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SECOND CORINTHIANS 5:11-6:2

Let me throw some words out to you and you tell me what you think of...

Bobbin, thread, needle? Answer: sewing

Mulch, compost, fertilizer? Answer: gardening

Canvas, brush, oils? Answer: art

Now, what if I said...regeneration, reconciliation?

These words have to do with salvation...and we should be just as familiar with these words as we are with the ones we just mentioned.

Today, we're going to see Paul teach us about the **doctrine of regeneration** and the **doctrine of reconciliation**.

Now, I don't want us to be intimidated by these theological terms...

Remember, that when we use the word, "doctrine", we simply mean "**something that is taught**"...

And, when we use the word, "regeneration", we simply mean "**new birth**", and when we use the word, "reconciliation", we simply mean "**to change**"...and we'll see these definitions make sense in just a few minutes.

But, I hope when you leave here today, you'll be familiar enough with these two doctrines that if you hear these words used, you'll know what they mean!!

Last week, Paul told us that we live in an earthly tent that is decaying. Now, I don't believe that's a surprise to anyone here. **Some of you are younger and some of us are older...but, we are all decaying...**

I mean, all we have to do is look in the mirror and see that what once was **tight** and **smooth** and **uplifted** is now **loose** and **wrinkled** and **sagging**. Gravity and age have taken their toll on us all!!

We also saw that one day we will all appear before God and be recompensed or rewarded for all the deeds done in these old bodies...whether they're good or bad deeds.

I believe that will be a **very** solemn time...

All the idle words I've spoken...

All the idle deeds I've done...

All the time wasted...

All the good I didn't do...

All the bad I did do...

And so, Paul continues this letter to the Corinthians in **verse 11**, with the word, "therefore"...and when we see that word, as we've said before, we know it's a **word of conclusion**,

What Paul is saying is "In light of the fact that our bodies are aging and decaying and are only temporary..."

In light of the fact that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...then, there are certain things we must know...

Verses 11-13...

I believe in our culture, and in our day, we don't really think a lot about the fear of the Lord...I mean, all you have to do is look at our world... look at our nation...

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look at our entertainment,
look at our priorities...
and we see no fear of the Lord...do we?

Remember what God said about the children of Israel?
"There was no king in Israel...and every man
did what was right in his own eyes."

Beloved, there is no king in America... Jesus is not regarded as Sovereign in our country...God is not looked upon as Majestic and Holy and Righteous in America...and as a result, there are no absolutes, no black and whites...only grays...and "if it feels good...go on and do it...don't deprive yourself of anything! Make light of Almighty God...He's just an 'old grandfather in the sky' or 'the old man upstairs,' and He won't do anything about your sin."

But, I want to tell you something...
based on the authority of God's Holy Word...
God is a God of **holiness** and **righteousness**
and He has called us to **holiness** and **righteousness**...
and when we look around us at the folks we see every day
folks in our families...our workplace...the marketplace...

then, Paul said, "**we persuade men...**"

Paul is saying, "I know the fear of the Lord...I know that it is a fearful and a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of an angry God...I know our God is a consuming fire and **knowing all this...I persuade men.**"

Of what? Of what does Paul persuade men?

Well, Paul's gonna tell us...He's gonna tell us what so many preachers today are **afraid** to tell their people...

Paul could never be accused of watering down the Gospel...of preaching a "social gospel", or a "feel good gospel"...
Jesus said He had come to seek and to save **that which was lost**...and many people don't even they're lost.

The problem today in many churches is the fact that the preachers don't preach the whole counsel of God...they tell little topical stories or speak on current events...and their messages aren't Holy Spirit inspired and so there is **no condemnation** or **conviction of sin** and therefore, no one hears about sin or hell or judgment...and no one knows they're lost!

and Paul says, "Folks, I have a message for you...I'm not doing this to commend myself, but I **am** giving you reason to be proud of me because all that I **do** is done for God and for your spiritual welfare." (And, may I add that we have reason to be proud of our pastor and our associate pastor for the same reasons.) And, Paul goes on and says, "You may think I'm beside myself or you may think I'm in my right mind...but if you believe I'm a little off, I'm a little off for God, and if you believe I'm on target, I'm on target for you!"

We Christians are misunderstood not only by those outside the family of God, but even those inside the family.

Let me read you something A. W. Tozer said...

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“A real Christian is an odd number anyway.
he feels supreme love for One whom he has never seen,
talks familiarly every day to Someone he cannot see,
expects to go to heaven on the virtue of Another,
empties himself in order to be full,
admits he is wrong so he can be declared right,
goes down in order to get up,
is strongest when he is weakest,
richest when he is poorest,
and happiest when he feels worst.
He dies so he can live,
forsakes in order to have,
gives away so he can keep,
sees the invisible,
hears the inaudible,
and knows that which passeth knowledge.”

When you think of it that way...no wonder folks think Christians are a little bit nuts...

Remember over in the Book of Acts, when Paul appeared before King Agrippa and Festus, the governor of Judea and he preached a powerful sermon...Festus accused Paul of being mad?

Beloved, don't think it strange that the world and even some folks who call themselves Christians think we're out of our mind...we're in good company...they thought Paul was, as well.

Verses 14-15...

“constrains” (KJV), “controls” (NAS) and “compels” (NKJV) and (NIV)

I like the word “compels” because there's **an urgency** in this word...

Paul says, “it's the love of Christ that **motivates** me...that **pushes** me...that **compels** me...” and I believe the reason Paul is so compelled and motivated and controlled is because all mankind is under a death sentence.

As we said before...we're immersed in a “live-and-let-live, I'm-OK-you're-OK” society. But if we believe what we say we believe, we can't just sit in an easy chair with our remote control while the world races headlong to hell. We should get involved. We should intervene. We should persuade people that they **aren't** OK, that they need to be reconciled to God...(and we'll see that in a moment...)

Adam deliberately disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden
and when he did he tainted all of us with sin and death!!
Someone once said, “**the very moment that gives you life
begins to take it away from you.**”

I read a very good illustration of this this week and I want to give you my version of it...

As we look out our living room windows at the cabin we see a range of hills...the Ozark mountains...but, there are valleys in amongst those mountains.

When God created Adam, He placed him on a mountaintop. Adam had it all...he had everything that was good for him. God did not withhold anything from Adam

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except one thing. And in that one thing Adam disobeyed God...**Adam sinned...**
Adam fell...

and when Adam fell, he came tumbling down off that mountain, and he landed way down in the valley of death where we are today...

After he fell into that valley, he began to bring into this world a race of people. And they didn't come into this world way up there on the mountaintop where Adam had been when he was innocent and sinless...they came into this world **down in the valley...the place where Adam fell.**

When the sinless Son of God came to seek and to save that which was lost, He didn't go to the mountaintop...**because there's no one there...**there aren't any people up on the "mountaintop of innocence"...they're all in the valley...they're all dead in their trespasses and sins.

So, what did Jesus do? **He came down into the valley.**
He came down into the place of death where all men are. "And He died for all"...

Because men were dead, He went down into death and He brings men, not back upon that mountaintop, but to someplace so much better...
He puts us in the heavenlies with Him (Eph. 2:6)

And, Paul says, "We no longer live for ourselves, but for Jesus." See, Jesus died, not only that we should be brought up from the valley of death that Adam put us in...but He died so that we may live **with** Him in the future and live **for** Him in the here and now.

Verse 16...

"according to the flesh..." (NAS)
"from a worldly point of view..." (NIV)

You know, we look at folks and we're very impressed by their achievements, aren't we? I mean, their **education**, their **jobs**, their **family tree**, their **abilities** and **talents**, their **knowledge** and **money** and **possessions** and **power** and **position**.

But, God says, "There's no partiality with Me and neither should there be any with us. When we look at folks, we shouldn't be **impressed** or **put off** by what they are in the flesh.

We are **all alike** in God's sight. The only distinction He sees is if we're saved or lost. **And that should be all that we see...**we shouldn't give folks a place of honor **because of their riches**, nor should we shun folks **because of their past sins**.

By the same token, Paul said that even though the facts about the earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ are important...I mean, the entire Christian message is grounded in those events...but, that's not all there is!!

Jesus is on His throne...Jesus is high and lifted up!
We're not identified with the Man who walked the earth nearly as much as we're identified with the risen Savior!

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Granted, He's one and the same, but if we had to rely on knowing Jesus according to the flesh alone, we wouldn't be any different than the followers of Buddha or Mohammed or Confucious.

Verse 17...

This is the doctrine of regeneration!!

Jesus told Nicodemus "Ye must be born again..."

Beloved, Christians are brand new people!! The Holy Spirit gives them new life...they're not the same as they were!!

Christians aren't **reformed, rehabilitated, or re-educated...** Christians are **recreated**.

Well, let me ask you...if you and I are Christians and we are new creatures...new creations...**what are the things that have passed away?**

Now that we have trusted Christ, we are no longer identified with Adam, now we are identified with Jesus ...now we belong to Jesus!!

After a person is regenerated, old value systems, priorities, beliefs, loves and plans are gone. New value systems, new priorities and beliefs and loves and plans have come. **Evil and sin are still present, but the believer sees evil and sin in a different way...from a new perspective.**

There may be someone here who would say...

"I know this is a great verse, but how am I supposed to be absolutely certain that I am a new creation in Christ Jesus?"

Listen to what the Lord Jesus Himself said...

"Verily, verily I say unto you, he that hears My word, and believes on Him who sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but has passed from death unto life."

Have you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ?
Do you trust Him? Have you repented of all your sins? Do you accept His sacrificial death at Calvary as atonement for your sins?

If you do, He assures you that you have eternal life...you have passed from death unto life. You have been regenerated. You are a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Verse 18...

Reconciliation – "a change of relationship from hostility to harmony and peace between two parties."

Let's go back to Adam and Eve again...

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When God created Adam and placed Adam in the Garden of Eden, Adam and God fellowshiped with each other. God created man in His own image so they could enjoy sweet fellowship.

Genesis 3 tells us that God would come and walk in the Garden in the cool of the day. Can you just imagine the Lord God coming around 6 or 7 in the evening to your back yard and you go out to meet Him and you just sit around and drink a glass of tea together and enjoy each other? **That's how I like to think it must have been for Adam and Eve and God!!**

Well, Adam and Eve sinned and when they sinned, their sweet, sweet fellowship with God was broken and as we just saw...Adam died spiritually.

**So, what we have is man over here....
and God over here....**

So, how can we get back into fellowship with God?
How can we ever get from here....to here....?

(To illustrate this, use the tract that KWBC uses in counseling...man over on one side and God on the other.)

Verse 19...

The only way is through Christ and His precious blood!

"Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin..."

When Adam and Eve sinned, God made coverings for them from animal skins. How did He get those skins? He shed **blood** to get them, didn't He?

And for centuries, **blood sacrifices** were made for the sins of the people...all looking forward to the **blood** that would be spilled by the precious Lamb of God at Calvary.

And, Paul says here, "the blood of Jesus covers our sins so they're not counted against us!"

I believe this is the most incredibly wonderful and amazing thing!!
Think about it!! God cannot look upon sin!! God cannot have sweet fellowship with sinners!!
But, when a man looks at himself as totally unrighteous and he stands condemned before a holy God, and he pleads for salvation by the blood of Christ...

Then that sweet reconciliation comes and that sweet fellowship is restored and he is brought from hostility to harmony and peace with God and praise God...my sins are not counted against me because when God looks at me, He sees the blood of His dear Son covering all that sin!!

Now, look what Paul says...

Verse 19b-20...

Beloved, our ministry, our service to others is to be one of reconciliation!

I don't believe God has given His children any higher calling than to give others this "word of reconciliation."

1) To say to someone, "Your sin has separated you from God."

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- 2) To tell them, "God is holy and you're not."
- 3) To tell them, "You're over here and God is over here..."
- 4) To tell them, "But, I have good news... There's a way to get from here to here, and it's through the blood of Jesus!!"

Verses 20-21...

Who is an ambassador?

Think about that for a minute...

Ambassadors spend their lives on foreign soil. They speak a different language than the people. They have different traditions, customs, cultures, and lifestyles. They always feel somewhat like a stranger. They speak on behalf of their country conveying its ideals and beliefs. They represent their country's leader or king. And, for good or for bad, their country is judged by their words and by their actions.

By the same token:

We are in a foreign land. Peter says we are pilgrims and strangers here. Paul says our citizenship is not here...it's in heaven. And, God has called us to be ambassadors in this foreign land. We are His messengers representing the King of heaven and we are to plead with the people of this world to be reconciled to God!

I hope we never get over the wonder of being saved by Jesus and used by God to bring others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ!

What a privilege!! What an honor...even more an honor than to be appointed an ambassador to represent our country in a foreign land.

God has appointed and anointed us to tell others that He has sent His Son to become something He never was so that we could become something we could never be!!

Well, let's quickly look at chapter 6, the first 2 verses:

Verses 1-2...

"Yesterday is **past**... Tomorrow is **future**.
All we have is today. **Today is a gift**...
That's why it is called '**the present**.'"

Many of you have read the **Left Behind** series. I've only listened to most of the audio tape of the first book.

In that book, some folks who were left behind after the Rapture were saved. These were folks who had already heard the Gospel time and again and rejected Jesus until they realized their loved ones had gone to be with Jesus and they had been left behind.

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Will this happen? Will it be this way? **I don't know!!**

There are learned theologians who have differing opinions. Some say that no one who has rejected the Gospel **this** side of the Rapture will be given the opportunity to accept the Gospel on the **other** side of the Rapture.

There are other learned theologians who say that no one but Jews will be saved after the Rapture...

And, there are still others who say that everyone, Jews and Gentiles alike, those have heard the Gospel and those who have not heard the Gospel will have the opportunity to be saved.

There are vast differences in these three views:

Which view is correct? I don't know. However, I do know this...

The Bible teaches there is a time in God's economy when He listens to sinners and responds to those who are repentant and then there is a time when He stops doing that...

Genesis 6:3: "Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever...'"

Proverbs 1:25-26: "And you neglected all my counsel, and did not want my reproof; I will even laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes."

Proverbs 29:1: "A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy."

John 9:4: **Jesus said, "We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work."**

2 Cor. 6:2: "...**now** is the accepted time..."
"...**now** is the day of salvation..."

Beloved, I'd rather err on the side of urgency than on the side of procrastination!! I'd rather take God at His Word, and believe that indeed **today is the day of salvation** than take a chance on tomorrow...

I mean...if you're not saved...think about this...

What if you had a wreck leaving the church and you died this afternoon? There'd be no more chances...

What if you stop for a hamburger at a fast food place and you're kidnapped and killed? There'd be no more chances...

What if Jesus comes back today and you're left behind and there are no more chances?

We may not know what will happen after the Rapture, but we do know this:

God wants you **regenerated**...He says, "You must be born again..." and today is the day to do it!

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God has **reconciled** you to Himself through the blood of His dear Son and He longs to enjoy sweet fellowship with you...and today is the day to do it!

God has given us the **ministry of reconciliation** and He longs for us to share our testimony with others...and today is the day to do it!

Let me ask you this...How in step are you with the Lord?

One way to test yourself is to see how out of step you are with the world. If you are out of pace, and people look at you funny, don't worry. Keep marching onward, Christian soldier...because as Thoreau said, you're simply marching to a different Drummer.

God has sent us forth as His ambassadors with this message:

"Today is the day of your salvation..."

My prayer is that our Heavenly Father will be so pleased as we persuade men and women to be born again... to become new creatures in Christ Jesus... and to be reconciled to God.

Now, if anyone asks you about the **doctrine of regeneration** or the **doctrine of reconciliation**...you should be able to tell them...

We should be as well versed on the subject of salvation as we are on the subjects of gardening, or art, or sewing, or computers!!