PLEASANT SPRINGS CHURCH • SERMON • WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST, PART ONE

A New Creation

The old has passed away — an exploration of 2 Corinthians 5:17–21

A New Creation

Who We Are in Christ, Part One — 2 Corinthians 5:17–21

Preached Sunday, November 15, 2026 by Pastor Jeremy Arnold

2 Corinthians 5:17–21 • Romans 8:1 • John 14:6 • Genesis 1:27; 2:8, 15–17 • John 15:4–5 • 1 Corinthians 15:20 • Romans 6:4–11 • Galatians 2:20 • Matthew 28:18

Christ took upon Himself what we could never overcome so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

THE SERMON TEXT

> **2 Corinthians 5:17–21 (ESV)**
>
> “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

REMARKS

One of our greatest struggles as a Christian is understanding who we are in Christ and how God the Father views us.

A lot of times we are defeated by our past, focusing on our failures, mistakes, addictions and disappointments. We believe God forgives us, but we still carry the guilt, which often brings our minds back under condemnation.

There is a difference between the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the condemnation that keeps a believer chained to their past.

Conviction leads us to repentance and back to Christ.

Condemnation tells us that our failures are our permanent identity.

> **Romans 8:1 (ESV)**
> "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Point

Salvation is more than getting our sins forgiven; it is God bringing us into a relationship with Him!

How does He do that?

1. Through the Person of Jesus Christ.

Verse 18 says it is through Christ that we are reconciled.

> **John 14:6 (ESV)**
> "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

2. In Christ.

Paul is teaching that when a person is in Christ, he is a new creation — not a better version of oneself. Old things are passed away, and all things are becoming new!

SEPARATED FROM THE FATHER

If we look back to 2 Corinthians 5:14–15, we see that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and 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.

> **2 Corinthians 5:14–15 (ESV)**
> "For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and 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."

Sin brought alienation into humanity's relationship with God. But God did not abandon His creation. He acted through Jesus Christ to make reconciliation possible, and He calls us to be reconciled to Him through Christ.

Man was created in the image of God.

> **Genesis 1:27 (ESV)**
> "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

In verse 8 of chapter 2, God placed humanity in the garden to live in fellowship with Him. Many biblical scholars recognize temple-like imagery in Eden, because it was a place of God's presence and humanity's service before Him.

> **Genesis 2:8 (ESV)**
> "And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed."

In verses 15–17, God gives man a guard rail, along with a choice and the consequences if they were to rebel: death would come on the scene!

> **Genesis 2:15–17 (ESV)**
> "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

In Genesis chapter 3 we see the fruit being separated from its source of life — and once separated, it cannot continue to flourish. Humanity's rebellion brought separation from God, who is the source of life.

In John 15 Jesus gives the illustration of Him being the vine and us as the branches. If we are separated from Him, we die!

> **John 15:4–5 (ESV)**
> "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

Sin brought death into the human experience.

God began implementing His master plan of redemption, redeeming humanity by sending His Son, who would become the firstfruits from the dead, reconciling all of humanity that would believe and follow Him.

> **1 Corinthians 15:20 (ESV)**
> "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."

Point

Our greatest problem was not what we had done, but what sin had done to our relationship with the Father.

> **Romans 6:6 (ESV)**
> "We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin."

Point

We were once slaves to sin, making sin our master!

But now, in Christ, we have a new Master — Jesus Christ, who frees us from sin!

Now we have a new identity, a new relationship with God, and a new direction in life.

Notice Paul refers to it as our old self — the person we once were. The emphasis is on the past tense!

Sin no longer has dominion over us!

Freedom from sin's dominion does not mean freedom from every temptation or the possibility of failure. That does not say we don't go through periods of temptation, but we have been given power to overcome temptation when we choose to walk in fellowship with Christ.

In Romans 5 Paul is teaching us that sin came through one man, Adam, and death through sin. In Romans 6 he is showing us that in Christ we are brought into a new relationship with the Father.

We have been brought out from the dominion of darkness into the light and lordship of Christ.

THE STRUGGLE

A lot of people say they have accepted Christ but still live as though they are under the rule of the old master, sin. They say:

- “That’s just how I was made.” / “I was born this way.”
- “I have always struggled with this sin.”
- “I can’t change.” / “I have tried.”
- “It’s part of me.” / “It’s who I am.”

The difference is whether we are trying to live the Christian life through our own strength or trusting Christ to live in and through us.

Yes, the struggle is real — heavy, hard at times — but Romans 6 challenges that thinking.

Sin may knock on your front door, but we don’t have to let him in.

> **Galatians 2:20 (ESV)**
> “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Paul is showing us several things here:

1. Our old life has been crucified with Christ.
2. Christ now lives in us.
3. Through the Holy Spirit, we put sinful desires and practices to death.
4. We live by faith in the Son of God.

Paul also says in the latter part of verse 20, “the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Point

Our confidence is not in our ability to save ourselves or maintain ourselves through our own efforts; our faith is in the Son of God, who loves us and gave Himself for us!

Point

Some people want Jesus to forgive their past, but don’t want His authority over their present!

Christ’s desire is to be Lord not only over our past, but over the present as well as the future!

If we go back to Romans 6:4–11: because our old self was crucified with Christ, we are to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we are now called to walk in newness of life!

> **Romans 6:4–11 (ESV)**
> "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

The awesome thing here is that, Christ being raised from the dead, not only is He victorious over death, but over all powers and principalities in high places.

> **Matthew 28:18 (ESV)**
> "And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Christ has all authority, and because we belong to Him, we are no longer under the rule of our old master. We depend on His power and follow His lordship as we walk in the new life He has given us.

CLOSING

He has given us a new identity, a new relationship with Him, and a new purpose.

We are ambassadors for Christ, and we are called to be image bearers of our King!

> *God did not just save us from something; He saved us for something. — Pastor Jeremy Arnold*

GROW FURTHER

SERMON

Born From Above

Nicodemus and the new birth: why the old life, however well run, cannot reach the Kingdom — and what God begins instead.

DEEP RESEARCH

Romans 6:1–7:25

Dead to sin, alive to God: the old self crucified, a new Master, and the struggle Paul does not pretend away.

DEEP RESEARCH

Genesis 2:4–17

The garden in Eden: humanity placed in God's presence to work and keep it, and the one command with its warning.

DEEP RESEARCH

John 15:1–11

The vine and the branches: apart from Him we can do nothing.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)