

## Switch Glasses

II Corinthians 5:16-17

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BIS: The new way of viewing ourselves and others is a result of becoming “in Christ” and involves not judging and viewing based on the world’s standards or flesh, but on Christ’s or spiritual.

(Two sets of glasses)

(GA) This world has a way of looking at people.

A. A set of glasses. With these glasses on, we assess one another. We put people in slots, or categories. We become judgmental.

1. That person is overweight.
2. That family is poor.
3. That church is too big.
4. That’s the cool group of kids – those are the geeks.

B. From the time we’re young, we’re encouraged to notice the ways that other people don’t measure up. We look for flaws.

1. We’re even entertained by this set of glasses. We put shows on television that try to find *America’s Most Beautiful Person*, which studied how these beautiful people didn’t measure up.
  - a. I watched one episode of that show and thought to myself, “Man, if these people have all these things wrong with them... what hope do I have?”
    - i. They’d have to make the show a three-hour special to get through all my flaws. The judges would have a field day on me.
2. And judges in this world do have a field day on me. And they do on you, too. This is a hard world to live in... because we’re so hard on one another with our judgments.

(SN) I wish I could say that the church is a brightly shining beacon of a different way to live. But we often do this in the church, too. We don’t necessarily take these glasses off when we walk into the foyer on Sunday mornings.

A. In fact, the church often finds even odd, more particular issues to judge about.

1. Or, there’s no way a Christian should purchase a car that expensive.
2. Or, can you believe Mr. Smith? A Christian should take care of their lawn better than he does.
3. Men should wear ties to church. It’s the right way to be reverent to God.
  - a. The first time I preached as a pastor was in Iowa. I spent two weeks studying and praying. I was so excited about the sermon... but so nervous, too.
    - i. I preached my heart out and hoped to hear some evidence of the Spirit at work. After the service, one older lady, one of the solid attendees at our church, walked across the auditorium. I thought, “Oh, here it comes... I can’t wait to hear what God did in the heart of this saint.”
  - b. She walked straight up to me and said, “Young man, I like my pastors in ties.” And she walked away.

B. We do this. We wear the glasses of judgment even in the church.

C. We don't have to. There is another option. There is another set of glasses that we can choose.

(S) Would you flip over to *II Corinthians 5*, and we'll see this different set of glasses.

A. The city of Corinth was like our culture today in many ways. One of the similarities is that they were judgmental.

1. This set of glasses we often wear today was designed, mass produced, and made popular in Corinth in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. The Corinthians started this trend by judging people on everything.

a. Social class – whether they were rich or poor.

i. The rich never ate with the poor. The poor never ventured to talk with the wealthy.

b. They judged people based on the family they came out of.

c. They even judged people based on their oratory skill.

i. Speaking ability – oratory skill – was highly prized in this community.

2. Paul suffered at the hands of this judgmentalism when he went to Corinth.

a. Even Christians, people in the church at Corinth, criticized Paul for how he spoke and what he looked like.

b. In *II Corinthians 10:10*, Paul quotes people as saying about him, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.” (*II Cor. 10:10*)

3. Paul didn't measure up. When the Corinthians wore the world's glasses, he fell short.

a. Paul described these glasses in *II Corinthians 5:16* as, “judging people according to the flesh.”

i. This means thinking worldly about someone. Assessing and criticizing them based on outward appearances, according to the world's standards.

4. And this is what the Corinthians were doing to Paul.

B. Now, we should appreciate the irony here. Paul is being judged by the Corinthians in exactly the same way he used to judge Jesus. You'll remember, before Paul became a Christian, he saw Jesus as a lunatic; a crazy man trying to subvert Judaism.

1. Paul did to Jesus what the Corinthians were now doing to him. The Corinthians were saying that Paul was a lunatic.

a. Look at *II Corinthians 5:13*. Paul says in *verse 13*, “For if we are besides ourselves, it is for God” – that phrase literally translates, or means to be mentally imbalanced. There were people in Corinth that thought Paul was mentally nuts.

C. If you read I and II Corinthians, you'll see that much of these two letters involve Paul trying to convince these believers that he's not crazy. He's an Apostle, sent by God. If Paul's life and methods seem foolish, it's because of Christ.

1. Now, Paul's not defending himself in these letters. He wants these believers to see him and the other Apostles differently so that they will be able to hear God's Word – receive the instruction of Christ.

a. But they need to receive Paul well, first. Paul was the one whom God sent to speak truth to these believers and help them grow up in their faith.

i. If Paul is marginalized for silly, fleshly, judgments... the gospel is marginalized.

2. But if they could view Paul differently, they'd find life and instruction from Christ.

D. Remember, this is how it began for Paul. He had to view Jesus differently, and this is what God did for him. God opened Paul's eyes to seeing Jesus through a different set of glasses.

1. On the road to Damascus, God came to Paul and knocked the glasses right off his face, didn't He? In a powerful moment, God showed Paul who Jesus really was.

a. And in that moment Paul stopped judging Jesus according to the flesh. He saw Him accurately. That's the moment that Paul found life. And joy. And forgiveness and peace with God.

i. Ironically, Paul was blinded... but in that blindness he finally saw accurately.

E. And Paul wants to open the Corinthians eyes in the same way, that they might see Jesus and other believers accurately. Our passage - *II Corinthians 5:16-17* – is Paul's instruction on how to do this; how to put on these new glasses. *Read II Cor. 5:16-17*

1. Paul is accomplishing two purposes with these verses.

a. First, he's celebrating one of the most essential truths about us if we are "in Christ."

b. But he's also addressing how a person "in Christ" should view another Christian – in this case, Paul and the other Apostles.

2. These two verses celebrate how we've changed... *and* how that should change the glasses we use to view others believers.

D. But we need to begin by understanding what it means that we are a "new creation." What does it mean? To answer this, we need to appreciate what God has done for us. *Vs. 18* says, "All this is from God." – let's remember together what God has done for us.

1. Well, first, let's remember that Jesus, the God of the universe who had lived in glory from eternity past, left His place in glory and entered our reality. He came as a human and lived a perfect, a holy, life.

a. He lived the life that Adam, the first human didn't live.

b. Which is the life that you and I haven't lived either.

c. God made humans to be holy. He expects each person to live a sinless, perfect life. Adam failed. I've failed. And you have failed.

i. But Jesus spent every conscious moment of his thirty-three years on earth as a human, obeying God so that His righteousness could be credited to your and my account.

c. That's incredible – I can't think of going one day without wrong thoughts, or doing something that violates one of the Ten Commandments. Jesus lived His entire life free from sin.

i. Now, there is of course a theological significance to Jesus' perfect life. There is a benefit for us. This sinless, righteous life that Jesus lived becomes ours when we trust in Jesus – God looks at us and sees the perfection of Jesus. If you are "in Christ."

2. But not only did Jesus live a perfect life, He died on the cross as a payment for our sins.

a. You see, we've got two problems when it comes to our relationship with our sinless, perfect Creator.

i. When we face God someday, we'll have two problems to overcome.

a) First, we haven't lived the perfect, holy life we were created to live. God is righteous and cannot fellowship or share company with sin. We've got a problem... we've sinned a bunch, haven't we.

i) It's not a matter of doing more good than bad... or living a pretty good life... it's a matter of being able to say to God, "I never sinned. Not once."

a. You and I have a problem – we can't say that.

b) We also have the problem of paying for the sins we have committed.

- i) The life we have lived has offended an infinitely holy God. We owe an infinite penalty. A penalty we can't pay.
    - b. This is the what Jesus did for us. He lived the perfect life in our place. And He died the wrathful death we ought to die.
      - i. He solved both of our problems, the Scriptures tell us. If we trust in Jesus for our salvation. If we make Him the Lord of our lives.
  - 3. How amazing is the grace of God. Jesus lived and died on our behalf!
    - a. But there's more. Jesus didn't just live and die on our behalf. In three days, Jesus rose from the dead.
      - i. When this happened, Jesus became the firstborn from among the dead. Paul tells us in *Colossians 1:18*, that Jesus is "the firstborn from the dead."
  - 4. This is where it gets exciting. You and I were born into sin. *Ephesians 2:1* tells us that we are dead in our trespasses and sins.
    - a. We were spiritually dead. Yet Jesus conquered sin and death when He rose from the dead. He broke away and rose above the wickedness of this world. He became the first to do this. The firstborn from the dead.
  - 4. You see, if there is a *first* to be reborn from the dead – there will be a second, and a third, and a nine-hundredth, and a ten-thousandth.
    - a. I don't know what number I am... or you are... but if you are in Christ you are freed from sin and death and the patterns of your old self.
      - i. This is the gospel. It is Jesus freeing us from sin and death. *Acts 13:38-39* tells us: "Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him **everyone who believes is freed from everything** from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses."
- E. What does it mean to be a "new creation" – it means that by Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, your entire reality has changed.
- 1. You now have the fullness of life that God offers. The "zoe life," as Pastor Scott explained last week.
  - 2. You now have a new nature. You're no longer enslaved to sin and death; you're now enslaved to life and peace.
  - 3. You haven't been slightly improved... or tweaked... or refreshed.
    - a. You've been remade into someone completely different from who you were before you met Jesus. Just like the Apostle Paul, you're completely different.
- F. What does it mean to be a "new creation" – it means that God looks at you completely differently now that you are "in Christ."
- 1. And friends, if God now looks at you as perfect and complete and holy, "in Christ" – it should change how you look at yourself, and others who are in Christ.
    - a. It should cause you to **SWAP OUT YOUR GLASSES**.
- (VR) But this is where you have a choice to make. I like how Pastor Scott put it last week – he talked about how God doesn't force us to obey.
- A. God isn't some great puppeteer in the sky, pulling strings and making us live as new creations.
    - 1. He doesn't make us obey. He makes us new. He gives us the Spirit. He gives us the Word and all resources we need to walk in obedience.
  - B. But then He lets us choose whether we're going to walk in faithfulness. Whether we're going to live in the new identity that He has given us.
    - 1. My sister and brother-in-law just gave birth to their first baby on Friday night. A healthy baby boy named Coltrane. My brother-in-law is really into jazz.

a. My sister and brother-in-law gave this boy a life. They gave him a family name. They will pass on their values, their wisdom, their best instructions. They'll walk with this boy everyday, coaching him, helping him see the choices he has in front of him.

2. But little Coltrane will grow up and decide for himself whether or not he will live in the identity and name and character that was given to him.

a. It's all there for him. He'll have every advantage and every opportunity... but he still gets to choose the person he'll become.

B. Friends, if you've trusted in Jesus as your Savior, you are a new creation. But you still have the choice of whether or not you will live out that identity.

1. You have to make this choice. And I have to make this choice.

(A) And I pray that we make the right one. For our joy, and for the sake of others seeing what is possible through Jesus Christ. There is a world out there longing to see something refreshing – something different from the harsh, critical, Judgmentalism of this world.

A. Daniel refers to saints who live for God as stars – *Daniel 12:3* says, “And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

1. Jesus calls His faithful people “A city on a hill, a light that cannot be hidden,” in *Matthew 5*.

a. Well, one of the tremendous opportunities we have to come out from this world and be different – shine for our Savior – has to do with how we look at ourselves and others.

2. How we treat each other as saints, people loved and redeemed by Jesus.

a. A new creation treats other new creations with honor... with love... because of all that Jesus has done.

b. A new creation doesn't slander, doesn't judge or criticize for petty, outward things.

c. A new creation views every interaction with another believer as an interaction with Christ, Himself.

B. So many people in this world live and operate in shame. They talk about others so critically because they feel so poorly about themselves.

1. What a chance we have to honor Jesus – the One who made us new creations – by viewing ourself, and others, differently.

C. That's the challenge I have for us this week – live as the new creation you are.

1. See yourself as rebuilt by God into a saint.

2. And then every chance you get to interact with a brother or sister in Christ, view them as a saint. A person Jesus loves and has changed.