

# 2 Corinthians 5 (Part 2): 11-17 - A New Creation in Christ

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2 Corinthians, chapter 5. As we're making our way through Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, this is part 2 of chapter 5 and we're going to read. We're not going to actually read through the whole rest of the chapter. I'm going to reserve the last few verses for next week and I'll tell you why.

Next week we've got communion and these last—like 4 verses of the chapter are just so amazing, and I want to tie him in with a communion message next week. We're going to take 11 through 17. Go ahead and follow along as I read, beginning 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; <sup>15</sup> 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.*

*<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (ESV)*

Stop there, please. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we open our hearts to You this morning that the ministry of Your Word would really take hold in our hearts. We present our hearts to You and our minds, and we ask in Jesus name for You to keep us from distractive thoughts. We ask You to help us, Lord, to really focus on what You want to say to us today.

And we just give permission this morning to Your Holy Spirit to minister insight and understanding to our hearts, and to speak according to the purpose of Your will. We look to You, Lord, to do this, and we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. Amen.

We took a week off last week for Brent Harreld to share. I feel like a little quick summary of what we're dealing with here is in order. As we've seen in our studies, the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians here a very personal letter to them, arguing for the sincerity of his own ministry and how he lived among them in the gospel that he brought to them.

And the reason that this was necessary was because men had arisen in the Corinthian church, not from Corinth but from outside, who had come with a sowing seeds of criticism toward the apostle Paul. And as it often does, this criticism blossomed and grew to the point where some in the Corinthian Church actually began to question the legitimacy of Paul's apostleship and even the message of his gospel that he brought to them.

He's been writing to them here, and he's been arguing for the importance and the validity of the ministry that he'd been given by using several different approaches to that ministry. But what he's going to talk about here, and what we're going to deal with today, is the message. He's going to talk about the message he brought. He's going to specifically hone in on, here's what I've been saying, here's what I told you when I shared the gospel, I want to remind you of it. And this is what it's all about.

And as he begins to talk about this, he touches on his own motivation for ministry, which you look at here in this first verse that we're looking at. Notice that verse 11 begins with the word, therefore. Now, if anybody starts a conversation with the word, therefore, they've completely messed up their grammar because you never start a conversation with therefore.

You don't just walk up to somebody for the first time and go, therefore. That would be stupid because the word, therefore says that you're about to make a statement that is connected with something that has been previously spoken, right? Remember that little saying we like to repeat: whenever you see the word therefore, stop and see what it's therefore. The word therefore is to point us back in verse 11 to verse 10. And verse 10 is the statement that Paul made, if you look with me there in your Bible, he says, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ...”* That was the point he made in verse 10.

Now he says, “*Therefore* (in other words, knowing that, or as the—I think the NIV says, since then. Since then, right? We understand this, he goes on and says), *knowing the fear of the Lord* (or having a healthy fear of God, he says in verse 11), *we persuade others*.” So knowing as we do, that there's a judgment day coming and the fear of God that we have related to knowing that there's a judgment day coming. We work to persuade others. It's our aim to persuade others.

Let me ask you a question: Is it your aim to persuade others? I want to stop for just a moment and even focus your attention for just a bit on that word, persuade. And the reason I want to focus on it is that we don't often think about that word when we're talking about the gospel. We talk a lot about proclaiming the gospel. We go into all the earth and proclaim the gospel, and that's something that is pretty commonly understood as it relates to getting the gospel out there.

But think about the word, persuade. We persuade people related to the gospel. Let me remind you of what that word essentially means. I'll put it up on the screen here for you.

**Per·suade (verb)**

To cause (someone) to do something or think a particular way through reasoning...

It's a verb, which means that it is an action word, right? But it means to cause someone to do something or think a particular way through reasoning. Ah, so that gives us a little bit further into it. We see that it is actually something that we're called to, to reason with people related to the gospel.

We don't just proclaim the gospel; we actually reason with people. When they ask us questions and say, but what does that mean? Or, how does that work? I don't get it, that's when we begin that work of reasoning, and I think that's an important thing for us to stop and notice: that single word here that Paul gives us, because it involves reasoning, and reasoning is something that is essentially slipping away from our culture.

We don't reason much anymore, right? Reason is not why we make decisions any longer. Critical thinking is going the way of the typewriter. How do we make decisions today? Emotions, we feel.

Have you ever noticed, when you're sharing Christ with somebody, you might say something or refer to something that the Bible says, and if they disagree with you but don't really know how to respond from it biblically, they'll just say,

well, I just don't feel that's true. I just don't feel like God is; I just don't feel like God is going to judge people because I think just judging is wrong. I just feel like it's wrong, right? I mean, that's the basis of decision-making. That's the basis of determining right and wrong. That is how we determine morality today: it's how I feel.

What was interesting—I'm not going to get into commenting on it from a political standpoint—but you guys heard about what our president did related to transgenders in the military here this last week. However you may feel about that, what's interesting is to listen to the comments. It's all very emotional. It's a very emotional conversation that has arisen related to this whole thing.

Now, there have been a couple of little people that have popped up above the noise with a little sense of reason, but they're pretty quickly drowned out. Anybody who says, hey, let's reason this out, they're like, they're shouted down. And it's basically an emotional sort of a thing. That's the culture in which we live. Reason, like I said, is a dinosaur.

But you know what? It's something that we're still called to do as we talk to people. And we can't base our proclamation of the gospel on emotion. I mean, good grief, we've tried in the past, maybe even in the present, with tears and that sort of thing. And if, you know what, if it's an emotional response, when the emotions die down, somebody can quickly change their mind. We're supposed to reason.

Let me show you, this is something God has—wants us to do because he's given us the ability to do it. Well, I want to show you something from the Book of Isaiah, this is God talking.

**Isaiah 1:18 (ESV)**

*“Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.”*

Isaiah records it, He says, *“Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD (and then He goes on to say): though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they're red like crimson, they will become like wool.”*

But what is the first statement that He makes? Come, come, come let us reason. Let us reason this thing out. Do you understand, people, that we have a reasonable faith? Ours is a reasonable faith. It is reasonable to consider Jesus as

Savior. It is reasonable to accept Him as such, right? We have a reasonable faith, and so we're called to come and reason.

In fact, Peter talking in the New Testament. Let me show you this one also, from 1st Peter chapter 3:

**1 Peter 3:15 (NIV1984)**

*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason from the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...*

He says, “*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason from the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...*”

Do you have hope in Jesus? Somebody's going to waltz along at some point and want to ask you about the reason for your hope. And what they're saying is, reason this out with me, let's talk about this.

Listen, are you prepared? Are you prepared to give a reason? Are you prepared to explain why it is reasonable to believe in Jesus Christ and to accept what he did on the cross as payment for one's sins? Are you prepared to do that? Because Peter says to you and me, always be prepared. That means practice.

Have you ever practiced for, like, a job interview? Talked about—I'll never forget, something just came into my brain. When Sue and I were going to tell her parents that we wanted to get married, we practiced. And the reason was, she was 17 years old, and I was a little bit older. I'm 3 years older than she is.

And so, we went to her sister, who was already married, her older sister and her husband, and we sat down with him and said, okay, you be mom and dad. And we basically practiced. So we said, okay, prepare us with questions, and it was pretty weird because they really wanted us to get married, her sister and her husband. And so I don't think it was a fair practice, but at least it was worth the attempt or something like that.

But we're supposed to, we're supposed to practice, be prepared to share with people. Because this whole thing about reasoning, even though it's a lost art in our culture today and that we've almost stopped reasoning, we can't stop. We can't stop reasoning because when we give, when we let go of reason, guys, we reduce ourselves to like animals. When we kick reason to the curb, which again is becoming the popular cultural response to things, we become like animals.

It's interesting in Peter's next letter. He actually makes reference to people who live that way. I want you to see how he describes them.

**2 Peter 2:10a, 12 (NIV2011)**

*This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority...these people blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct...*

Look at this, he says, “*This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority... (he says) these people blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like unreasoning animals (they're like), creatures of instinct...*”

It's like this emotional instinct takes over and reason goes out the window. We can't allow that to happen.

So Paul says, listen, we make it our aim to, to persuade through reason with individuals to come to know Christ. Notice that he finishes verse 11 here if you look with me in your Bible by saying, “*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 (that you), so that you may be able to answer those who boast about (just) outward appearances...*” And he's may, that's a reference to the Judaizers who had come and were focusing on circumcision. And he says, they're not focusing on what's in the heart, they're just focusing on what's on the outside.

And again, this is because Paul was under attack, and he wrote what he did so that the believers in Corinth would understand the nature of what he had shared with them, and possibly even take pride in him. I understand this; this is a dad talking. He considered himself the spiritual father of these people in Corinth.

And as a dad, I understand what it is to look at your kids when they go through that stage in life where you're an idiot in their eyes. I love it when my kids get older because I get smarter as they get older, which is really cool. But there's that period of time where you look at your kids and you're I'm proud of you; I just hope you're proud of me.

And that's what Paul's saying here to these people. And then he says in verse 13, “*For if we are beside ourselves...*” That's beside ourselves that's a euphemism for crazy, okay, like Looney Tunes. So he says here, if we are out of our minds literally, he says, “*...it is all for God (it's all for God); (but) if we're in our right mind, it is (all) for you.*” And again, a dad talking to the kids, you know what,

if I appear crazy, it's for God, but if I'm in my right mind, it's all for you because I love you guys so much.

And it's very possible that Paul was being accused. See, again, 2 Corinthians is a one-sided conversation. We haven't heard the other side of the conversation, but it's very possible Paul was being accused of actually being out of his mind. That was not entirely uncommon for Paul because he looked that way, not in the way he acted, but in his devotion to the Lord. It was so extreme that people probably looked at him and said, the guy is whacked.

I mean, think about it. Do you guys remember, we won't turn there but in—toward the end of the Book of Acts, the 26th chapter—Paul is waiting to be taken to Rome because he appealed to Caesar, and he's giving his testimony before Festus, the procurator. So he's talking about the gospel and how Jesus came to die for the sins of the world, and he talks about resurrection. He starts talking about how Jesus was raised from the dead.

You guys remember what happened? Festus just speaks up and he goes, Paul, you're out of your gourd. He didn't say that specifically, but he said, you're insane. Your great learning is driving you mad. Well, so you see, that was not an uncommon sort of an idea when you looked at the life of this man that we called the apostle Paul.

I mean, think about it. Would a sane person willingly face or want to face a riotous mob? Because Paul did. Who in their right mind would walk back into the city where he had just been stoned and left for dead? Because Paul did. And who is loony enough to risk things like poisonous snakes and shipwrecks, and hunger, and all the other things that went along with it? Because Paul was.

And you look at his life, and you're kind of like—I mean, we today might, somebody might derogatorily call him a Jesus freak or something like that, the guy's just wacky. It's like, I'm a—people will say, I'm okay with having a little religion, but you don't want to go too far, that sort of thing, because then you'll look like the apostle Paul; they're doing stupid stuff like that.

That's the way Paul looked, but Paul says, listen, if we're out of our minds, it's for God; if we're in our minds, it's for you. It's all for you, for your sake. Here's the question: what in the world would make this man, the apostle Paul, do the things that he did? In other words, what was his motivation? What got him out of bed in the morning?

Verse 14 is where he answers that question, he says, *“For the love of Christ controls us...”* There it is, you can underline that in your Bible if you want to. But your—by the way, your Bible, if you have a different translation, may say *compels us*, the love of Christ controls us or compels us. And the word, *compel*, means to drive something onward, your car is compelled by a gasoline combustion engine, right?

He says, the love of Christ compels us, it drives us onward. Why? He finishes it in verse 14, if you look with me there, he says, *“because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; <sup>15</sup> 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.”* Two things he's saying here.

First of all, what's my motivation? He died for me. He gave it all for me. Can I do any less than give all to him? Right? He gave it all. So, I want to give it all. But then he goes on to make this amazing statement here in verse 15, where he says, *“...and he died for all, that those who live (meaning those who live for him) might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”* When he makes that statement, *no longer live for themselves,* you know what he's saying to you and I, isn't he? Don't you?

He's saying that that's our natural state, that we live for ourselves. That's our bent; that's the way we're born, focused on living for my—life is for me. Life is to please me. Life is to satisfy me. Life is to make me happy, right? Didn't you hear people say that a lot? I just want to be happy. And you just, we just need to—we need to be, you can't make other people happy until you're happy. You just need to be happy.

We're just all looking for happiness. You know what that is, don't you? It's a life lived for self. Guess why Jesus came? That those who live might no longer live for self, but for Him who died for them. And boy, I tell you, that statement right there in verse 15, that sums up our Christian lives. That sums up the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Do you understand that from the day you accepted Jesus as your Savior until the present day, today, the Holy Spirit has had a fundamental ministry in your life? And that is to get you to stop living for yourself and live for Him. And sometimes it's like pulling teeth. I'm talking, permanent molars, right? I'm talking, wisdom teeth that are impacted and embedded.

I'm sorry I got too graphic there. It's like, that's what's, I mean, this stuff... I came to Jesus when I was about—I came to him with all my heart when I was



about 25 years old. And already at the age of 25, the concept of living for me was so deeply ingrained and embedded in my life that it was just... I didn't think about it. It's a knee-jerk reaction, it's me, it's all about me, right?

And I realized I need a Savior, and even that was for me. So I come to Jesus, and the Holy Spirit begins working in my life to say, Paul, it's not about you. The universe doesn't revolve around you. And that's what the Lord's doing in all of our lives, taking the me out of the center of our universe. You see, it's not about being happy anymore. It's about pleasing our Savior. It's about living for Him, that's why He came. Jesus died so that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but live for Him, right? That's what Paul is saying here.

But see, again, even though this is one of the single most important characteristics of what it means to be a believer, it is the single most difficult characteristic to walk out in our lives, right? Don't you see that? Don't you see it in your life? Am I the only one who sees myself as like the most selfish person I know? Because I am. I am the most selfish person I know. And it is just a constant battle in my life where the Holy Spirit is awakening me to more and more things I need to give to Him, surrender to Him, and say, I'm going to let you be Lord of that too.

When I first got saved, I loved singing all those songs about how He is King and He is Lord. And we sing those so just off the cuff. You are Lord of all, King of my life, and all this other stuff, right? And we're saying this just like it's like it's a reality. You know what I mean?

And then as new believers, it's fun to think that I've got a king. He's Lord, and I call him Lord, and all this stuff. And then all of a sudden, He convicts me of my selfishness, and I'm like, what? Suddenly now, this whole king and lord terminology takes on a different dynamic because I realize I'm king. I'm lord of my life, that's the way I've been acting, right? And He's like, hey Paul, I love you, but that was all you, and that was all for you, that was not for me.

And every Christian understands this. You come to the Lord, and we say, I've given my life to Jesus, but we spend our whole life giving our life to Jesus. Bit by bit, room by room, issue by issue, right? It's just this slow, progressive process. I'm still giving my life to Jesus; there's a whole huge part that I've still retained to myself. Sometimes it's wearying.

But I—it's like Paul said, brothers, I have not yet attained these things, right? Isn't that where you're at too? None of us have arrived, and we say that to each other like it's a revelation. People will say to me, well, I'm not perfect. It's like, duh! I mean, none of us are. We're just, we're totally in process.

My natural tendency is to take my life and say, this is for me and to hang on to it. But Jesus told me that the more I hang on to my life, the more I lose it. Let me show you this passage from Matthew chapter 16.

**Matthew 16:25 (ESV)**

*For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

*“For whoever would save his life (and that means to almost like hoard it, I'm going to keep it for me, he says) we'll lose it (he's going to lose it), but whoever loses his life (whoever gives it away, whoever says, Jesus, my life is for you. I surrender it today, use me as you wish, I am yours, which, by the way, is a huge sort of a thing to say to the Lord) for my sake will find it.”*

But he says, that's the path to finding your life. See, it's exactly the opposite of what the world thinks. The world says, you just need to find yourself. And that's what; that's how Jesus says; that's how you lose yourself. The way the world is finding themselves, that's how you lose it. Isn't that crazy? Well, it shouldn't be crazy. We should just go, well, yeah, that's the way the world is the opposite of the truth, right?

That passage, Matthew 16; that's a powerful, powerful passage. In other words, when I make my life all about my pleasure, my happiness, Jesus says, boy, you're on the fast track to losing it, buddy. But finding my life comes in losing it for Him. And then we come to this very important statement here in these last two verses we're looking at.

Verses 16 and 17, look with me in your Bible again. He says, *“From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh* (or in other words, worldly thinking).” Looking at you apart from the understanding of Christ in you. He says, well, we don't do that anymore, we regard no one. He says, you know what? We used to actually regard Christ that way.

And people still do from time to time. You'd be talking to them about Jesus and they'll say, well, yeah, Jesus, okay, I'll give you this, he was a good teacher. Well, what they're doing is they're just regarding him according to the flesh, right? But Paul says here, *“...we regard him thus no longer.”* We understand He is who He said He is. He's savior, He's king, He's lord, He's master, He is one with the Eternal Father.

And then look at verse 17: *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ* (since we do regard him as he really is)...” We understand that if anybody is in him, that individual

is actually a new creation, he says. *“The old has passed away; behold (he says), the new has come.”*

And I got to tell you something. This is probably one of the most encouraging, one of the most amazing passages in the whole of scripture. I love it because the implications of it are so far-reaching. But at the root of understanding verse 17, we see in no uncertain terms that Jesus changes people. That's it. Jesus changes people. When I was up in Washington, Sue and I were doing Bible study. We started a church up there. It didn't get very big.

I like to say that people stayed away in droves, but they—we used to do a Bible study in our apartment. I used to just take this piece of paper and I wrote on it, and I put it on the wall. It just said, Jesus changes people. Cause I wanted people to understand that when you come to Christ, you're not going to be the same.

And it's a message that we as believers desperately need to hear: your life can change; it should be changing. And the way it changes is by turning to Christ with all of your heart and giving Him, surrendering that life to Him. This is where he's talking about the effect of the gospel.

We don't just tell people about the gospel. It'd be one thing if it was just these words alone. No, we're showing people the effects of the gospel in our lives, our very lives, right? And if we're not, then it's just words, empty words. But we're not just, we're not just telling them, we're showing them.

And Paul says, if you are in Christ, you are a new creation. That means you've been transformed. By the way, this – that term, new creation, that is so important because it's what God's up to. It's God's – okay, let me, I got to find a way to put this – God's redemptive plan is to make all things new. All things, not just you, everything – you guys understand, right? God created this earth to be a beautiful place. There was no sin. There was no death. There was none of the curse that you and I live under and consider an absolute normal way to live. None of that existed.

And you know what? We're not even sure what the earth was like before sin entered into the picture. We try to guess, but we're not really sure. We have these little snippets of information in the Book of Genesis, but frankly, not that much. It was, I can only imagine, amazing, heaven on earth, I suppose. But then, sin entered into the whole picture, right? And everything changed.

The curse came into the picture. Death came into the picture. Sorrow, regret came into the picture. Dying, the process of dying. We talk about death, but we're all in the process of dying. Good news, huh? Yeah, you came to be encouraged. But it's true. We're all in that process because that's what sin brought into the universe, brought into the world in which we live.

Do you understand, people, that God's plan is to change all that? We open up the book of Genesis at the very beginning of our Bible, and we see this incredible world. And then, by the time we get to the third chapter, man, it doesn't take long; we see sin entering into this thing. And it's just awful from that point on; it's awful.

Do you understand if they ever put the Bible into a real movie and covered everything the way it happened, it would be rated like triple X? I mean, it's so graphic. And the Bible doesn't try to shield us from that; it's horrific. The results of sin are nothing short of horrific. But we see, through the course of Scripture, that God is working to change everything, to recreate everything, including you, right? And there is coming that time when the world will be recreated.

The Bible says this world is going to be destroyed. In fact, the current heaven is going to be destroyed. And God is going to create a new heaven and a new earth, and he's going to bring them together. That's what it tells us at the end of the book of Revelation: heaven and earth literally come together.

I think that's what He intended in the beginning. I think that's what the world was probably like in its innocence in the beginning. He's going to, He's going to bring it back, He's going to recreate. Do you understand what Paul uses this language about when you've made a new creation? He's using this language of God's redemptive program. This is what He's up to, you guys. He's recreating! And that recreation of all things includes you.

Let me show you how Jesus talks about it, how he refers to it. This is from John chapter 5, verse 24. Check this out:

**John 5:24 (ESV)**

*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me (that's God the Father) has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”* Wow. That's us, you guys. We've passed from

death to life in this amazing recreation, right? That God is doing in our lives. Death and darkness, he says, have passed away.

Problem is, we come to Jesus, right? As a brand new believer, we're told all these wonderful things that I'm a new creation in Christ, and it's great news. But then I run smack dab into myself in some sinful, stupid mistake that I make in my life. And I'm thinking to myself, okay, now wait a second here, I thought I'd been recreated. I thought I was a new creation. Why did I just say that, or do that, or think that? It's like, wait a minute, I thought I'd been made new.

And we begin to deal with this paradox that I'm going to talk to you here a little bit about, and it's something that Paul had made reference to a little bit earlier in this chapter when he said, "...we walk by faith (and), not by sight." (2 Corinthians 5:7) What that means is we don't see all of these things with our human eyes as having been finished, but by faith, we believe that they are because God talks about them as if they are.

You see, this recreation thing I was telling you about, that God has this plan, this conquest of the way we messed up the world through sin and stuff like that. This whole thing doesn't happen all at once. It'd be great if it did. It'd be great if we got saved and we were just like, ahhh, walking around with white clothes and a halo over our head. But we don't, it'd be nice. And the reason that doesn't happen like that is because this whole progression of change happens progressively, in steps, okay? Or in stages, if you will.

I wanted to encourage you by telling you we're almost at the end. We're almost at the end of all the stages that God has established in his redemptive program, and Bible scholars, and guys who are way smarter than me, have actually written down these stages and scripted them out and outlined them to see what the... this is what the Bible says, and I want to put them on the screen for you so we can look at them. 6 stages, all right.

- The conquest predicted

Stage number 1 is the conquest predicted, and this happens way back in Genesis because we see the fall of man in Genesis chapter 3, right? Where they give in to the temptation, they eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and sin enters the human race, and it just messes things up every way you can imagine.

But God begins to speak to them even in that very chapter, and he begins to talk about the serpent who is Satan. He begins to talk about the seed of the woman, who is prophetically speaking of Christ. And what does God say at that very early stage? He says, yes, the serpent will bite at his heel, but he, the seed of the woman, will crush his skull. (Genesis 3:15)

In that very first introduction of sin, we have a prediction that God is going to overturn this whole mess and get us back to where we need to be in this recreated thing that He has determined.

- The conquest predicted
- The conquest begun

Then we have the conquest begun. And it began, really, at the birth of Christ, and it was heralded by angels when angels appeared to some lowly shepherds out in their fields. And they said, dudes, we have some really good news for you. It started, a Savior has been born, and He's going to save the world from its sin (Luke 2:8-11). And that is the beginning of the conquest. And then things happened in a very fast sort of way.

- The conquest predicted
- The conquest begun
- The conquest achieved

Then we have the conquest achieved, and that's the cross. Do you guys understand that at the cross of Christ, the most powerful, amazing things happened? The curse was overturned. The devil was defeated. Sin was put away. The judgment of God was consumed in the person of Jesus Christ. The conquest was achieved at the cross.

- The conquest predicted
- The conquest begun
- The conquest achieved
- The conquest confirmed and announced

And then, shortly, just 3 days later, the conquest was confirmed and announced. It was confirmed when they saw that there was an empty tomb; it was announced, in a sense, when Jesus rose from the grave, through his resurrection. And the announcement of that, even by the angels. (Luke 24:6-7)

- The conquest predicted
- The conquest begun
- The conquest achieved
- The conquest confirmed and announced
- The conquest extended

And then we come to the Book of Acts where we come to the fifth stage of the conquest, which is the conquest extended. And that is what we read about in the

book of Acts as they take the victory, right? That Jesus won on the cross, and they began taking it out. They begin to preach it around Jerusalem, and all Judea, and into Samaria, and then into the uttermost parts of the world. (Acts 1:8)

And by the way, this one's still going on today—2,000 years later. Here we are in the conquest extended; it's still extending. This is where you and I are. There's one more stage that is yet to happen.

- The conquest predicted
- The conquest begun
- The conquest achieved
- The conquest confirmed and announced
- The conquest extended
- The conquest consummated

And that is the conquest consummated. And by the way, the word, consummate means to make complete, to make complete. The conquest has not yet been consummated. You and I are between stage 5 and 6, right now. And the consummation of God's plan to recreate all things is coming, right? But it is not here yet. And that is the paradox of what we see in the Word of God, right?

Because the Word of God tells me some incredible things about who I am in Christ, but Paul, as Paul writes, he says, but I also see this other law working in me, this law of sin and death. I want to share with you, if I could, I didn't have time to translate this stuff to my notes because I—kind of thought of it last minute sharing it with you. But this is a, I want to read an excerpt to you from a book that I read a number of years ago called *The Cross of Christ*. It's written by John R. W. Stott. He's with the Lord now, but a super smart person.

It's a challenging book to read because of that, but he has some things to say in this book about this period that you and I refer to as where we live between, the now, and, the not yet. The now is where we live; the not yet, which is still to come, is the consummation, the completion of all things. And how difficult it is to live in this period of time that we live in, because it's challenging, because we don't see the reality of these things. We have to look with eyes of faith, right, to reconcile them to our hearts.

Listen to this. Listen to this. This is very good. He says, on the one hand, we look into the Bible and it says that we are alive, seated, and reigning with Christ. And we even have principalities and powers of evil placed by God under His feet and therefore under our feet. And yet, on the other hand, we're warned in Ephesians that these same spiritual forces have set themselves in opposition

to us, so that we have no hope of standing against them unless we're strong in the strength of the Lord.

Do you get the paradox? Do you see the difference between the now and the not yet? The now is that we have to be very vigilant against the work of the enemy. 'The not yet, right, is the reality of the situation that we take by faith. All right, here's the same paradox, but using some different language. He says, on the one hand, we are assured that having been born of God, Christ keeps us safe, and the evil one cannot touch us. On the other hand, we're warned to watch out because the same evil one prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Do you see the paradox? The difference between the now and the not yet? The reality of where we are, looking by faith, but not seeing yet by sight. This is interesting too, he says, many Christians actually choose one or the other of these positions. (They can't reconcile the paradox and so they just choose one or the other, or they go back and forth between them.) Some of them are triumphalists who see only the decisive victory of Jesus Christ, and they overlook all the biblical warnings about the powers of darkness, the powers of sin, and so forth.

Others are defeatists because they see only the fearful work of the enemy, the power of their flesh, the draw of the world, and they overlook the victory of Christ, which he has had over those things, and which has been already won. (And so he says here) The tension is part of our Christian dilemma, between the already and the not yet. Already the kingdom of God has been inaugurated and is advancing, but not yet has it been consummated. Already the age to come has come, so that we have tasted the powers of the coming age, but not yet has the old age completely passed away. Already, we are God's sons and daughters and no longer slaves, but not yet have we entered the glorious freedom of the children of God.

It's interesting, isn't it? I mean, I am right now, and so are you, in Christ, seated with Him in heavenly places. And yet, here I am, right here, in this lowly, mortal, corrupt body. And that's the paradox, that's the difficulty. We live by faith, and not by sight. We believe, even our salvation is referred to in the scripture as done, and at the same time, being done.

Do you understand that as believers, we are referred to as saved, and then we're referred to elsewhere in the scripture as being saved? The paradox between the already and the not yet, so, it's a challenging time to live, right? It's very challenging for us as Christians, and that's why we're here to encourage one



another, to hold fast, to be strong, and to look with eyes of faith because everything we see with our human eyes would contradict the promises of God.

But we can't let go. We have to keep encouraging one another, say, hang on, we're between stage 5 and stage 6 according to this list we had here. The consummation is coming, you guys. All the other things have either happened or are happening. We're just waiting for this thing to be finished.

Meanwhile we walk by faith. Jesus, you are the Lord of my life. I want to give my life to you, even though I see inconsistencies in my ability to do so. Even though I fall to the temptations of sin from time to time, I come back to you. I repent of my sin and I say, Jesus, I need you again today.