

**New Creatures in Christ**

**Lesson Scope:** 2 Corinthians 5:17 - 2 Corinthians 7:16

**Lesson Focus**

The believer rejoices and finds great consolation in his hope of eternal reward (2 Corinthians 5:1-6). To receive this reward, the believer must be found faithful when Christ returns.

His accountability before God (2 Corinthians 5:10) gives him a two-fold responsibility. First, he must live for the One who died for him. Second, he must declare the message of salvation so that others might also be reconciled to God.

The great provision of reconciliation was provided while we were yet enemies (Romans 5:10). The sinless Son of God gave Himself an offering for sin. This sacrifice opened the way for reconciliation to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). The sinner, cleansed and at peace with God, may become a partaker of divine righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Through faith in Jesus Christ, a man can become a "new creature." His new life is marked by separation, holiness, and acceptance into the family of God.

Five great doctrines are taught in this lesson—regeneration, reconciliation, separation, sanctification, and repentance. All these are necessary for "perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

The following points ought to be explained and understood well. Reconciliation is a coming together, a making up, between God and man. God never changed. His attitude and actions toward sin and toward righteousness never changed. Man sinned; he rejected God and became God's enemy.

The propitiation accomplished by Christ's sacrifice makes reconciliation with God possible for man.

Separation from the world is not merely avoiding the bad things of the world or using certain key items to show distinctiveness from the world. All these may help us have a certain sense of differentness. This is good. But we must realize that we must be separate from the world's system of thinking, values, status, and idolatry.

Repentance springs from a deep-seated change of heart. It is not superficial or forced. Confession is not made because of men, but because of a deep sense of having transgressed God's holy laws.

**Lesson Aim:** To promote principles involved in living the Gospel.

**Theme Verse:** 1 John 3:7. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

## Lesson Text

### Reconciled Unto God

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 <sup>17</sup> Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. <sup>18</sup> And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

2 Corinthians 6:1 <sup>1</sup> We then, *as* workers together *with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

2 Corinthians 6:3-4 <sup>3</sup> Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: <sup>4</sup> But in all *things* approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

### Separated Unto God

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 <sup>14</sup> Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? <sup>15</sup> And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? <sup>16</sup> And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>17</sup> Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, <sup>18</sup> And

will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

### **Sanctified Unto God**

**2 Corinthians 7:1-2** <sup>1</sup> Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. <sup>2</sup> Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

**2 Corinthians 7:4-5** <sup>4</sup> Great *is* my boldness of speech toward you, great *is* my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. <sup>5</sup> For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without *were* fightings, within *were* fears.

**2 Corinthians 7:8-11** <sup>8</sup> For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season. <sup>9</sup> Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. <sup>10</sup> For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. <sup>11</sup> For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **Reconciled Unto God**

1. What things are distinctly new for the new creature in Christ?
2. What message does the ambassador for Christ proclaim?
3. How can we keep our lives blameless?

#### **Separated Unto God**

4. Why is a union between a believer and an unbeliever an unequal yoke?
5. How does this passage emphasize the two-kingdom concept of the Scriptures?
6. What unequal yokes threaten us?

## **Sanctified Unto God**

7. How do the promises of God inspire holiness?
8. How does godly sorrow differ from the sorrow of this world?
9. How do we show that our initial repentance experience is current?

## **Analyzing the Passage**

Being in Christ and being a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17) requires a new birth.

"All things are of God" (2 Corinthians 5:18). The plan and provision are of Him. "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34).

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). The unity of the Godhead is not in focus. Rather, God accomplished reconciliation through Christ. Man needs it because he is alienated from God and hostile toward Him. Not once is God said to be reconciled.

"That we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The believer "becomes in Christ all that God requires a man to be, all that he could never be in himself" (Vine's).

Mankind is divided into two exclusive, opposing, and contradictory groups. No synthesis is possible. This is illustrated by righteousness versus unrighteousness, light versus darkness, Christ versus Belial, believers versus infidels, and the temple of God versus idols.

What (2 Corinthians 7:11) is elsewhere translated how great and how much. The Corinthians' sorrow for sin was intense, and their restitution was thorough.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Reconciled Unto God**

1. A true Christian is a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-18, 21). He is not a good moral man dressed with numerous commendable character traits. Some men on the street are that good. A new creature in Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit. Love is not a friendly, polished veneer, but a genuine expression of agape love—the implanted nature of God. This new life is not proven by a few extraordinary acts of kindness. Rather, it is a consistent life of divine goodness, both in its abhorrence and reproof of sin and in its sacrifice for the salvation of souls.

2. The transformed, reconciled believer carries on the work of Christ in this world (5:18-20). Before Christ left this world, He committed His work to His disciples. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20). This is one of the most frequently quoted Scriptures by the Anabaptists. Christ instructed His disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit, who would enable them for this great work (Acts 1:4-8). By the power of the Holy Spirit, they would do even greater works than Christ had done (John 14:12). As a result, thousands entered the church after Pentecost. We are Christ's messengers to the world. If we fail to carry His message, who will?

3. Justification and union with Christ produce righteous living (2 Corinthians 5:21). The standard for and source of righteousness is God Himself—His character and His law. The pattern and example of righteousness is Christ. Faith and righteousness are inseparable (see Romans 4). Faith is reckoned to the believer for (with a view to) righteousness. Such faith brings the soul into vital union with Christ and inevitably produces a righteous life of conformity to the will of God.

4. By the grace of God, the believer lives blamelessly before men (2 Corinthians 6:1, 3-4). Blameless living includes sobriety, temperance, restrained speech, discretion, chastity, and loving home relationships (Titus 2:1-5). Inconsistencies in the lives of professing Christians cause the enemies of God to blaspheme. A little folly can easily produce a harmful effect (Ecclesiastes 10:1). A little misrepresentation in a business deal, a little inaccuracy in our speech, a little unfairness with our children, a little partiality by the school board, a little false accusation of our brother, and a little ignoring of the church rules cause homes to deteriorate, churches to scatter, and young people to be lost while the world looks on—perplexed!

### **Separated Unto God**

5. The Christian may not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14-16). Many who identify themselves as Christians reject some basic principles of New Testament truth. We must beware of close relationships with the world and with nominal Christians. An un-

equal yoke may develop even if a formal agreement is absent.

6. The Christian must focus on the two-kingdom concept to maintain his separation (2 Corinthians 6:14-17). There are two ways—only two—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. The Anabaptist movement was based on this concept. One writer, after describing the first baptisms and ordinations of the Swiss Brethren, wrote, "There-with began separation from the world and its evil works." Michael Sattler wrote, "Christ despises the world; His children shall do the same. He has no kingdom in this world; the world is against His kingdom. The believers have been chosen out of the world; therefore the world hates them." We might reject certain items of the world because they are evil in themselves. This is good, but it is not enough. We must reject the whole world system (Revelation 18:4).

7. God's promises motivate separation (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). God promises an acceptance into His family that will meet our needs. To find this acceptance, we must not so much as touch this world's filth. Godly people will reject Mennonite novels that describe pre-conversion wickedness, sensational mission accounts without discipleship, and "plain people" romance. If we raise our children on entertaining story tapes, they will have little interest in reading *Martyrs Mirror*.

### **Sanctified Unto God**

8. God requires holiness of body and soul (2 Corinthians 7:1). We must focus our eyes on what is decent. We must keep our hands clean while we handle money. Our mouths must not overeat. Our tongues must not gossip or slander. Our ears must not listen to casual music or CDs teaching heresy. Our minds must not imagine evil of our brother. The loyalty of our heart must not be divided between God and mammon. Pride, jealousy, envy, ingratitude, and self-will must be purged from our minds.

9. God's servants rejoice when the Gospel succeeds in the face of tribulation (2 Corinthians 7:4-5). A farmer works a field, plants the seed, fertilizes the crop, and destroys the weeds. He endures drought, heat, wind, and cold, but after much patience he rejoices in the harvest. So God's servants sow the seed on the soil of men's hearts. They sweat, toil, and persevere in the midst of adversity. They encourage any sign of growth; they jealously guard against any enemy of the soul. What great joy they

have when their children, friends, and neighbors make right choices and grow spiritually! What even greater joy is theirs when victories are won over great trials and temptations! God's Word will not return unto Him void (Isaiah 55:10, 11).

10. Genuine sorrow for sin is essential for godly living (2 Corinthians 7:9-11). We have not yet arrived; we are not already perfect (Philippians 3:11-17). We must keep our Christian life current by making our wrongs right as we go along. Parents, as we live conscientiously and confess to our children our wrongs toward them, we set an example of true Christianity before them. Ministers and teachers must do the same. No one is too important to sincerely say, "I am sorry."

Repentance has four elements—conviction, contrition, confession, and restitution. Conviction is a heaven-sent awareness of guilt upon the conscience. Contrition is a yielding to the conviction that results in brokenness before God. Confession may also be toward men if we have sinned openly or wronged another. Restitution is making right as far as possible what we have done wrong. When these four steps are followed, God also clears the matter. Praise God.

### **Important Teachings**

1. A true Christian is a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-18, 21).
2. The transformed, reconciled believer carries on the work of Christ in this world (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).
3. Justification and union with Christ produce righteous living (2 Corinthians 5:21).
4. By the grace of God, the believer lives blamelessly before men (2 Corinthians 6: 1, 3-4).
5. The Christian may not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).
6. The Christian must focus on the two-kingdom concept to maintain his separation (2 Corinthians 6:14-17).
7. God's promises motivate separation (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).
8. God requires holiness of body and soul (7:1).
9. God's servants rejoice when the Gospel succeeds in the face of tribulation (2 Corinthians 7:4-5).
10. Genuine sorrow for sin is essential for godly living (2 Cor.7:9-11).

## Answers to Questions

1. What things are distinctly new for the new creature in Christ?

The born-again Christian has a new mind (the mind of Christ) and new motivations for living. His good works spring from the Holy Spirit of Christ within and are not the filthy rags of man's attempted goodness. His life is a consistent display of the fruits of the Spirit.

2. What message does the ambassador for Christ proclaim? Both the plan and the provision for salvation are of God. Through Christ, God accomplished the work of redemption. By personally receiving the great propitiation, the sinner is reconciled to God. In Christ the believer conforms his life to the will of God. The ambassador beseeches men in behalf of Christ, "Be ye reconciled to God."

3. How can we keep our lives blameless?

In business, we must not be ruthless or dishonest. We must be kind, fair, and generous. In church life, we must be brotherly, impartial, and understanding. In family life, we must not provoke our children to wrath and must communicate well with each other. In our personal lives, we must be temperate, sober, and chaste. Frivolous, loose behavior will ruin our testimony. In every aspect of life we must be consistent.

4. Why is a union between a believer and an unbeliever an unequal yoke?

Because there is no fellowship, communion, concord, or agreement, they cannot work together. They have no common goals or methods. A believer and an unbeliever have different masters.

5. How does this passage emphasize the two-kingdom concept of the Scriptures?

The passage emphasizes the two-kingdom concept by listing five opposites. Those in whom God dwells are to come out from "them" (2 Corinthians 6:17). Because there are only two groups, them is understood to be the world. The command to be separate emphasizes the two-kingdom concept. The command to "touch not" indicates the radical separation of the two groups.

6. What unequal yokes threaten us?

We are tempted to unite with a wide spectrum of plain people in relief work. By extension of that work, we might also be involved in mission and publishing activities. Plain persons are also uniting wide spectrums

of people in financial organizations and health institutions. Some businesses are so large and heavily financed that worldly bankers and financial consultants may actually be running the business. The Christian may not be in such a yoke. The unequal yoke of insurance also threatens our people.

7. How do the promises of God inspire holiness?

The world, the flesh, and the devil tempt us to enjoy the instant pleasures of sin. The promises God gives of future bliss and present acceptance with Him, when claimed by faith, cause us to reject this world and seek the world to come. Because these promises are conditional on holiness, we strive to purify ourselves to attain the resurrection of the dead (Philippians 3:10-11). "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

8. How does godly sorrow differ from the sorrow of this world?

Because of the fear of God, godly sorrow results in a change of attitude toward God, toward sin, and toward self. This change of attitude results in a complete turning of the sinner's life to a life of godliness and a complete confession and restitution so that the past is cleared. The sorrow of the world produces a bitterness of spirit toward those who have exposed sin. Such ones chafe under whatever law is enforced and resent the punishment inflicted upon them. Others may actually desire to change to please men or to avoid the unfavorable effects of sin, but the fear of God is lacking.

9. How do we show that our initial repentance experience is current?

We are humble, realizing the frailty and evil tendencies of our human nature. We sense the imperfections of our own life as we follow in the steps of Christ. Because of this, we freely apologize when we make mistakes. We clear up matters as we go along so that we are blameless before God and man.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

Being in Christ makes us a new creature. Being reconciled to God gives us a new relationship with the Father. Being separate from the world identifies us with a new family. Being holy in body and spirit means we are living by a new standard. Being repentant for our past sins gives us a clear sheet for the past and a new look for the future. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

## **Research Guide**

1. Study "Repentance" in *Doctrines of the Bible*.
2. Study "Reconciliation," "Righteousness," and "Faith" in *Vine's Expository Dictionary*.