



## **Going Deeper**

Grace Under Pressure: If Anyone is in Christ...

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

October 11, 2009

### **Opening Prayer**

We thank God for his word:

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

2 Timothy 3:16

**Leader**      **The Lord be with you**  
**People**      ***And also with you***  
**Leader**      **Let us pray**

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **Remembering the Message**

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.

### **Introduction**

In his sermon, Fr. David brought us to this central passage of Paul's letter to the Corinthian church. In these verses, Paul brings razor-sharp clarity to the message and meaning of the gospel. It is as if the snow in a snow globe is settling down after being shaken up. As it settles, the image inside – the gospel – becomes crystal clear. Paul does this by making three declarations about the work of Jesus Christ.

### **Declaration 1: We have changed (vs. 16)**

One change that comes over us is the way that we see the world. Once we have come to know Christ – and seen the power of his work on the cross – we never look at anything the same way again. Paul says that because of Jesus, we don't see things from "a worldly point of view," that is, the way the world sees people and situations and events. We see them with new eyes, the eyes of Christ.

Imagine walking into the extreme poverty of a small town in Peru. On the surface you see small huts that serve as the homes of the people in the town. You see the largest cemetery in Peru, not with well-manicured lawns and pristine headstones, but with mounds where people have come and buried their loved ones in nothing but a cloth. But you turn a corner and come to a small building with a corrugated tin roof. Gathered outside are men and women and children singing a song of praise to God.

This is their church. These are God's people. Where the world would see poverty and lack and death, through God's eyes you see people rich in love for God, overflowing with blessings, and full of the life of Christ. This is seeing with the eyes of Jesus.

### **Going deeper:**

Read James 2:1-13, I John 4:7-12, Philippians 2:3-13

1. What ways is favoritism practiced in our society? As a Christian, how can you come against it in your day to day life?
2. How can you take up the spiritual practice of looking at people, situations, and events through the eyes of Christ?
3. Is there a particular situation in your life that would be different if you looked at it not as the world sees it, but as Christ sees it?

### **Declaration 2: We have been changed (vs. 17)**

We are able to see the world differently because we are no longer the same! God has changed us from the inside out...made us new. We are a completely new creation. Think of it this way: All around Dallas, people are buying older homes, tearing them down, and building new homes. Rather than doing a patch job of remodeling, they've chosen to build something brand new. That's the same thing God has done for us. He didn't just patch us up...giving us a fresh coat of paint over the destruction of sin. He made us brand new! We have a new life, a new start!

Don't feel new? Do you see cracks in the plaster, leaks in the plumbing? Do you feel more like "This old house" than "Extreme home makeover?" Well, that's part of what Jesus is doing in our relationship with him. He's helping us learn to live into that new life. In the Philippians passage you just read (Philippians 2:12), Paul admonished the church to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." What he's saying is this, "learn what it means to be the people of God. Learn to live like the new creation God has made you to be!"

### **Going deeper:**

1. Answer the question Fr. David asked in his sermon today: How have you been changed by God? (If you don't feel comfortable sharing with the group, take this home and answer it later by yourself.)
2. Another question from Fr. David: Despite all of the new work God is doing, how much of the "old you" is still in you? (Again, answer this at home if you'd rather not share with the group...but please take time to think through this important question!)
3. Read Psalm 51. How does God want to take away the old life and give us a new one?

### **Declaration 3: All of this is from God (v. 18)**

In this passage, Paul makes clear that the change we've experienced – in ourselves and in the way that we view the world – is the result of nothing else but God's work in us. Fr. David reminded us that we often forget the results of sin. It didn't just make us do "bad" things. It made us enemies with God. His holiness is offended and can't live near our sin.

C.S Lewis put it this way in his book *Mere Christianity*:

In other words, fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms. Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realizing that you have been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor--that is the only way out of our "hole."

That's the bad news! But the good news is this: Rather than leaving us in that state of despair and separation, God made a peace treaty – He reconciled us to himself – through the work of Jesus on the cross.

Paul ends this section of his letter reminding us of the gospel in summary. God made Jesus, who didn't have any sin, to become sin for us on the cross. He did that so that we who were full of sin could become righteous and holy and live in relationship with God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Now we have peace: peace with God, peace within ourselves, peace in our relationships with other people. We remind ourselves of this every week in our service as we pass the peace. It isn't just a fellowship moment (although that's important!), it's a reminder: We've been reconciled to God and one another through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. All that was old is gone...everything is being made new!

#### **Going deeper:**

1. Read Philippians 4:6-7. What are ways that God's peace can come to your life?
2. Is there a relationship or situation in your life that needs to experience reconciliation – a peace treaty?

#### **Closing Prayer**

O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.