

**Sermon Series:** With All Your Heart  
**Sermon Topic:** Coming Together by Pr Rufus Chan  
**Sermon Text:** 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

16 From 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**.

17 **Therefore**, if anyone is **in Christ, he is a new creation**. The old has **passed away**; behold, the **new has come**.

18 All this is **from God**, who **through Christ reconciled us to himself** and **gave us the ministry of reconciliation**;

19 that is, in Christ God was **reconciling the world to himself**, not counting their trespasses against them, and **entrusting to us the message of reconciliation**.

20 **Therefore**, we are **ambassadors for Christ**, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, **be reconciled to God**.

21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might **become the righteousness of God**.

#### Introduction:

- Reconciliation in the Greek lexicon: “The reestablishment of an interrupted or broken relationship”.
- “Reconciliation” in the biblical context means “bringing God and man together”, re-establishing that broken relationship at Eden.
- 3 prepositions to unpack 2 Cor 5:16-21:
  - **In Christ, Through Christ and for Christ.**
- Paul repeatedly used the conjunction “therefore”. The use of “therefore” links the cause to its effect. What is before is:
  - “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” (2 Co 5:14–15.)
  - Thus, the death of Jesus for all and His resurrection is the CAUSE. And reconciliation (coming together) became the EFFECT.

#### POINT 1 – IN CHRIST: WE BECOME A NEW CREATION

- Christ died so that we might live (v15–17). This is the positive aspect of our identification with Christ. We not only died with Him, but we also were raised with Him that we might “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4) -> In Christ.

- THEREFORE, what do we need to do?
  - Because we regard Christ no longer in the flesh, likewise, we are to regard no one according to the flesh as well.
    - Paul used to regard Christ “after the flesh”, ie. evaluating Him from a human point of view. From his very own human point of view, he condemned Christ and persecuted Christians.
    - After his conversion at Damascus, Paul no longer regarded Christ in the flesh. He saw Christ as the resurrected God.
    - Likewise, Paul’s view of men changed too.
  - Those who are IN Christ are no longer in the flesh. That is to say when we look at one another, we do not see a physical body that is wasting away. We see eternal values. We look beyond the form, but into the depth of people’s hearts.
- And this is reiterated by a second “therefore”,
  - Therefore those who are IN Christ, they are a new creation. We should look at other Christians as a part of the new creation, and not evaluate them base on education, race, finances, or position in society.
  - “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).
- But note that we are a new creation, not completed creation.
  - The legal transaction of reconciliation between broken creation and God is inaugurated. What is not completed is restoration from brokenness to shalom (completeness).
  - Christians are new creation as much as they are sinners. But we now see them/ourselves as sinners made in the image of God for whom Christ died. We see them the way Christ sees them, as lost sheep who need a shepherd.

## **POINTS 2 – THROUGH CHRIST: OUR SINS ARE IMPUTED ON HIM**

- Reconciliation is mediated THROUGH Christ.
  - Paul tells us that all this is FROM God. “God was reconciling the world to himself” (v5:18).
  - Christ, however, is the agent of the reconciling work that emanates from God.
  - Initiated by God, mediated through Christ.
- Why do we have to go to God via a mediator?
  - Because the truth is that God does not have to be reconciled to man. It is actually the sinful man who must be reconciled to God. But no matter what we do, we cannot achieve that.
  - The only Person who can is Jesus Christ, and the place where He reconciles us is His cross. What has been broken in Eden is now restored at Calvary.
- But how does that work?
  - It is by imputation: It simply means “to put to one’s account.”
  - When Jesus died on the cross, all of our sins were imputed to Him—put to His account and in return, God has put to our account the very righteousness of Christ!

- Christ has atoned for our sins. Atonement refers to what Christ accomplished for us both in his life and death. Through Christ, sinners can be made “AT ONE” with God.

**Point 3 – FOR CHRIST: WE BECOME HIS AMBASSADORS, TO MEDIATE MAN TO GOD AND MAN TO MAN**

- The blessing of being reconciled with God actually comes with a responsibility.
  - We are entrusted with the message of reconciliation.
  - We are to be ambassadors FOR CHRIST. (v20)
- This reconciliation that is initiated by God and mediated through Christ, is to be represented by us.
  - “The ministry of reconciliation” (v18) simply suggests the work of those who mediate. Two ways to look at it: Vertical and Horizontal.
  - Reconciliation to God and reconciliation between men.
  - Note that when Paul uses the phrase “ministry of reconciliation” here in 2 Corinthians, he is actually talking about men’s vertical reconciliation to God. What is not explicitly implied here is the horizontal reconciliation.
  - But elsewhere in Ephesians 2:14–17, Paul speaks of the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles based on the reconciliation with God i.e. all true peacemaking between human beings necessitates peace with God. (c.f. Matthew 5:23-24)
  - Being at peace with one another does not necessarily mean we are reconciled with God. But being reconciled with God must lead us to being at peace with one another.
- But what about those we hate to the core?
  - The slanderers, the backstabbers, people who have wronged you or done you wrong or those who are just pure evil (e.g. paedophiles, ISIS etc...)
  - Forgiveness is not about letting the person go scot free, acquitted. But it is about releasing that person or circumstance go to God and letting our just and fair God to deal with that person rightfully. (2 Thess 1:6).
  - When we choose to forgive and reconcile, we are not releasing that person to be free but rather, we are freeing ourselves from the deep seated grudge, unhappiness and hurt in our hearts.

**Conclusion**

We cannot remain passive about this letter of reconciliation. If not, we are like the postman who never delivers. So for Christ’s sake, deliver well the message of reconciliation and be reconciled to one another because we are in Christ, just as we are reconciled to God through Christ.

**Cell Group Reflection & Discussion Questions:**

1. Read 2 Corinthians 5:16. You can't make a second first impression. How do you get past looking at someone in a purely human way?

2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. You are a new creation in Christ. Discuss how you are a new creation in Christ even when you sin. How does struggling with sin or past guilt not affect your status of being a new creation in Christ?

3. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-20. In these verses Paul uses the word reconciliation 5 times. Think of a relationship with a friend, relative, or co-worker that needs to be restored. What steps have you taken? What stops you? to happen

4. Discuss what it means to be an ambassador for Christ in this Covid-19 season.