

## Lesson 7

# A Different Outlook on Life

## *Life from an Eternal Perspective*

### **Before You Begin**

**Read:** Ephesians 2:11-22; 2 Corinthians 5:11-17.

**Pray** for better understanding and a more significant commitment to leading life from a spiritual perspective. Express your thankfulness to God for the new life He has given you through Christ, and ask Him for help in your spiritual growth and progress to greater maturity.

**Set Your Intentions:** What do you hope to achieve from this lesson?

**Journal Your Thoughts.** Journaling can be a valuable tool for spiritual reflection and growth.

### **Introduction**

The power of Jesus is seen in Ephesians 2:11-22, which reveals the essence of our spiritual renewal. Before coming to Christ, we were in a state of spiritual deadness, without Christ, alienated from the citizenship in His kingdom, devoid of hope, and absent from God. This bleak existence demonstrates our desperate need for salvation.

Thankfully, Christ intervened, and His sacrifice brought the opportunity to be near. After our spiritual adoption, His proximity is not only about being closer physically or emotionally; it involves a fundamental change in our spiritual status. We have become fellow citizens with the saints and gain access to the Father, which elevates us from our previously hopeless state to one of dignity and promise.

This access brings us deeper communion, where we become part of God's household, sharing fellowship with Him. The magnitude of this transformation is striking—once outsiders, we are now embraced as God's children. This new identity is a testament to the impact of divine grace, reminding us of our origins and the grace that defines our new identity.

Understanding the depth of our former alienation—with its sheer hopelessness and the destructive nature of sin—highlights the severity of our past and the necessity of redemption. Sin, with its soul-corroding power, traps us in a cycle of despair, emphasizing our incapacity to save ourselves and pointing to our need for a force greater than our own to rescue us from our self-inflicted predicaments.

Realizing our dire need for God is crucial to the transformation process. Encountering Him allows us to see life from a new perspective. As discussed thus far in this study, our adoption redefines our priorities, and our lives become centered around Jesus. We experience transformation through Christ's power, where old ways dissipate and new life begins.

In this lesson, we will explore how our relationship with Jesus redefines who we are and how we live, offering us a new perspective and an invigorated sense of purpose. The goal is to understand further the life-changing power of our faith and the continual renewal it brings.

## What Motivated Paul in His Mission

2 Corinthians is Paul's defense of his integrity, written in response to the challenges he faced from dishonest false teachers who sought to discredit him. These adversaries were vigorous in their efforts, pushing him into a delicate situation where he felt compelled to defend himself to preserve the effectiveness of his ministry. However, he knew the danger of appearing self-serving, arrogant, or prideful.

In navigating these challenges, Paul transparently revealed his motives for ministry throughout 2 Corinthians. A prime example of this approach is in 2 Corinthians 6:11, where he states, "We have spoken openly to you, Corinthians; our heart has been opened wide." Paul wanted the Corinthians to examine his heart, recognize his integrity, and acknowledge the purity of his motives.

Leading up to this, Paul outlined several motives that drove his work. These are seen in detail in 2 Corinthians 5:11-17.

- In 5:11, he emphasizes his reverence for the Lord, which underpins his devotion and faithful service.
- In 5:12, he expresses a constant concern for the unity and witness of the church, highlighting the power of genuine and sincere hearts in testifying to the lost.
- In 5:13, his devotion to truth is evident—even to the point where his fervent passion led some to claim he was insane. His passionate preaching, driven by his convictions and divine inspiration, underscores his commitment to God and his followers.

Now, we will go further into Paul's writings, specifically looking at 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and 5:17, exploring how the sacrifice of Jesus impacted Paul and, by extension, affects us. These passages illuminate how God rejuvenates and transforms lives through the power of Jesus' sacrifice, offering a new perspective from which to live. This transformation is central to understanding the depth of change that the gospel brings into the lives of believers, continually renewing them in the image of Christ.

## The Love of Christ Propels Us

For the love of Christ compels us, since we have reached this conclusion, that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for them and was raised (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Paul's encounter with Christ's overwhelming love is the cornerstone of his theological reflection and ministerial motivation. His love was not just a theological abstract but a reality; Jesus died for him while he was still entrenched in sin, specifically for Saul of Tarsus, the notorious persecutor of Christians. Jesus' sacrificial death was not just a general act of redemption but a *personal exchange*—His life for

Saul's. This act was not due to Saul's merits but was a manifestation of Jesus' magnanimous, unmerited love. This love compelled and drove Paul to dedicate his life to serving others.

This overwhelming love should not be exclusive to Paul; it extends to all of us. The same love that transformed Saul into Paul should also move us deeply, compelling us to reflect on our past and recognize the complete contrast to where we stand now in Christ. *For the love of Christ compels us*, this love should govern our actions and decisions, exerting a pressure that results in measurable Christian action.

We must fully surrender to Jesus, allowing His love to control every facet of our lives. This idea is further seen in 2 Corinthians 5:14b, which reminds us that *one died for all, and therefore all died*. This shows us how our lives are no longer centered around our desires but are instead focused on Christ and His will. Our gratitude for His sacrifice should be evident in our dedication to living for Him, as Paul emphasizes by the continuation of his thoughts in 2 Corinthians 5:15:

And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for them and was raised.

Our old selves have died, and now we live for Christ.

This is seen in other New Testament writings.

- Galatians 2:20 elaborates on this new existence: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."
- This idea of substitution and transformation is also reflected in 1 Peter 2:24, emphasizing that Christ's death enables us to die to sin and live to righteousness. We are a new creation, indwelt and empowered by the Spirit.

This goes far beyond initial salvation from eternal damnation; it is a complete overhaul of our nature and purposes, as described in Titus 2:13-14:

while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works.

Jesus' sacrifice aims not just to save us from hell but to purify us, making us righteous people who actively live out His will and purposes. Thus, the Christian life is about embodying the love of Christ, living a life hidden with Christ in God, as stated in Colossians 3:3, and moving forward in faith and righteousness, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

## The Old Has Passed Away

From now on, then, we do not know anyone from a worldly perspective. Even if we have known Christ from a worldly perspective, we no longer know him this way. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:16-17)

From the moment we believe, we are called to walk in newness of life. This fundamental change is particularly evident in how Paul shifted his view of others. Previously, he might have assessed people

based on worldly standards like physical appearance, superficial behavior, or personality traits. However, following his conversion, Paul ceased recognizing people "according to the flesh," as noted in 2 Corinthians 5:16a. External judgments no longer clouded his interactions; instead, he viewed life through a lens enriched with spiritual insight and divine wisdom.

This viewpoint is behind what it means to become a "new creation." The impact of Jesus' death and resurrection promises that anyone, regardless of past transgressions or status—from the most notorious sinners to societal outcasts—can be remade. This offers new knowledge, wisdom, and a shift in priorities from the temporary to the eternal, changing how individuals see themselves and others. It cultivates a vision that sees beyond earthly attributes to each person's more profound spiritual connections with God.

I think Paul further elaborates on this idea by emphasizing our security in Christ, suggesting that being "in Christ" provides a reformation of identity and an assurance of our future with Him. Jesus guarantees our eternal inheritance, accessible exclusively to those who find their identity in Him.

The term "new creation" carries significant weight in Paul's epistles, as he uses it in various contexts to describe the radical change brought about by Christ's salvation. For example, in Galatians 6:15 and Ephesians 4:24, Paul speaks of God's desire to recreate us in Christ and the call to put on the new self, respectively.

For both circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing; what matters instead is a new creation (Galatians 6:15).

And to put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth (Ephesians 4:24).

This concept was not unfamiliar to Paul's audience; in the Old Testament, Jews used the term to describe someone whose sins were forgiven. Paul adapts this term to describe Jesus's comprehensive work in our salvation.

Ultimately, being a new creation in Christ is not only about personal renewal; it's about living in a way that reflects our deepened relationship with God. As we die to our old selves and live through Christ, we are not only transformed individually but are also given the power to view and interact with the world around us from this refreshed sanctified perspective. This shift affects every aspect of our lives and guides us to live according to our new, divine nature.

## **A Reality in Process**

God is actively involved in our salvation, personally investing His effort and energy into transforming our lives. As He works within us, our old ideas, plans, values, loves, passions, principles, and beliefs are profoundly changing. It's important to note that this transformation does not imply we become sinless; instead, God instills new desires, inclinations, appetites, truths, and values aligned with His will.

As we nurture and develop these new traits, they begin to overpower our old, fleshly tendencies, and we gradually transform into the image of Jesus. However, this process requires our full cooperation and surrender. We must not resist or hold back the changes God wants to make in us; He can only work to

the extent we allow Him. A vital aspect of this involves shifting our view of Christianity—from focusing on what we must give up to embracing what we gain in Christ.

Upon coming to Christ, we begin to reevaluate everything. As we do, our perception of what is essential should change. Suppose we find ourselves clinging to old ideas, values, or passions. In that case, it indicates a lack of complete surrender to God. 2 Corinthians 5:17c emphasizes that "the new has come," using a verb tense that implies a continuing state of fact, indicating that our growth is ongoing and enduring.

Our new state brings about a new perspective on time and eternity. As adopted sons or daughters of God, we no longer live for the temporal but for the eternal. Now, we see reality more clearly. Despite living in the world, we live from a new viewpoint, rejecting worldly standards, motives, judgments, and values.

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things (Colossians 3:1-2).

The old ways are gone, and we are called to focus on God's perfect standard of holiness. While we may only partially meet this standard, it is our goal and guide. Pursuing holiness reshapes our lives, prompting us to live according to God's divine standards rather than the world's.

## What's In This for Us?

**Embrace Total Transformation:** Your spiritual renewal goes far beyond external changes. It involves actively nurturing new desires and inclinations that align with God's will. This involves a deep internal shift that allows us to gradually transform into Jesus's image. Each day, choose to build these godly traits over your old habits and fleshly desires, recognizing that this is ongoing and requires continuous dedication.

**Prioritize Eternal Perspectives over Temporary Views:** As we realize the importance of living for eternity rather than just for the present, we must adjust our priorities and values accordingly. This shift in focus helps us evaluate life's situations, opportunities, and challenges from a spiritual perspective, ensuring that our actions and decisions are anchored in eternal truths, not just immediate gratifications or pressures.

**Live for Christ in Everyday Interactions:** Deciding to no longer live for ourselves but for Christ who died for us calls for a daily commitment to reflecting Christ's love and grace in our interactions. Whether at work, at home, or in the local community, our lives should be testimonials of the power of Christ's love, seeking to serve others and promote unity and righteousness as Paul did.

**Continuously Evaluate and Surrender:** Regular self-assessment of our spiritual life is vital to ensure we are not clinging to old patterns or resisting the Spirit's work. Surrendering to His work involves letting go of previous identities, values, and priorities that conflict with our new identity in Christ. This might mean reevaluating relationships, career choices, or personal goals to ensure they align with our Christian faith and values.

## Conclusion

What have we learned here?

When we fully embrace Christ's life, we will experience a new existence where our old selves are replaced by new creations defined by godliness, purpose, and an eternal perspective. Our daily lives should be a living testament to the grace and renewal found in Christ. By committing to a life that continuously seeks God's standards over worldly ones, nurturing new spiritual inclinations, and prioritizing eternal values, we draw closer to God and become living illustrations of His power in a world that desperately needs hope. How strong is your commitment to live fully for Him? Are you embracing every opportunity to demonstrate His love and truth in all you do?

## For Reflection

1. How does understanding our previous state of spiritual deadness enhance our appreciation of Christ's sacrifice?
2. In what ways have you personally experienced transformation since accepting Christ into your life? Share specific changes in values or perspectives.
3. Paul talks about not evaluating others "according to the flesh." How can we apply this principle in our daily interactions with people?
4. Discuss how being a "new creation" impacts our identity and actions. Can you think of a moment when this became particularly clear to you?
5. How does the idea that "the love of Christ compels us" influence our motivation for service and ministry? Share an example where this love guided your decisions or actions.
6. What old desires or passions have you had to surrender to embrace the new life Christ offers fully? How did you go about making these changes?
7. How can we practically "set our minds on things above" daily? Discuss strategies that have worked for you, or that could work.
8. What does living "not for ourselves but for Him who died for us" mean? How does this perspective change our roles in our families, workplaces, and communities?
9. Discuss the importance of continuous spiritual evaluation. What practices help you stay aligned with God's will and be aware of any areas needing surrender?
10. How can the local church support its members in the process of transformation and living out the new identity in Christ? What roles do accountability and fellowship play in this process??