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# **An Urgent Matter To Attend To**

## **2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21**

### **Introduction**

1. Have you ever known someone who has suddenly had to leave work, an event or perhaps even your home because they had “an urgent matter to attend to?”
2. Have you ever had to suddenly leave a place, an event or a gathering of people because you had “an urgent matter to attend to?”
3. The fact that it was “urgent” means that it couldn’t wait — it had to be addressed immediately.
4. The fact that “you” had to “attend to” it means that no one else would do — it required your personal attention.
5. This afternoon, I would like for us to look at something which the apostle Paul writes in his second letter to the saints in Corinth.
6. It had to do with something which God had done in Christ on their behalf.
7. As we shall see, it required their immediate attention, and by extension our immediate attention as well.

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### **I. The Need To Become A New Creation**

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV)

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#### **A. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE IN CHRIST?**

1. It means we have put Christ on much like we would put on a new coat or a new set of clothes.

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”

(Galatians 3:27, ESV, NKJV) — “clothed yourselves with Christ” (NIV84).

2. It means that we have become recipients of God’s “free gift of . . . eternal life” (Romans 6:23).

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23, NASB95)

3. It means that God will no longer condemn us because of our former sins (Romans 8:1).

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1, NASB95)

4. It means that nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39, NASB95).

5. It means that God now considers us His sons and daughters (Galatians 3:26).

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:26, NASB95)

6. It means that we are destined for God’s eternal glory (1 Peter 5:10).

“After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.” (1 Peter 5:10, NASB95)

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### **B. THE NEW HAS REPLACED THE OLD**

1. Paul adds here in verse 17 that “The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV)
2. The old was a life swallowed up by its love for the world and the things in it.
3. We had to have the things which our eyes and flesh desired — We longed

to boast about who we were and what we had done (1 John 2:15).

4. The old was a life of constant lies and anger — a life which would rather steal something than to work for it (Ephesians 4:25-28).
5. It was a life filled with bitterness, rage, anger, screaming, abusive speech and all kinds of depravity (Ephesians 4:31).
6. Now that we are “in Christ” a new life with different desires has replaced the old.
7. Our new life seeks to be like God “in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).
8. It is a life which speaks truth and wholesome words which edify others (Ephesians 4:25,29).
9. It does “not give the devil an opportunity” (Ephesians 4:27).

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## II. God Is The One Who Makes All This Possible

### A. HE RECONCILES US TO HIMSELF THROUGH CHRIST

“Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ . . . namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.” (2 Corinthians 5:18a,19a, NASB95)

1. Twice, Paul speaks of God reconciling people to Himself.
  - a. In verse 18, Paul speaks of himself and those with him as being reconciled to God through Christ.
  - b. In verse 19, he speaks of God reconciling the world to Himself.
2. What does it mean to reconcile someone to yourself?
3. It means to restore peace and harmony between enemies.
  - a. How many of us as parents have had to tell our children to apologize to

one another and make up.

- b. How many teachers have worked to resolve differences between two students in an effort to help them reconcile.
4. How is it possible that Paul was an enemy of God?
5. In his own letter to the Christians in Philippi, he writes “as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless” (Philippians 3:6b, NASB95).
6. However, by his own admission, Paul said, “I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women in prison” (Acts 22:4).
7. Later, in Caesarea, he would tell King Agrippa “not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them” (Acts 26:10).
8. On the road to Damascus, in Paul’s effort to arrest more Christians, that the Lord confronted him and asked, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14)
9. How are we enemies of God?
  - a. James wrote that “whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4).
  - b. In his letter to the saints in Philippi, Paul wrote, “For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things” (Philippians 3:18-19).
10. The world has been and continues to be in rebellion against God.
11. It is through His one and only Son that God is reconciling the world to Himself.
12. In Romans 5:10, Paul wrote, “For if while we were enemies we were

reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” (Romans 5:10, NASB95)

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**B. NO LONGER DOES HE COUNT OUR TRESPASSES AGAINST US**

“namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them.” (2 Corinthians 5:19a, NASB95)

1. Our sins and transgressions stand as a black mark against us.
2. Almost 800 years before Paul penned these words, the prophet Isaiah wrote:

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“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not so short  
That it cannot save;  
Nor is His ear so dull  
That it cannot hear.  
But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,  
And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.”

(Isaiah 59:1–2, NASB95)

3. A few verses earlier here in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians he reminded them:

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“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10, NASB95)

4. How is it possible for God not to count our trespasses against us?
5. The answer is found only in Christ.
6. Look at what Paul tells us in here in verse 21, of 2 Corinthians 5:

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might

become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21, NASB95).

7. God made Christ *to be* sin, so that we might *become* the righteousness of God in Him.
8. Every time a person obeys the gospel and is baptized into Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his or her sins, there is an exchange which takes place.
9. It is an exchange of “sin” and “righteousness”.
10. Paul describes this exchange in his letter to the saints in Rome:

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.” (Romans 6:3–7, NASB95)

11. This is why Paul wrote to these Christians in Corinth in his first letter “you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11, ESV)
12. We are now the “walking redeemed!”

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13. The powerful hymn written by Fanny J. Crosby over 140 years ago declares this message:

**Redeemed how I love to proclaim it!  
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed thru His infinite mercy,  
His child, and forever I am.**

**Redeemed and so happy in Jesus,**

**No language my rapture can tell;  
I know that the light of His presence  
With me doth continually dwell.**

## **Conclusion**

1. You and I now have a responsibility.
2. For those of us who are Christians here today, we, like the apostle Paul and his companions, have committed to us by our God "the word of reconciliation."
3. We too "are ambassadors for Christ" through whom God makes His appeal, "be reconciled to God."
4. This is a message we must continue to share with those who are lost.
5. If you are not a Christian here today, your sins separate you from a God who loves you and wants you to be with Him eternally.
6. He has provided His sinless son as the means to your salvation.
7. However, you must be willing to . . .
  - a. Repent of those sins
  - b. Confess Jesus as God's only Son and your Savior
  - c. Wash away your sins through baptism into His name
8. Do you need to respond to His invitation to you?