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.

Coming to Christ changes our point of view. What did Paul think of Jesus before his conversion? He almost certainly thought of Jesus as a deceiver, a magician who duped the masses, and as a failure who met His end on a Roman cross.

And what did Paul think of the followers of Jesus? At best, they were deceived; at worst, as much deceivers as he thought Jesus was. They were tearing down the Jewish faith he had cherished from childhood with the adoration of this dead magician as "lord."

That's the old point of view. God gave Paul a new point of view—a new creation point of view.

I think the wants to see to it that we all have this New Creation point of view.

It seems to me that Paul answers three false visions of life in these verses:

- 1. Life is cruel, then you die**
- 2. You can't teach an old dog new tricks**
- 3. Put off God as long as possible**

One at a time:

Life is cruel, then you die?
No—life is *full*, then you *fly*!

Look at 2 Corinthians 5:11-15:

11 Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord [as we face the bema of Christ, vs. 10], we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.

12 We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart.

13 If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.

14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

15 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.

Life is full—of opportunities to serve God! In view of the fact that we'll all stand before the judgment seat, the bema, of Christ, "we try to persuade men." Why do we do that? "Christ's love compels us" that's why. His death on the cross is the decisive event of all time and history. All who put their trust in Him have

“died” to their own agenda and belong to Him now.

We live in a deeply spiritual generation. People are interested in spiritual, not material answers for their lives and for the world. There is longing for reality that can't be supplied by material things. Further, people want to be part of a cause: fighting AIDS, or coming to the needs of the people of Dafur. Grab some meaning from Greenpeace or PETA or the NRA or Habitat for Humanity. It's a struggle for meaning in a crazy world. People long for something that lasts, something that transcends the right now. All these causes can be good, but they leave you hollow because none of them go far enough.

What goes far enough? Paul tells the answer. “The love of Christ compels us.” There is a loving Person who has gone before us through life and death and who rose up from the dead, Jesus Christ. The cross on which He died is also the cross on which He won. And now He reigns, and the day will come when all His own will stand before and give an account for our lives. That's something, someone, worth living for and even dying for.

The old point of view was, life is short and then you die. The new point of view is, life is full—full of opportunities to bring glory to the risen Jesus, and at the end, we **fly** to His presence. That's a new point of view!

Another change of view:

**You can't teach an old dog new tricks.
You can teach him new tricks if you make
him into a new dog!**

People are people, and they don't change. A liar will always be a liar, a thief and thief, a druggie a druggie, and so on. That's seeing

without the new creation, seeing without the cross. What does Paul say in 2 Corinthians 5:16-21?

*16 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. 17 Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation**; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who **reconciled** us to himself through Christ and gave us the **ministry of reconciliation**: 19 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**.*

*20 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**. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Well, what He says is that the cross is God's rescue mission for the people of planet earth. He says that if anybody is "in Christ", that person becomes a new creation. He says that God was reconciling us to Himself through Christ, and now, amazingly, has given us "the message of reconciliation."

With the "message of reconciliation" comes a new role: "ambassador": "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's method for dealing with human hearts is not to reform them, but to start them over: *Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation**; the old has gone, the new has come!* This is far more radical than anything **religion** ever came up with. Religion tries to

make old creation act like new creation. You're as likely to teach a guppy fly a space shuttle!

I need to make sure we all get this point. God isn't interested in reforming you. He's interested in crucifying you. The "old you" that could do without God, He nails to the cross with Jesus. And as He dies, the old you dies. But then He lives. There is resurrection, there is new creation, and God fills that New You with the very presence of the resurrected Lord. You get a new start with a clean slate. And we get a promotion: to the rank of Ambassador. We tell others the Good News that the King of Glory seeks peace with them.

A faithful ambassador lives in two worlds. Say that you are selected to be the US ambassador to Italy. Off you go to Rome, where you will live among Italians, learn all about their lives and hopes and needs and dreams. You live in that world. To be effective you must know that world: Italian language, music, culture, art, politics, and so forth.

But you never forget that you are an ambassador. Your ultimate allegiance isn't with Italy, but with American. You live as **the** spokesman of America among Italians.

And so, in this present world, we live as those who speak for Christ. Our final loyalty is to Him.

The world around us knows something is wrong, but believes that there isn't any problem that can't be overcome simply by trying harder with the old creation. We have a different perspective. The number one problem with the world is people who are not reconciled to God. So, seeing with eyes that see all things through the cross, we happily expend our lives on the priority of making the appeal of God, to be reconciled to God.

Before moving on, I need to point out that in vs. 21 Paul slips in, almost unnoticed, a gem. In one quick turn of phrase, he gives us a powerful picture of HOW God does the business of reconciliation:

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

I like to call this The Great Unfair Trade. Paul is saying that God, the eternal Triune God, made Him who had no sin...

(Who's that? Yes, Jesus. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus was "without sin.")

Jesus who was without sin God mad Him "sin for us." Whoa, that's a strong statement. Paul goes beyond saying that He bore our sins or that He died for our sins. He is the final sin offering. All the offerings of all the centuries found their reality is the one offering of Jesus the Son of God on the cross. And it was God's doing, not our own. It was the Father's will that the Son die there.

And on the cross, He bore human sin so fully that He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?" As the Sin-Bearer, the eyes of the Father turned away. Remember that darkness that came over the land? It's as if God cupped the His hand over the world and said, "I can see all things, but this I cannot bear."

There is a joyful ending in vs. 21, though: *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, **so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.***

That's the glory of it all. This is the Great Unfair Trade: Jesus the righteous one bears

sin; we the sinners bear His righteousness. We share in the power of His resurrection by becoming "new creatures" in Christ. And it is a different kind of new, the kind of new that never becomes old.

The old point of view was, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. The new point of view is, you can if you make the old dog into new dog. That's the miracle of the new creation through the cross and resurrection of Jesus and it's a new point of view!

That last area where there's a huge gap between the way the world sees things and the way God wants us to see things is here:

Put off God as long as possible

Because after all, serving God can't be any fun! Let me have my fun now, and when I'm old a gray, I'll get serious about God.

Kind of like the kid who sees his grandma reading the Bible all the time, and who says, "I guess she's cramming for finals!"

But he says, *Right now is the right time to get right with God.*

Look at 2 Corinthians 6:1-2:

6:1 As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.

2 For he says,

"In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you."

*I tell you, **now** is the time of God's favor, **now** is the day of salvation.*

The right time is **now**. Why is the right time **now**?

First, because tomorrow is never guaranteed. My father-in-law lived into his 90s. My father was 74 when he died. My mother was 52. My uncle was 33. There are no guarantees, so today is the day to get right with God.

Second, it's not right to assume that you can produce repentance whenever you want to. The book of Hebrews tells us that Esau put off God, and then later wanted to turn to God, but "He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears." (Hebrews 12:17) You can harden your heart against God in such a way that you **can't turn whenever you want to**. That's a risk you don't want to take.

Third, putting off God assumes that knowing and serving God is some misery to be endured compared to the fun you can have on your own. Nothing could be further from the truth. It's always better to go with God. Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart." **There is more delight—real lasting pleasure—to be found in knowing and serving God, than by anything or anyone else in this life.**

The old point of view was, serving God is hard and you should put it off if you can. The new point of view is, today is the right day to come into God's family, to be made right with God and to serve Him, because He is so wonderful.

So—how's your vision? Are you seeing things from a New Creation point of view? Ever wear a pair of those 3D glasses? Maybe you saw a movie that required wearing them to get the 3D effect. Without them, the same stunning effect is just a red and blue blur.

The world looks at Jesus and sees a blur. It looks at His death on the cross and sees confusion. It looks at life and sees a disappointment. It looks at God and sees a taskmaster.

We slip on the Cross Glasses, the New Creation glasses, and everything changes. We see Jesus the Lord. We see the cross as our hope. We see life as our opportunity to serve God. We see God and we see glory.

I can't end today without repeating the call in 2 Corinthians 6:1-2:

6:1 As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.

2 For he says,

"In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you."

*I tell you, **now** is the time of God's favor, **now** is the day of salvation.*

There's no time like **now**. If you're here today and haven't made that most important commitment, would you join me in prayer? What are you waiting for?

Dear God, today I surrender my life to You. You are worthy. Thank You, Jesus, for dying for me on the cross. Thank you for rising again from the dead and giving me hope. I accept you know as my Rescuer and my King, the Lord of my life, and I commit the rest of my life to serving You. Amen.

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