

THE NEW NORMAL #9
“Social Justice in the Ministry of the Church”
2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Last week we took a look at the role social justice played in the life of Jesus and concluded that it occupied a crucial place in his ministry. Should social justice also occupy a crucial role in the contemporary church? The world will claim that many of the injustices in the world can be corrected by better education, health care, redistribution of resources, socio-economic reforms, governmental reforms, and so on. Although some of these things may be helpful, none of them address the root cause of social injustices that have been endemic in the human condition going all the way back to Adam and Eve. The root cause is the depraved human heart. The answer to the poisoned heart is the gospel. Therefore, social justice must occupy a place in today’s church.

- 1. CHRIST’S TRANSFORMATIVE LOVE SHOULD COMPEL US TO SHARE THE GOSPEL, v. 14**
 - A. The scope of Jesus’ death – he died for all mankind
 - B. The reason for Jesus’ death - He died for our sins
 - C. The result of Jesus’ death - all died with him by faith
 - D. The motivation resulting from Jesus’ death - endure hardship for the gospel
- 2. CHRIST’S TRANSFORMATIVE LOVE SHOULD CAUSE A REFOCUS OF THE DIRECTION OF ONE’S LIFE, v. 15**
 - A. His love should lead to denial of self-interests, Luke 9:23-25
 - B. His love should cause us to live for Christ’s agenda, Rom 12:1-2
- 3. CHRIST’S TRANSFORMATIVE LOVE ALTERS OUR VIEW OF PEOPLE, v. 16**
 - A. Paul doesn’t view people according to worldly standards
 - B. Paul once regarded Christ according to worldly standards
 - C. Paul saw Jesus as a false Messiah
 - D. Paul persecuted Jewish Christians, Acts 8:1-3

- 4. CHRIST’S TRANSFORMATIVE LOVE ENABLES US TO BE A NEW CREATION, v. 17**
 - A. “If anyone” is an allusion to Paul & anybody else
 - B. By faith we are “In Christ”: our new spiritual address
 - C. New creation: old is gone (old vs. new covenant), 3:6-8
 - D. New creation: Born again, John 3:3 & 5
 - E. New creation: Regenerated, Titus 3:5
 - F. New creation: Died to sin – walk in new life, Rom 6:1-8
 - G. New creation: Crucified with Christ, Gal 2:20, 5:24
 - H. New creation: Infused with a divine nature, 2 Peter 1:3-4
- 5. CHRIST’S TRANSFORMATIVE LOVE ENABLES US TO BE RECONCILED TO GOD, v. 18-19a**
 - A. God reconciles the world through Christ, v. 18
 - B. God gave Paul the ministry of reconciliation, v. 18
 - C. God forgives sin & reconciles us to himself via Christ, v. 19
 - D. God gave Paul the message of reconciliation, v. 19
- 6. CHRIST’S TRANSFORMATIVE LOVE HAS CALLED US TO BE HIS AMBASSADORS IN RECONCILING PEOPLE TO GOD, vv. 20-21**
 - A. The role of the Roman ambassador (*presbeuo*), v. 20
 - B. God makes his appeal through us, v. 20
 - C. Be reconciled to God by faith in Jesus, v. 20
 - D. Christ became sin for us – imputed sin, v. 21
 - E. Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us, v. 21

NOTES:

Hillcrest Church, July 19, 2020
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TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 5:14-21: For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. ¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 3:6-8: He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant-- not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. ⁷ Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?

John 3:1-6: Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." ³ In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." ⁴ "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" ⁵ Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one

can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

Titus 3:4-6: But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior

Romans 6:1-8: What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵ If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin--⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with 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.

2 Peter 1:3-4: His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- #1. Paul suffered tremendous hardship as an apostle. In what way(s) does Christ's love compel you to endure in the Christian life and share the gospel?
 - #2. According to v. 15 what should the evidence be of a true conversion to Christ?
 - #3. What does it mean to regard people according to a worldly point of view? According to a spiritual point of view?
 - #4. In what way(s) did Paul view Jesus from a worldly point of view prior to his conversion?
 - #5. What does it mean to be "in Christ"?
 - #6. What does it mean to be a "new creation"? (refer to 2 Cor 3:6-8)
 - #7. Point 4 on the outline lists several terms that are close in meaning to "new creation." Discuss your observations about the different terms.
 - #8. What does the term reconciliation mean?
 - #9. Discuss the parallels between Roman ambassadors and the role we have as ambassadors for Christ.
 - #10. Discuss the radical transformation that Paul experienced in his life (heart) after meeting Jesus.
 - #11. Why is v. 21 so important to this discussion?
 - #12. What is your big takeaway from this teaching?
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NOTE THE ROLE OF ROMAN AMBASSADORS:

There were two kinds of provinces in the Roman Empire. (1) The Senatorial province had no troops and was under the control of the

senate. (2) Places that were turbulent and had troops garrisoned were under the control of the Emperor (Imperial provinces).

When Rome defeated a people ten Ambassadors were sent to them. The terms of entrance into the Roman Empire were drafted by the conquering general and the ambassadors. They were then submitted for ratification by senate. We offer the terms set by God to come into the kingdom.

When they defeated an enemy, ambassadors would offer entrance into the empire, like a peace treaty. When we lead someone to Christ, they are reconciled to God, like a peace treaty.

Roman ambassadors had a direct commission by the Emperor. Paul received his commission directly from Jesus.

Roman ambassadors spoke with the full authority of the Emperor. What he said was considered the word of the Emperor. When we share the gospel, we do so with the full authority of Jesus--as if our words were said by Jesus himself.

If people reject the ambassador's offer, they reject the Emperor. If we share the gospel and it is rejected they are rejecting Jesus not us.

The honor of the country is in the ambassador's hands. He speaks for Rome and the country is judged by the ambassador's behavior. Likewise, we speak for God and his honor is in our hands.