

# Regarded as Reconciled

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. Good morning, yeah. As Jesse just said, my name is Alan, or Bear, whatever you want to call me. That's fine. I'll answer to many things, good, bad, and ugly.

And we are so glad that you did choose to be with us this morning, like I said earlier, because there are so many great churches in the area. So thank you for doing that. We have now been working through this book or letter called 2 Corinthians for eight weeks.

This is part eight, and man, it's been really good and powerful for me, and I hope you can say the same. If you are new or you have missed some of the series, they are all available online on our website or app, too.

So I encourage you to check them out. Today we're going to look at the last part of chapter five through the first part of chapter six. And I think no matter where you are on the spectrum of Christianity from a non-believer that may be just checking this out, to who is this Jesus, to someone that's been a Christian for 50 years, this group of verses can and should clarify who you are and how much God loves you and I.

I find myself coming back to this passage because the fact of the matter is we are all living in trying times, and life can be really hard, dark, and even lonely. And it's a good thing to remind my heart and soul that I am loved, cared for, and even bought with a price.

[ 1 : 23 ] So let's jump in and read the passage. It should be on the screen behind me, 2 Corinthians 5, starting in verse 11. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.

But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not committing ourselves to you again, but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.

For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God. If we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this, that one has died for all.

Therefore, all have died, 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. 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.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away.

[ 2 : 27 ] Behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against him, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

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

For our sake, he made him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

For he says, In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.

Behold, now is the favorable time.

Behold, now is the day of salvation. We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry. But as servants of God, we commend ourselves in every way.

[ 3 : 32 ] By great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger. By purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love.

By truthful speech and the power of God. With the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left. Through honor and dishonor. Through slander and praise.

We are treated as impostors, and yet are true. As unknown, and yet well known. As dying, and behold, we live. As punished, and yet not killed. As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.

As poor, yet making many rich. As having nothing, yet possessing everything. We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians. Our heart is wide open.

You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return, I speak as to children. Widen your hearts also. This is the word of God.

[ 4 : 35 ] There's a lot in there. We have throughout this letter, seen this tension between Paul and the church in Corinth. Where they were wanting him to be different.

They wanted a better orator or a professional speaker. Which is like modern day celebrities. Look at how much weight today's celebrities carry. Where millions and even billions of people listen to and believe what they say about anything.

Because they are a great actor or athlete. This is exactly what they wanted from Paul. And he is constantly pushing back against this. Pointing them back to God. What Paul uses again and again in this passage is the word reconciliation.

This was the term they used for paying. For the exchange of money to buy a good or service. Paul was saying again and again that their hope does not need to be put in a man and how big a celebrity they are.

But in the God that paid their debt. He reconciled them back to a right standing with himself.

Reconciliation is God's way of forgiving our sins.

[ 5 : 41 ] Verse 18 says, All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself. God so desired to make the wrong we created. That he sent his son.

Like any good parent knows. Our children are incapable of following the rules. We try every known way to help them understand the consequences. We tell them we have rules for their safety.

We love them. We care for them. We only want the best for them. And yet, they still disobey. They still cross the boundaries. We tell them all the time about the consequences.

They still disobey. My three-year-old son, soon to be four next week. So, Turner's saying, no. I'll ask him to do something. He's, no. Or better yet, and I really love this one.

I'll ask him to stop doing something or come here or whatever. And I know he hears me. And I can see him looking out the corner of his eye at me. And he just ignores me. I love, I really love that.

[ 6 : 44 ] Well, what does that sound like? That's like the whole Old Testament. God telling his children what the boundaries are. And the consequences for going outside those boundaries. We know now that he is doing this out of a heart of love and concern.

Not to be a grumpy old party pooper. The Israelites obey for a season. And then they go their own way. God allows consequences to happen. And the Israelites repent. This happens over and over and over.

God knew there would never be full restoration without divine intervention. He knew without the absolute perfect sacrifice, all hope was lost. And we were doomed to eternal separation and death.

That is the gospel. It is the good news of our debt being paid. And the great exchange of us

receiving the inheritance of Christ. And Christ receiving the punishment for all our sins. Our debt.

Our consequences. When we understand the amount of debt that Christ paid for us. As Paul does. It should lead to changes. And one of those is reconciliation.

[ 7 : 47 ] It changes how we view ourselves. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. Paul says that we are new.

We are not slightly better. But brand new. You may be checking out Christianity and thinking, Well, maybe I will not watch, you know, R-rated movies. Or cuss as much. No, this goes way beyond that.

Paul is saying, We are a brand new people. We often associate the word new. And the Bible uses the word new. With like the latest version. You know, the latest iPhone.

The new truck. Or a car. Or a boat. Etc. Those are still the same thing at the core. But just a better version. That is not the case in this context. With this word new.

This term means unlike anything ever seen before. The old us is gone. Behold, a brand new, unlike never before us, is here.

[ 8 : 48 ] We've been born again. Not by flesh and blood. But by the spirit. You may think that seems like a bit of a stretch. But that is what happened to Paul.

He did a complete 180. We'll look at Paul in a few minutes. But he was and we are a brand new creation. Because of the reconciliation offered by God.

We looked at this in 1 Peter. Here we have become exiles in this world. We are still a part of it. Actively involved. And positive member of society. But we are different. We have a different set of values.

A different source of hope. And a different Lord. Our perspective on life should be different. Not in a weird, repulsive, strange way. But in a way that makes a difference. Others should know there is something different about you and I.

We should be more caring. We should be more compassionate. Sympathetic and empathetic. The problem most of us have is that we try to add Jesus onto our values. Our hopes.

[ 9 : 46 ] Our dreams. Etc. Which are distorted and flawed at best. We think Jesus could. We think Jesus could you help me with a new back. Or a new body.

Some of you may be thinking. I thought my wife was going to be a new creation. But she still nags me all the time. What? Otis gave me that line. My don't.

Just kidding. Eat that. No. We have a new identity that is grounded in the love of Jesus. Verse 14a through 21.

The love of Christ controls us. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin. So that in him we might become the righteousness of God. We are now loved by God.

To be honest with you. When you look at this through the lens of logic. It doesn't make any sense. I get what Jesus is supposed to get. And he gets what I earned. C.S. Lewis calls this the great exchange.

[ 10 : 49 ] All we have to bring to the table is all of our shame. And imperfections. And sin. And faults. And failures. And God gives us perfection. I mean God has to be the worst banker in the history of the universe.

Who would first of all create such a deal. And then follow through with it. Paul is saying the only way someone would do this. Is love. Galatians 2.20 says.

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live. But Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh. I live by faith in the son of God.

Who loved me. And gave himself for me. Because of what Jesus did. We're reconciled. I am compelled to love and be loved by him.

John 3.16. For God so loved. If we grasp the reality of God loving us and making us new. This should lead to something else. We are free from living to please others.

[ 11 : 47 ] Verse 11b through 12. But what we are known. But what we are is known to God. And I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again. But giving you cause to boast about us.

So that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance. And not about what is in the heart. Paul is saying we aren't commending ourselves to you. We're known by God. I hope we're known to you. He's saying I hope we're known to you. But we can't control that. We aren't obsessed with outward appearance. We're obsessed with the heart. Seeing what's in the heart.

Not what's on the outside. What God sees. And what God cares about and does. Paul says because we are known by God. We now care about what he thinks more than we care about what others think.

This was a dominating thought for Paul. Impossible to do both. Galatians 1.10. For am I now seeking the approval of man or of God? Or am I trying to please man?

[ 12 : 45 ] If I were still trying to please man I would not be a servant of Christ. I was trying to please man. Of course I was. But I'm not anymore. Now that's some of how this great exchange impacts us personally.

But it wasn't just personal for Paul. And it shouldn't be for us either. 2 Corinthians 5.14-16 says. For the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this. That one has died for all.

Therefore all have died. 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. From now on therefore we regard no one according to the flesh.

Reconciliation changes how we view and treat others. If Jesus did this for me. So that my relationship with God can be in right standing.

My vertical relationship. Then it should compel us to change our horizontal relationships. How we see others. We should see others. We should treat others.

[13:53] Through a different lens. And have a different perspective. If you know Paul's story. This all sounds a bit odd. First of all his name.

Before meeting Christ was Saul. He is known as being highly intelligent. A phenomenal student of scripture. And avidly defending the ways of the law. To the point where.

Anyone coming out against the law. Should be snuffed out. When we're first introduced to him. He's killing Christians. Acts chapter 7.

Stephen. One of the first deacons. Becomes the first martyr. Gets stoned to death. While Paul. Saul. Holds the jackets of those throwing the stones.

That is brutal. Being a holy man would have thought. He would have felt great remorse. For his actions. He would have been in bed that night. Just in anguish. About what happened.

[14:51] However. The very next thing we see. Acts chapter 8. And Saul approved. Of his execution. And there arose on that day. A great persecution.

Against the church in Jerusalem. And they were all scattered. You now had a bloodthirsty mob. Trying to wipe out Christians. Saul has gotten a taste for blood.

And once more. He has seemingly taken care of the issue. In Jerusalem. And now wants to fan out. All across the region. All across the region. And lead the charge. Acts 9.

It says. But Saul. Still breathing threats. And murder. Against the disciples of the Lord. Went to the high priest. And asked him for letters. To the synagogues. At Damascus.

So that if he found. Any belonging to the way. The Christians. Men or women. He might bring them. Bound to Jerusalem. You might not think about.

[15:44] The mentioning of women. But it's a big deal. In this passage. It's meant to shock. The readers. Into the brutality. Of their ruthlessness. They were out for all. Including women. This guy is ruthless.

He's bloodthirsty. He will stop at nothing. To totally erase. Christianity. Or the way. As it is called. His reputation. Is so bad. That Jesus himself.

Visits Ananias. Via a vision. To tell him. That Saul will be different. Knowing this context. About the savagery of Saul. When we read this.

From a converted Paul. It blows our minds. For the love of Christ. Controls us. He writes. Because we have concluded this. That one has died for all.

Therefore all have died. And he died for all. That those who live. Might no longer live. For themselves. But for him. Who for their sake.

[16:45] Died. And was raised. From now on. Therefore. We regard no one. According to the flesh. What? Would you say. This guy is a new creation?

Someone that has never been seen before? Is that a good conclusion. For the life of Paul. That transversion we see. Can you imagine. All of his friends. Back in Jerusalem.

Unrecognizable. Paul has gone from. Living for himself. And his own set of distorted values. To living all. For the sake of Jesus.

This is no longer the Paul show. That no doubt. Would have attracted hundreds. Maybe even thousands. Every time he spoke. That Paul is gone. He is a new creation.

And in that light. How can he view. And treat others the same. For God so loved the world. That Paul was compelled. To do the same. This is not just some old.

[17:41] Irrelevant story. Told a couple thousand years ago. No. This reconciliation. Should change us. From who we were. To someone totally different. Reconciliation.

Should change us personally. Our vertical relationship. With Christ. But that should. Have horizontal consequences too. We should. Treat others different.

Because we've been treated different. If you have hate. And discontent. In your heart. Toward others. For any reason. Now. Is the time to change. Now.

Is the time to recognize. The love of Christ. Directed towards you and I. And allow the Holy Spirit. To change us. You may think. You're being a hero. Leading the charge.

For political or social agendas. But I assure you. Many so-called heroes. Have been wrong. And you and I. Are no exception. Now. You may be saying.

[ 18 : 35 ] That Paul had a radical transformation. And that would be true. But what about us? Shouldn't we be ambassadors. Ambassadors for Christ. When we encounter other people. Let this be one of those moments.

When you look at yourself. As you truly are. Not here on Sunday mornings. But who you are on Monday morning. Thursday afternoon. Friday night.

Saturday night. Are we truly making disciples. And pushing back darkness. During those times too. It's easy to say. And do this here.

Not so much. In the real world. Don't misunderstand me. I'm speaking to myself. Too. I don't have it all together. I don't make good decisions.

Around people all the time. But that is. One of the main points. Of this passage. Reconciliation. Changes our main purpose. In life. If we lived our lives.

[ 19 : 34 ] With the mentality. That we were in prison. And miraculously set free. We might have a different outlook. I think we should live like this. I think we should.

Change our course in life. How is it possible. To continue down the same path. Or purpose. Pre-salvation. Compared to post. It is not possible.

We should change. How we see ourselves. We should see. Ourselves. As ambassadors. With a message of grace. Many of you may think. This outlook on life.

This purpose. Was only meant for Paul. Or maybe even the apostles. The saints. Or let's go way out there. And say it is only for guys. On the stage today. Not me. The logic Paul had.

Was that he was reconciled. Back to God. And he is still breathing. He is here. Totally forgiven. And has been entrusted. With something. He has been entrusted.

[ 20 : 29 ] With a message. For some reason. He received grace. Instead of condemnation. He is now. In right standing. With God. And understands. That all who would listen. Needs to hear the gospel.

The good news. The good news. That God. Through Christ. Paid our debt. That we have hope. We have a purpose. We have a reason. To live.

Very much in line. With what Jesus. Told his disciples to do. To go and tell all. Who would listen. The good news. Many people. We come in contact. Today. With every day. Don't believe. They have a reason.

To live. Just like the man. In Mark 5. Possessed by demons. A nuisance. A recluse. Jesus comes. And sets him free. And he can't help himself. But tell the whole town.

The blind man. He heals. And Jesus tells him. Not to tell anyone. But he can't help himself. The woman at the well. That Jesus told her. About living waters. And knew her life. She immediately went.

[ 21 : 25 ] And told the whole town. Paul is in that camp. And so are we. If we have been set free. In light of eternity. Nothing else comes close to importance.

Your life message becomes. God is reconciling the world to himself. Not counting their sins against him. Be reconciled to God. That's our message. I'm not asking you to quit your job.

No. You are surrounded with a huge field. That is ripe for harvest. Not only at your job. But in your neighborhood. With your family. With your friends. We are all surrounded by people.

That don't have a clue. They. That are losing hope. And losing their desire to live. 2 Corinthians 5. 11. Therefore. Knowing the fear of the Lord.

We persuade others. 2 Corinthians 6. Working together with him. Then we appeal to you. Not to receive the grace of God. In vain. For he says. In a favorable time. I listen to you. And in a day of salvation.

[ 22 : 27 ] I have helped you. Behold. Now. Is the favorable time. Behold. Now. Is the day of salvation. Paul is definitely. Putting the pressure on. Because he understands.

The futility of life. We aren't guaranteed. Another day. We should not be saying. To ourselves. That. We'll one day. Talk to my neighbor. Or co-worker. You know. One day. I'll. I'll.

You know. Muster up the courage. To talk about Jesus. No. 2 Corinthians 6. 3 through 10. We put no obstacle. In anyone's way. So that no fault. May be found.

With our ministry. But as servants of God. We commend ourselves. In every way. By great endurance. Endurance. In afflictions. Hardships. Calamities. Beatings. Imprisonments. Riots. Labors. Sleepless nights.

Hunger. By purity. Knowledge. Patience. Kindness. The Holy Spirit. Genuine love. By truthful speech. And the power of the God. With the weapons of righteousness. For the right hand. And for the left.

[ 23 : 21 ] Through honor and dishonor. Through slander and praise. We are treated as imposters. And yet are true. As unknown. And yet well known. As dying. And behold. We live. As punished. And yet not killed.

As sorrowful. Yet always rejoicing. As poor. Yet making many rich. As having nothing yet. As having nothing. Yet possessing everything. This is a charge for us.

To help others see the gospel clearly. Yes. There are lots of opportunities. For us to be offended. Or to get it wrong. To give into our flesh. Don't do it. Paul says that we do not want to get in the way. We don't want to do or say anything. To get in the way of recognizing how great Jesus truly is. Life is short. And we need to make the best of the opportunity we have.

To help others be reconciled to Jesus. We do everything we can to help people see the gospel clearly. We think on our own little minds that we need to help God out.

[ 24 : 19 ] We have convinced ourselves that there is no way that God can save this person or that person without some coercion. Somehow, some way, I need to maybe enter the gray area to change this person's course.

Essentially, you and I don't have the faith in God and his sovereignty to do what only he can do. I mean, how corrupt are our minds? How many millennia will it take for us as humans to learn to trust in his will?

Paul says that the weapons in both our hands are futile and useless. He is saying that all of my knowledge and all of my abilities are nothing but an obstacle to the truth of how great Jesus is. 2 Corinthians 4.2, we put forth the truth plainly, the NIV says. Don't want anyone or anything to get in your way to Jesus. Now, you may be thinking this means we don't want to offend.

That's becoming a thing more and more. Let's not offend anyone. Think about the culture we live in today. It's all about how I feel today. What I identify today.

[ 25 : 25 ] How I see myself today. See that word over and over and over. I, I, I. That's certainly not what we see with Paul's ministry. The gospel is offensive.

You are a guilty sinner destined for hell. That's offensive. Who, me? I think you mean that person over there.

They're way worse than I am. You know, I helped the old lady cross the street. You know. I took out the garbage. I paid for the order behind me in the Starbucks line.

You know, to pay it forward thing. Surely I'm not condemned. I'm sure, I'm not sure if there's a hell or not. But if so, it's for them. No, it's for you.

It's for me. That's offensive. Not a lot of ways to make that better. Paul not putting obstacles and saying, I don't want you to trip over me or us or our ministry.

[ 26 : 22 ] I want you to make it to the rock of offense. Jesus is the rock of offense. Either fall on him or you are destined to be crushed by him. That's hard.

Paul goes on to show, this isn't just making sure the songs sound nice. That's a key one. We don't employ worldly means to achieve this.

Our passion and anger for injustice seem to only produce stumbling blocks and pitfalls for the lost. It's like we give them ammunition to dispute what we know is right and true and just. That is so frustrating because in our hearts we are trying to make a difference.

We are trying to improve life for others. The problem is that we are not following the ways of God. We are trying to will our way and our timing. James 1.20, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

It's God's love and power. It's kindness and suffering. Maybe you've had a time in your life where you live like this. For many, right after they become a Christian, they are amazed by their salvation.

[ 27 : 28 ] They're on fire. They want to tell everyone they know. And they see their whole purpose in life as being part of helping people see Jesus. Many of us remember the early days after meeting Jesus and no one could shut us up.

All we wanted to do was tell everyone that would listen and even those that probably didn't want to listen about Jesus and how awesome he is. But in time, distractions and sin come along and that fades.

We feel shame. We feel remorse. But Paul had way more reasons to settle down than we do. He could have easily settled down and faded into oblivion where no one would have blamed him. Paul was able to stay focused and keep his eye on the prize. We see in letter after letter, his focus on the gospel and Jesus that it can be mind-blowing. Even with churches like this one in Corinth where there was difficulty, he was able to stay focused on the prize.

Jesus. How is Paul able to keep such a laser focus? Verse 16. Long before Paul's view of himself or others or his purpose in life changed, his view on Jesus changed.

[ 28 : 44 ] The most important thing is that reconciliation changes how we view Jesus. Paul had viewed Jesus as a condemned heretic.

He was cursed by God. A man that claimed to be God and God struck down. But when Jesus showed up in glory and Paul was struck to the ground, his perspective was changed.

And that moment on the road to Damascus kept ringing in Paul's ears throughout all of the suffering and work. What you and I need when we forget isn't to be guilted into action.

What we need is to be reminded of the love of Jesus for us. He loved me and gave himself up for me. Has your perspective on Jesus changed?

That's what matters. That's not about going to church or not. That can be a religious check-in-the-box thing. Check, check, check. I did this. I did A, B, and C. No, that doesn't matter.

[ 29 : 43 ] What do you say of him? How do you regard him? No one wants to be associated with the losing team. With a loser. I mean, look at the election cycles are upon us.

No one wants to look weak. No one wants to look like Jesus, even though they may mention him to get a vote. But no one wants to actually humble themselves, sacrificing in love.

They weren't shouting, elect Jesus. No, they were shouting, crucify Jesus. And this Paul, he wasn't the exception. He persecuted Christians.

But because of reconciliation, we boast in the folly of the cross. 1 Corinthians 1, 22-24 says, As the band comes up, if you're here or listening and not yet a follower, of Jesus, the fact of the matter is that we have an enemy who is conniving and cunning and sneaky and smart.

He is supremely good at planting little seeds of doubt in our minds about who Jesus is and what he has done for us. However, Jesus went ahead of us.

[ 31 : 18 ] The fight wasn't with him. He knew no sin. Satan was, is, out for us. He wants to destroy us. He wants to hurt God because he knows how much God loves us.

But he became sin in our place. He fought a fight that started long before in the garden when Adam and Eve broke creation with their sin. He is our reconciler.

But he's also a returning king. And while you don't have to pay for your sins, you do have to surrender. Luke 14, 31 says, There's a coming king.

You can't beat him. But he's made a way for peace. Today is the day. Don't wait another day.

We implore you today. Be reconciled to God. Don't wait to have him count your sins against you. Don't just wait until you think it's a more favorable time.

[ 32 : 47 ] Don't hear about his grace in vain. You can't beat him. You can't save yourself. But Jesus was exchanged for you. You can be reconciled.

If you're here or listening already a follower of Christ, what love would you say is controlling you? Is it the love of Christ? Has the love of Christ taken the place of hate at the center of your life?

What you and I need to remember is Christ died for all. And for me. Take a few moments to ponder those and we'll continue with communion.

Thank you. change is fueled by love. Some of you may be asking, why do we take communion every week?

Because if you're like me, I forget. I forget that I've been reconciled and it came at a great cost. You take your cups out and open the little wafer and the juice. We all drift. We all forget.

[ 34 : 22 ] We all start living for ourselves again. Jesus took the bread and broke it and he told them to remember that his body was broken for them. And he passed the cup and he said, this is my blood shed for you for the forgiveness of all sins. Do this often, do this in remembrance of me.

So in that context, let's take the wafer and the juice and remembrance of him. God, we are thankful that you are the great reconciler. We are thankful, God, that you paid a debt that our backsides can never pay. For that, for that alone, we are grateful. God, I pray for those that may be here or listening that don't know you, God, that they would understand what is at stake, that they would understand there is no way they can win.

God, I pray that they would bow their knee, that they would submit, that they would run to you crying, Lord, I need you. Meet them where they are.

Lord, I pray for those of us in the room that are, that are Christians that have been saved. God, I pray that you would change our hearts, our minds, our souls, that we would look at people through your lens, your eyes, that would have heart of love and grace and mercy and compassion, God. Let us be those people, God, that are different. We are thankful, God, that you do mean us right where we are. We are thankful that you are continually changing us. We are thankful that you never, ever, ever give up on us.

[ 36 : 10 ] I pray that we, that that truth would find good soil deep in our hearts, Lord. You're a great God and you deserve all the glory, the honor, and the praise. And for that, Lord, we thank you. Help us, God. Be with us. Thank you. In your name we pray. Amen.