



POWER IN WEAKNESS | AMBASSADORS (7)

October 19, 2025

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

PURPOSE

To discover and experience Jesus Christ in our midst
To cultivate mutually encouraging relationships
To participate in God's mission to the world

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Discussion Question

- If someone visited your hometown for the first time, what's one thing you'd want them to experience?

WORSHIP 10 MIN

PLEASE OPEN IN PRAYER

RESPONSIVE PRAYER — Psalm 36

Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens,

Your faithfulness to the clouds.

Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;

Your judgments are like the great deep.

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!

The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

They feast on the abundance of your house,

And you give them drink from the river of your delights.

For with you is the fountain of life;

In your light do we see light.

SCRIPTURE READING

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

¹¹Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. ¹²We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is 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 controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

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.

BIBLE STUDY **Summary**

40 MIN

We are continuing our fall sermon series, *Power in Weakness*, during which we're looking at Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, appropriately considered Paul's most painful, personal, and passionate letter. In this week's passage, Paul continues developing his defense of apostolic ministry by grounding it in the transforming power of the gospel. The "therefore" at the beginning of verse 11 connects this passage to the preceding discussion of the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). Because all must appear before Christ to give an account, the Christian lives with reverent "fear of the Lord," which compels him to persuade others to know Christ as Savior before meeting him as Judge. This fear does not come from paralyzing terror but from a holy awe that moves the believer to faithfulness and evangelistic zeal (Proverbs 9:10; Hebrews 12:28-29). As Puritan commentator Matthew Henry beautifully summarizes, "When Christ shall appear terribly, the Christian may appear before him comfortably." The believer's confidence comes from knowing that he is known by God (verse 11), so that even amid misunderstanding or opposition, his conscience rests secure (1 Corinthians 4:4-5; Westminster Confession of Faith [WCF] 18.1-2).

Paul then explains that the love of Christ is what motivates his ministry (verse 14). That is, Christ's love toward us in his death and resurrection both constrains and compels the believer to live no longer for self but for him "who died and was raised" (verse 15). This marks the pattern of all true Christian living: love received produces love expressed in service to God and neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40; 1 John 4:10-11; Westminster Shorter Catechism 42). Paul clarifies that Christ's death was substitutionary and particular — "one has died for all" — not in the sense of universal salvation but in the sense that all who are "in Christ" have died with him and will also live with him (Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 15:22). While Christ's atonement is sufficient for all, it is effectual only for those united to him by faith (John 10:11, 27-28; WCF 8.8). Thus, the "all" who died in Christ are those who, through union with him, have been made alive and now live for his glory. The believer's response to this redeeming love is wholehearted devotion.

Paul goes on to describe the transformation that reconciliation brings. Through regeneration, believers are no longer defined by worldly standards ("we regard no one according to the flesh," verse 16) but are made "new creations" in Christ (verse 17; Ezekiel 36:26; John 3:3-8). This renewal is entirely the work of God, who reconciles sinners to himself through Christ and entrusts to the Church "the ministry of reconciliation" (verses 18-19; Romans 5:10-11; WCF 13.1-2). The language of "reconciliation" presupposes enmity: our sin had separated us from a holy God. Through the cross, that hostility has been overcome. God's grace not only removes guilt but also restores fellowship, as Christ "who knew no sin became sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (verse 21; Isaiah 53:4-6; Galatians 3:13). This is the great exchange at the heart of the gospel: our sin imputed to Christ, his righteousness imputed to us (WCF 11.1; Westminster Larger Catechism 70-73). As "ambassadors for Christ" (verse 20), believers now proclaim this message of reconciliation to a world still alienated from its Creator, imploring others on God's behalf, "Be reconciled to God."

1. Looking at the Bible

- From the passage, share with the group some key phrases or ideas that stood out to you.

2. Looking at Jesus

At Central we believe that all of Scripture points to Jesus. In other words, Jesus is the theological center of the Bible. Every passage not only points to Jesus, but the grand narrative of the Bible also finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus.

- Paul says that knowing “the fear of the Lord” moves him to persuade others (verse 11). How does a right understanding of Jesus as Judge deepen our awe of him? How does knowing that this Judge is also our Redeemer change the way we live before him (John 5:22-24; Hebrews 4:14-16)?
- In what ways does Jesus himself model godly fear and obedience to the Father (e.g., Hebrews 5:7-9; Philippians 2:8)? How might his example shape our confidence and humility before God?

3. Looking at our Hearts

- If reconciliation begins with God moving toward sinners who wronged him (verses 18-19), what does it say about our hearts when we wait for others to make the first move toward us? How does that expose our struggle to believe the gospel we proclaim?
- Where are you withholding the kind of grace and forgiveness that God has already given you in Christ?

4. Looking at our World

- If we are ambassadors of Christ (verse 20), what would it look like for our relationships, our workplaces, and even our civic engagement to reflect the character of his coming kingdom?

PRAYER **15 MIN**

Pray for each other: Share any prayer requests you have.

Pray for the relationships in our lives that need reconciliation, that we would forgive as we have been forgiven, and that we would be strengthened to love one another as image bearers of the one who has loved us and gave himself up for us.

Pray that the universal Church would embody its position as the ambassadors of Christ to a world desperate for the reconciliation offered through the gospel.