

Sermon: Representing Jesus and His Kingdom; Delivered on May 26, 2019, by Dr. Ed Stetzer, executive director of the Billy Graham Center

Bible text explored: 2 Corinthians 5:16–21

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. [ESV]

Review and application:

Dr. Stetzer said that the church of Corinth was not only divided and corrupt, but also believed that Paul's message was out of touch.

(See the immediately preceding verses: 2 Cor. 5:13-15.)

1. What (vv. 16-17) prompted this radical change of perspective for Saul the Pharisee? (See *Acts 26:11-15*.)
How does becoming a new person in Christ cause you to see others in a different light?
2. How did looking at the world through a different set of lenses cause Paul to end up conveying a sense of urgency to the Corinthians? (See *2 Cor. 6:1-2*.)
3. How many times is a form of the word for *reconciling* used in today's Scripture passage?
4. Who (vv. 18-19) took the initiative in bringing this reconciliation about?
But to whom has God now assigned the task of representing him and his kingdom to the world?
After attending Billy Graham's funeral service, Dr. Stetzer was asked whom he thought might be Graham's evangelistic successor. Why did he single out the Uber driver who had driven him to the airport?
5. As a citizen of Heaven, do you see yourself (v. 20) as an ambassador?
Do you see this more as a privilege or as an obligation?
Did Paul himself need divine help to function as an ambassador?
(See *Eph. 6:19-20*.)

Dr. Stetzer visualized every member of Christ's kingdom as being a presenter of the gospel on a continuing evangelistic highway. He challenged us to keep the flow going, rather than becoming a cul-de-sac.

6. Paul concludes (v. 21) with what he sees as the primary motivation for us to faithfully represent Jesus. What was the punishment we deserved, and who paid the ultimate price to make our own reconciliation possible?
(See *Isa. 53:6*.)