

## Because of Christ II Corinthians 5:14-21

Throughout history there have been any number of significant events that have occurred. They include events related to medicine, science, industry, military and even the discovery of new lands.

Throughout history there have also been a number of significant people who have lived. A google search will give you the 40 most influential people in history according to the History Collection that includes religious and political leaders, leaders in technology, science, medicine, and industry. Some are famous. Some are infamous.

Among the 40 historical influencers on this particular list, Jesus Christ is listed #1 and that coming from a secular source. that includes not just His teachings, but also His birth and crucifixion as well.

Their reasoning is much different from mine in regard to His importance. I would also argue that His birth and crucifixion are woven together in such a way that they cannot be separated from the other. They stand as the most important events in all of history. Without the incarnation, God becoming man, the crucifixion holds no significance. And without the crucifixion, there is no hope for humanity. The incarnation and the crucifixion are linked by the sinless life of Jesus who alone could be our sacrificial Savior substituting His life for ours.

I would then add a third event that historians generally don't consider at all, because they don't believe it happened and that is the resurrection. Without the resurrection, the incarnation and the crucifixion have no meaning. They would be no different than any other birth or death. It is the resurrection of Jesus that affirms God's acceptance of His sacrifice on behalf of mankind guaranteeing that His substitutionary death paid the debt and appeased the wrath of God on account of sin.

Mankind may one day find a cure for cancer or discover the ability to do time travel. There can be new historical figures added to the list, but nothing will ever compare with the person and events of

Jesus Christ surrounding what we celebrate in His crucifixion and resurrection.

So for our time this morning I want us to look at Paul's second letter to the Corinthians and consider what we have because of the sacrifice of Christ. Because of the sacrifice of Christ we have a new passion. Because of the sacrifice of Christ we are a new person. Because of the sacrifice of Christ we have a new purpose.

**What impact does the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ have on you today?**

Let's open our Bibles to **II Corinthians 5:14-21**.

### I. BECAUSE OF THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST WE HAVE A NEW PASSION – vv. 14-15

**What are the things that drive you, that motivate you? What is it that when you think of it, stirs you inside?**

For Paul, it was Christ's love.

From **John 3:16** we understand that it was God's love that sent His Son.

From **Romans 5:8** we understand that it was God's love that Christ died for us.

From **John 15:9** we understand that Jesus loves us the same as the Father. How true it is that Jesus loves even me. And He loved me when I was an enemy.

Paul says that Christ's love compelled Him. The dictionary defines compel as something that is brought about by force or pressure. Love and force don't seem to go together, they seem to be diametrically opposed. Forcing someone to do something doesn't sound like love to me.

But that's not the idea behind what Paul is saying. In the Greek, Paul uses a word that means to hold together or secure or to have a hold on. It can also mean pressure that produces action. In other words, Paul is saying that the love of Christ had a hold on him that produced action on his part. It's quite evident as you read through all the letters Paul wrote and how he lived his life in the book of Acts on

account of seeing the resurrected Christ and how it altered his life and desire to give his all for Christ. But these opening words of **verse 14** refer to the love Christ had for Paul and essentially each one of us.

As a result of Christ's love, we have a love that compels us.

#### A. We Have A Love That Compels Us – v. 14

Christ's love is most evident in His sacrificial death for us. Jesus said **“greater love has no man than this that He lay down His life for his friends” (John 15:13)**. **What does His sacrifice mean to you? What does His love motivate you to do?**

I have no doubt of Robyn's love for me.  
Consequently, it motivates me to do things for her.  
I do the dishes.  
I rototill and weed her garden.  
I change the oil in her car.  
I meet her at the door and carry her heavy briefcase for her into the house.  
She loves me and it motivates me to serve her.

Because of the loving sacrifice Christ made for Paul, Paul in turn gave himself to serve Christ.

John MacArthur gives us something to think about when he writes **“The phrase ‘the love of Christ’ is best seen in this context as Christ's love for Paul – a love most clearly seen in His sacrificial death, which is the subsequent theme. It was that magnanimous, free, unmerited love that controlled, drove and motivated Paul to defend himself. Since Christ loved him savingly, he wanted to be certain that nothing hindered his ability to serve Him.”**

Frances Ridley Havergal put it poetically into song:  
I gave My life for thee;  
My precious blood I shed,  
That thou might ransomed be,  
And quickened from the dead.  
I gave, I gave My life for thee.  
What has thou given for Me?  
I gave, I gave My life for thee.  
What has thou given for Me?

That's a question we should all be asking considering what Christ has done for us, what have we done for Him? Christ isn't asking us to pay Him back. But certainly His act of sacrifice should result in a loving, willful, wholehearted act of service for Him.

**How often do we think about the love Christ demonstrated for us in His death, burial and resurrection?**

**When I think about the sins I have committed and that Christ died for all of them so that I can be forgiven through faith in Him, does that stir any emotion in me and cause me to love Him more and serve Him better?**

**Does His great loving sacrifice motivate us to serve in the church?**

**Does His great loving sacrifice motivate us to love our neighbor?**

**Does His great loving sacrifice motivate us to sacrificial giving?**

Paul expressed very clearly to the Galatians what Christ's sacrifice meant to him and how it motivated him.

**Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”**

In other words, everything Paul did was motivated because of what Christ did for him. Why? Because Christ was living in him. He understood that when Christ died, he died with Christ. He no longer lived for himself but for Christ who now lived in him. Paul lived with the same selfless abandon as Christ. Just as Christ gave His all for Paul, Paul gave his all for Christ. It's a lesson for us that we live selflessly because Christ lived selflessly for us. **Mark 10:45** reminds us that Christ didn't come to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. We can't be a ransom for others, but we can serve them.

When we consider that Christ loved the unlovely and the ungodly, the sinner and His enemies, His death and resurrection prove just how much He loved us. **Does His love for us in dying on the cross move us to action?**

Christ died for the benefit of all who by faith place their trust in His sacrificial and finished work of redemption on the cross for us. When He died, we died with Him. When He was buried, we were buried with Him. When He rose, we rose with Him.

Christ's death and resurrection put us in a position to be saved. And after that His death and resurrection put us in a position to serve. We have a love that compels us. It should be our passion.

Second, we have a love that challenges us.

## **B. We Have A Love That Challenges Us – v. 15**

If Christ gave Himself for us, then we are no longer to live for ourselves but for Him who died for us. He would tell us in **John 13:34-35** that we demonstrate we are His followers by loving others just as He showed His love for us.

He loved by listening.

He loved by teaching.

He loved by helping the needy.

He loved by serving. (washing feet and feeding 5000)

He loved by sacrificing Himself for our sin, paying our debt, dying our death.

All the while He did those things, He didn't think of Himself, He thought of you and me. His ultimate purpose was to seek and save the lost. His goal was the cross and the payment for sin. His aim was to procure eternal life for those who would admit their sin and accept His grace by faith. His sacrificial death was in obedience to the Father.

Dottie Rambo so eloquently puts it in her song:

He left the splendor of heaven

Knowing His destiny

Was the lonely hill of Golgotha

There to lay down His life for me.

And if that isn't love

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**How has the love of Christ challenged us to live for Christ?**

**How does His sacrifice challenge us to be selfless?**

Paul wrote in **Philippians 1:21** **“For me to live is**

**Christ and to die is gain.”**

I hope you long to be with Christ.

I hope your desire is for an eternal future with Christ, but let's not lose sight of what is to be our passion until then and that is to live for Christ while we still roam this earth. Everything Paul did, everything he said, everything he was all pointed to Christ. Christ was his oxygen. Christ was his water. Christ was his bread. Christ was his being and he wanted everything about him to point to Christ who died for him.

It's captured well in Ralph Hudson's hymn.

My life, my love I give to Thee.

Thou Lamb of God who died for me;

O may I ever faithful be, My Savior and my God!

I'll live for Him who died for me,

How happy then my life shall be!

I'll live for Him who died for me,

My Savior and my God!

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We have a love in the sacrifice of Christ that challenges us to no longer live for ourselves but for Christ who died for us. Because of the sacrifice of Christ, we have a new passion.

Second, because of the sacrifice of Christ we are a new person.

## **II. BECAUSE OF THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST WE ARE A NEW PERSON – vv. 16-19**

**Verse 16** tells us that we have a new context.

### **A. We Have A New Context – v. 16**

I was listening to a Sheriff on the news this past week. He said that as he drove to work in the morning passing by houses and businesses, he thought about the families who lived in those homes, some getting ready for work and others getting children ready for school. He thought of business owners about to open up shops for patrons to buy their services or merchandise. They were people wanting to live in safety. As an officer of the law, he thought about his duty to protect them, to ensure to the best of his ability that they were safe as they went about their

daily lives. It mattered how he looked at people.

In **verse 16** Paul is saying that before his conversion he looked at people differently. He looked at Christ differently. As a Pharisee he held in contempt those who didn't adhere to the strict letter of the law as he did. He looked down on sinners. In the account that Jesus told about the Pharisee who went into the Temple to pray, that could have been Paul who self-righteously looked at himself and all his religious accolades in comparison to the poor wretch of a sinner that entered the Temple with him.

When the Pharisees brought the woman caught in the act of adultery to Jesus, Paul may have been among them casting his own vote of condemnation and death by stoning.

When the Pharisees condemned Jesus of blasphemy and then later incited the crowd to crucify Him, because of how he saw Jesus, Paul would have been among them raising his voice. We read in Acts that he aggressively sought permission to eradicate Christianity and the name of Jesus from the region. He held worldly views about Jesus that were wrong. He held opinions about Jesus that were fostered by decades of misunderstanding regarding the Messiah. All of that changed at his conversion. He now saw Christ differently. The context of his belief about Christ had been reshaped. As a result, instead of looking at others from a skewed perspective, he now saw them as people for whom Christ died, people who needed to hear the gospel message. He worked tirelessly to share the good news of Christ.

John MacArthur writes *“The proud Pharisee, who once scorned Gentiles, and even those Jews outside of his group, now looked beyond mere outward appearances. His prejudice and hatred gave way to a love for all”* And it was because he saw Christ differently.

Because of the radical transformation that had taken place because of Christ, the one he considered to be a false Messiah, the one he considered was worthy of death, now was the one for whom he was willing to live for and be willing to die for.

It only took a single moment for Paul's context to change. His encounter with the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus not only forever changed his view about Christ, it changed his view about people. Like him, they were all people whom Christ loved and for whom He died. Paul was then willing to give his life for those same people that they also might be saved.

**When we look at Christ who died for us, how then do we in turn look at others?**

**Do we look at the person on the street corner holding up a cardboard sign begging for food or money as some bum who needs to go and get a job, or do we see that person as someone for whom Christ died and rose again?**

**Do we see people on the news who have committed some crime as deserving of the sentence they have been given or do we see them as someone for whom Christ died and rose again?**

**Do we see the mother belittling her child in the grocery store as someone who needs to learn a lesson on effective parenting, or do we see her as someone for whom Christ died and rose again?**

**Do we see people around us as those for whom Christ died and rose again?**

If we are in Christ and Christ is in us, we should have a new context and see people as He sees them.

**Verse 17** then tells us that because of Christ, we have a new character.

## **B. We Have A New Character – v. 17**

The word **‘therefore’** looks back to **verses 14-16** which speak of the believer having died with Christ and that we are no longer to live for ourselves. We are no longer worldly, we are spiritual. **Verse 17** tells us that the old nature is gone because it was nailed to the cross and buried with Christ. And when Christ was raised from the dead, we were raised with Him as **Romans 6:4** points out raised to **“walk in newness of life.”** The moment we are saved, when we have repented of sin and trusted in Christ by faith to save us, we become a new creation. The picture of

that is seen in baptism. We are buried in death with Him and raised to new life in Him.

The old that is gone are the old ways of life: pride, love of sin and its passions and habits. Throughout Paul's letters he identifies various characteristics of the old nature that have died to us. That the old nature has passed away doesn't mean that we no longer sin. I wish that was the case. But as one author stated, "There is a difference between continuing to sin and continuing to live in sin."

When Paul asks in **Romans 6:1** if we should continue in sin, he is referring to the habit of sinning. In **verse 17**, Paul is saying that we no longer live in the habit of sinning. Even in Christ, unfortunately we still sin, but in Christ it isn't our practice. Being in Christ means that each day in the power of God's Spirit, I strive to sin less. The crucifixion and resurrection have broken the power of sin in my life and one day when I stand in the presence of God I will be free from the presence and the influence of sin. We have a choice to let sin reign in our lives or to count ourselves dead to sin.

To be in Christ means we have accepted His sacrifice that paid for our sin realizing that His death and resurrection gives us the power for the latter. At the cross and through our faith an exchange took place where He credited us with His righteousness so when God looks at us, He sees that we are clothed with that righteousness. Christ in return bore our sin and gives us the power not to sin, what Paul calls a way of escape in **I Corinthians 10:13**.

GotQuestions sums it up this way: "To be 'in Christ' means that God no longer sees our imperfections; He sees the righteousness of His own Son. Only 'in Christ' is our sin debt cancelled, our relationship with God restored, and our eternity secured." All that and more is made possible because of the death and resurrection of Christ. In Christ we have a new character. It's the regenerating work of God's Spirit. Being made a new creation means being made new in quality.

One day a man was giving a speech to a crowd about the benefits of communism. As he was speaking a

man in ragged clothes walked by. The speaker told the crowd that communism could put a new suit on that man. Someone in the back of the crowd shouted back that Christ could put a new man in that suit.

Only through the death and resurrection of Christ can we receive a new character and become a new person.

**Verses 18-19** then tell us that because of Christ we have a new compatibility.

### C. We Have A New Compatibility – vv. 18-19

Reconciliation is the act of restoring a relationship that was once severed. Our relationship with God has been broken because of our sin. God had nothing to do with the fact that we became His enemies. It's all on us. We offended Him. Yet, God is the one who pursued us in order to mend that broken relationship. God loved us so much that while we were still his enemies, He sent His Son to provide the means by which we could be made right with Him.

Jesus said in **Matthew 18:15** that if a brother offends you, even though you weren't the one who is in the wrong, you are to go and seek reconciliation. We think it should be the other way around. If someone offends us, we expect that person to make the effort to make things right. When it comes to our broken relationship with God the Bible is quite clear that no effort on our part could ever satisfy what God requires for the relationship to be restored. People try all kinds of things but **Ephesians 2:8-9** tell us that our efforts are no good. And left to themselves, many don't even try to make it right with God. It isn't in our nature to seek God. So God made a way, God sought us out with the means to restore that broken relationship and He did it through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Only because of Christ is it possible to be reconciled to God. Christ made it possible through His death, burial and resurrection to be made compatible with God.

Because of the sacrifice of Christ we are a new creation. We have a new context with which to see others who Christ also died for. We are a new creation in which we are dead to sin and its habits and made new in our character to be like Christ

through the power of His Spirit. And we have a new compatibility – we are made right with God through Christ. **Romans 5:1** says that through faith in Christ we now have peace with God.

Finally, because of the sacrifice of Christ we have a new purpose.

### III. BECAUSE OF THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST WE HAVE A NEW PURPOSE – vv. 20-21

**Verse 20** says that we have a new role.

#### A. We Have A New Role – v. 20

As members of the body of Christ and the family of God, each of us has been given the role as ambassadors. An ambassador is a respected official who acts as a representative of the nation he serves. This world is not our home. Our citizenship is in heaven and we represent Christ our King and His kingdom. Our role is to reflect the position of our King who has given us His authority. According to His words in **Matthew 28:19-20**, our role is to go make disciples through evangelism. That is the ministry of reconciliation. We have been entrusted with the gospel message of Christ's death, burial and resurrection and are to proclaim that those who are not part of God's forever family can also become right with Him because of Christ's sacrificial death followed three days later by His resurrection.

**What kind of an ambassador are we? Are we in it only for the perks we receive or are we truly His representatives in how we act and in what we say that show others that they too can be reconciled to God through Christ?** Each of us is tasked with telling others that their broken relationship with God can be restored. It is an urgent responsibility to tell others to **"be reconciled to God."** Because of the sacrifice of Christ, that is our role.

Paul closes out the chapter by telling us that with this new purpose we have a new relationship.

#### B. We Have A New Relationship – v. 21

The sinless took on sin, so that the sinner could take on His righteousness. The judge looked at me and

found me guilty. He then sentenced me to DEATH. But then the most unusual thing happened. He came down off the bench, took off His robe and took the very sentence He had just pronounced on me. He died in my place and in exchange He who was not guilty pronounced me not guilty by giving me His righteousness. This exchange only comes through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ.

All our sins were laid on Jesus,  
Jesus bore them on the tree;  
God, who knew them, laid them on Him,  
And, believing we go free.

God is the benefactor who made Jesus sin, so that we might be the beneficiaries of a new life and a restored relationship with God. Because of the sacrifice of Christ, we have a new relationship and a new purpose.

There are a lot of significant events and people in history, but none so significant as Jesus Christ who died and rose again so that we could experience new life now and in the life to come.

**Is it possible that you have never become a new creation in Christ?** He has made the way open to everyone who will believe that His sacrifice paid for your sins bringing you into a restored relationship with God who clothes you in Christ's righteousness.

I want to close the message with a song to reflect on the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ and in the end to give a HALLELUJAH.

(Video – An Easter Hallelujah)