

New Vision

2 Corinthians 5:6-10, (11-13), 14-17 (June 13, 2021)

2 Corinthians 5:6-10, (11-13), 14-17

⁶So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord— ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil. ¹¹Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences.

¹²We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart. ¹³For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. ¹⁵And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Historical Context

In 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, Paul asserts that we can be confident in all circumstances, whether we are “at home” or “away” from either “the body” or “the Lord.” This theme resonates with his refrains in Philippians that “living is Christ and dying is gain” (Philippians 1:21) and that in any and all circumstances — whether in plenty or in need — we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:12-13).

Theme: New Vision

The experience of being truly loved is transformative. When someone who sees both our virtues and our flaws is committed to walking with us through life’s highs and lows, it strengthens us and helps us to live more fully as ourselves. When a friend takes our call in the middle of the night because we are anxious about the loss of a job or grieving the loss of a loved one, we gain hope to face another day—not necessarily because our problems have been solved, but because we know that someone deeply cares for us. As seen so often during this trying past year, people often come to know love precisely when they are at the end of their own strength or resources and others step in to give sacrificially of themselves. Such experiences can change us and motivate us to in turn love and care for others.

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul writes as one who has experienced the unsurpassable love of Christ that transformed him from a persecutor of the church into a servant of the gospel. He confidently declares in verse 17 that, “if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!”

But, Paul's talk of "new creation" presents both a promise and a challenge. Although God alone can transform us into those who live and love like Christ, we are called to surrender to being made anew. It is often easier for us to keep judging others (including ourselves) by human standards (2 Corinthians 5:16) than it is to allow the Spirit to give us new vision to see everyone through the lens of Christ's love for them. Embracing newness of life in the Spirit means letting go of the strange comfort of old thought patterns and habits that are not life-giving. Living for Christ means openness to embodying divine love to those we would otherwise deem unlovable.