

2 Corinthians 5:14-21, Ministry of Reconciliation

(NIV) ¹⁴ 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, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 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 people'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.

Exegetical Notes:

- If the question is asked “for whom did Christ die” it is best to see all as all people, not just those who believe. But his death only saves those who believe *so that* they become people “who will live not for the themselves, but for him who died and was raised.”
- Compare ESV with NIV on v. 17, literally the phrase in Greek is simply “new creation.” These should not be seen as mutually exclusive but rather mutually reinforcing.
 - NIV leans on “new creation” alluding to new creation themes in the servant songs of Isaiah because Isaiah 49:8 is quoted in 2 Cor. 6:1.
 - ESV leans on nearness of phrase “if anyone”.
- Reconciliation in modern english usage refers to repairing of relationships between friends or family members. The definition of the greek word here for “reconciliation” is about making peace between two parties who were enemies (cf. Rom. 5:1-10).

Questions

1. How does the death of Christ compel you to love others? What kind of people do you struggle to love and understand? What would have to die in you in order to make room for them in your heart?
2. Since reconciliation is about God making peace with us, who were once is enemies (cf. Rom. 5:10), how does Christ death for you, show both God's love for you and his judgment of sins?
3. How is God at work in your life to bring about “new creation,” what old things do you desire to be done with, what new things need to be awakened?
4. Reflecting on 2 Cor. 5:21, paradoxically, Christ's sacrifice brings about new life and transformation in our relationship with God. What things may you need to sacrifice in order to more fully experience the righteousness of God in your life?