A new creation

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Preacher: Rev Ian Allan

[0:00] Our consideration this morning to the chapter you read, 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and shall we look at verse 16, or rather verse 17.

2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come.
Some of us might think this morning that we are following an old established pattern of religious worship, and in some ways that is true.
There is a, shall we say, an oldness in this, but we know that not all old things are bad. But what we can fail to notice is that with the oldness, there is also newness.
Someone the other day was complaining about a coin that picked up, it was called a new penny, the date of it was 1978, and they said, how can this be a new penny, with this new name on it?
[1:12] Well, newness isn't something that we very often realise is so fresh. Newness is something which we take for granted.

We speak about a new life, a new beginning in life. Some of us buy another car, and we call it a new car, but it's not necessarily a new car to us, or is it necessarily really a new car.
Because when we think of what Paul is trying to tell us here, he's speaking about new in terms of something which in itself is new.
Not just something he feels is new, or even just appears to be new, or just something different. He's speaking about something completely new.
And the only way in which he can describe this new thing is in terms of comparing it perhaps to the old. We understand that Paul was one of the old way.
[2:22] That is, he was a Jew. But he wasn't just a Jew, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. And he was very much involved then with religion, an old established religion. But not only was he established in this religion, but he had a very strong conviction in his mind.

And he followed through that conviction with great conscientiousness about the living out of that old religion. And to him, that meant fulfilling of many obligations, of details of law.
It meant fulfilling those things very precisely, and with great care and concern. But this old way of life that he knew was not one that brought him very much satisfaction.
It brought with it a great burden, because with all the responsibilities of filling in the law, there was never a clear conscience before God.
He could never get peace before God, in spite of all his endeavours. And he was faithful, he was conscientious. From our point of view, perhaps he was a very fine man, because of his sincerity perhaps, and his faithfulness, to what he believed in.
[3:41] But yet he could never find, merely through this faithful behaviour, and this sincerity, and this conscientiousness, could he ever find peace. Because alongside this fulfilling of the law was the awareness of the burden and the weight of sin itself.

An awareness which didn't really become acute to him, until he came into sight, or in the light of the gospel, began to shine in his heart. And so for Paul, when he thought of the old ways, he thought of this way, the previous way of restriction, of limitation, of what we would call bondage, of this terrible weight of responsibility, of fulfilling rules and regulations, and yet knowing that in these things themselves, there was no life.
There was only a non-coming sense of weight, responsibility. Never relieved, and never released, from the weight of the power of sin in his own mind.
But he identifies not only the past, but something else, that he has found to be true of himself. He says, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, now to speak of anyone being in Christ, doesn't make much sense, initially at least.

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We know that. It seems rather a strange term. If you said someone who had followed Christ, you could understand that easily. If you said someone who believed in Christ, you could understand that.
[5:14] But he says, all those who are in Christ. And we know that he uses this word, particularly for this reason, to make us think about it.

To make us realize that to be in Christ is not just a matter of saying, I believe in something, as we believe in many other things in life, but to be in Christ is to be partaking or participating in what Christ has done.
It's a matter of being with him. When Christ died on the cross, he died a sacrificial death. And that death pointed obviously the Old Testament and the religion of the Old Testament, the particular form of worship that they had when they went in on the Day of Atonement to offer sacrifice.
The priest, the Great High Priest, would go in to this very holy place in the very center of the tabernacle or the temple and there he would offer sacrifices for the people.
But in Christ, the believer has been brought into this holy place. He has been brought into the presence of the living Holy God. The same God, but he's been brought in through Christ.
[6:31] He has been brought into all the blessings that Christ himself purchased on their behalf on the cross. And so when we think of this word in Christ, it really comprehends everything that the Christian is and receives from God himself when he is born again of God's Spirit.

for that is when this new life begins. It's a newness. It has to begin somewhere. And it begins then when God's Holy Spirit implants this new life within us.
And so therefore he says in verse 17, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. It's interesting that he uses this word not only new but a new creation.
Perhaps some of us might think of the so-called fashion designers of this world who every so often parade their work and they call the new works of the new fashions a new creation.
But that's rather inadequate to describe what Paul is meaning here when he speaks about a new creation. New creations that are made of men's hands are usually a remodelling of the old.
[7:52] Just a slight change here and a wee bit of change here. It's the same materials they use very often but they're maybe slightly altered and maybe the different people who are wearing them are not really anything very new just altered.

But Paul uses a stronger word than just that sort of idea of creation. Surely creation indicates the greatness of this work that has taken place within the life of the believer in Christ himself.
Not only the greatness of the work but also the divine nature of that work. This is a real new creation. This is not the result then of somebody working up emotional religious feelings in their mind and convincing themselves that this is right and then setting out to live a new life by their own strength and through what they've learned of life and through their mistakes and they're saying right I'm going to start all over again I've made all these mistakes in my life I'm now going to start all over again and this is a new creation of life.
That's not at all what Paul means. Perhaps we ought to go back to the first creation to understand what Paul sees in this idea of a new creation.
The first creation then creation of this world the natural world the author of that creation is God and the author of the new creation is also God and this is a very simple but absolutely fundamental fact for those maybe who are not truly aware of the nature of the new birth or what we're speaking about in a new creation.
[9:40] The new creation must be surely a work of God for how many people have began the new year with great resolutions and they haven't gone very far before they've all fallen down flat.

How many people have found the attempted reform in their lives but without much success? If there's going to be a change in their lives we might as well acknowledge the fact that we're not very good at changing our own.
We need something greater and someone stronger than us to change. So Paul uses this idea of a new creation reminding us that God is the author of this work.
If there's a great change going to take place in our lives it won't be by our strength. It'll have to be of something much deeper and much more radical. It has to be a power outside of ourselves and much greater in us.
And only God can do that work. And so believers in Christ are new creations. They're made new by the power and by the wisdom of God.

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[10:47] Also we notice that one of the first things in the new creation or the old creation, we should say the natural creation, was light. Indeed Paul himself mentioned this in chapter 4 and verse 6 of 2 Corinthians here.

He says, For God who said, Let light shine out of darkness, may it his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.
Lighting is one of the most basic parts to this creation. The shedding abroad of light. And even here it doesn't describe it just as a mere dawning, but it shines in our hearts.
It's a shining out of the darkness. The darkness of our previous experience. Darkness of a life without the knowledge and the light of Jesus Christ is a darkness.
It's a grey, empty, misty darkness, which prevents us from seeing where we're going, where we've come from, and where we are. But the light of gospel shows us where we have come from and shows us what we are and shows us where we're going.
[11:57] First of all, it shows us our natural condition. That is, our condition before we might come to know Christ. It shows us our helplessness, our sinfulness, our hopelessness by ourselves.

It shows us with regard to our pleasant life, that we haven't got much strength, that we haven't much confidence in ourselves. With regard to the future, there's not much hope there either. But then in the light of the gospel of Christ, when it continues to work and we're shown Christ, the past takes on a different significance.
While we look at the past, we acknowledge what we have been able to do by God's grace, we acknowledge our failings, but we leave them there. We come to Christ with them and we confess them and then we look forward to the future, not with some vague expectation that maybe things will possibly work out all right for us in the end, but with a sure confidence that if our lives are in his care, then we're in safe keeping, that we are in Christ, that we have the light, and this powerful light which we still have day by day reminds us, the light of the sunshine, reminds us of his care for his people.
We also know with regard to the first creation that he was a formless, shapeless boy, there was no substantial existence before this world was created, and in our lives we can say we are virtually nothing, there's a tremendous emptiness in what we are before we come to know Christ.
We might consider ourselves to be well off in many ways. There might be many things we can look at around us, but within us we really are rather empty.
[13:45] We really have nothing substantial to hold on to in life. Now we can claim our own, everything seems to be taken away from us, one by one, but the work of God is him creating within us a new life.

It's not a refashioning of the old life, a reframing, a reclothing as the fashion designers do. It's a new thing. Where there was no life before, there is real life.
There is a vital existence, there is meaningfulness, there is a dynamic that was never there before, an area that we have known nothing about, a dimension that we never knew anything about, begins to become real to us.
We also know with regard to the first creation, that the word of God was instrumental. The word of God. And so it still is instrumental. That's why we read God's word, that's why we pray over God's word, and that's why God's word is proclaimed, because it is instrumental in bringing us to a new creation.
By hearing this word, by knowing this word working upon our lives, it's not like any textbook you read, it's not like any political ideologies which you might be able to read out, or any creed, or any track, that people might produce of their own minds, because it's God's word, and there's a power in that word to change us.
[15:19] There's a power in that word to show us what is true, and what is false about life. That reminds us of the fact that the power that holds this earthly creation in existence is the same power that holds the life of this new creation.

But the Christian, whatever his personality, whatever his outer appearance, however insignificant he might look to the rest of the world, he might even be handicapped, he might have severe problems, mental or physical, but he's still being held by the same power that holds the world in motion, by the living God, and that dynamic is his strength.
He might not always be conscious of it, but we're dealing here not with feelings but with facts. And that is what Paul is emphasizing, that this is a new creation. remember also when the Lord finished

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the creation, we are told that he was pleased with it.
And with regard to the new creation, within the life of each believer, God is pleased. Isn't that a wonderful thought? That the living, powerful, almighty God can be pleased with his own handiwork in the lives of people who in many cases have been given over to everything but God at certain times in their lives.
People who have given their lives over to sin and given their lives over to everything against God, yet there comes this time when they've come to know Christ and God looks in that life and he's pleased with his work because he is a new or she is a new creation.
[17:16] And so we ought not look just to the outward appearances but look at the inner transformation that takes place. If there is a great new renewal then what is how is this renewal made real or what is it really about if we call it such a great thing?

Well the scriptures in various places bring us round to consider these things. first of all we can say there's a tremendous change takes place.
A change in one's state and condition. One passes from death to life. This is a new creation. Those who don't know Christ again they might not feel it they might not think about it they probably never realized it but until we come to know Christ we are in death we're in a state of death we're dead before God and if we had admitted our conscience would tell us that that God is as far away removed from us as any other part of the world in one sense that we're not here not at this particular moment he's not real to us because we've never met him but when we come to Christ and we come to know much our Lord and Saviour we are brought from the state of death to life Paul also reminds us of condemnation to a state of what we call justification the condemnation that Paul knew in his mind and heart and came to know as he heard the gospel was removed from him he found peace with God through Jesus Christ the curse of God's wrath and the curse of
God because of every sin each sin warrants God's curse and God's wrath just one and yet we're brought from that state to the blessings of the new covenant we're brought from the condition of an alien to given a state a relationship a community that we belong to from sadness we're brought to a state in a condition of sweetness in the Lord Jesus Christ but it's not only to do with this idea of something outside us we're speaking about states and conditions you don't necessarily feel those things but we can say something more than that because this work of creation is a deeper radical work so we know also it affects our frame and our constitution what we are our understanding is affected particularly we think of God's word our understanding about life also is altered we're not confined to a very narrow area of thought and to our own restricted view of what life is about we're given understanding as to the whole meaning of life not only ours but the whole world has meaningfulness our conscience becomes more tender towards the word of
[20:29] God we become more aware that God's truth is a precious thing that God's truth is that which feeds us which gives us satisfaction our wills are affected we don't have to be forced to do things to please God this new creation enables us to remove the rebellion and the stubbornness before God and we become obedient to him our desires are radically affected we no longer desire the things that once satisfied us we see something better to desire and we desire to be with God as Paul was speaking which is better we desire to know his presence we desire to know his blessings upon our life and the intimacy of the relationship with him our hopes our expectations they are all altered as well we don't just hope that maybe things are right we've got a solid hope in the word of

God and the work of Christ not only that affected but also our practice and our conversation we have a different way of living people sometimes look at us and they think what are these religious people up to now but this is a walk a new life and if we're going to speak about a new life then obviously it's going to affect the way in which we live it would be rather meaningless unless it did and so it is a new life not in the course of this world as scriptures remind us but in the will of God we've got new companions the fellowship of Jesus Christ the fellowship of his people we've got a new language we speak now about the things of God those things that once we laughed at and mocked at and even swore about the name of Christ that name which we may have taken upon our lips so readily becomes precious to us we're a new language and then we do this strange thing called praying we pray we don't just pray because we have to because we're forced to because our circumstances are terrible we've got to pray pray becomes part and partial of our very living our breathing is our prayer towards God it's not a forced thing and our reading of
God's word our reading is no longer tedious no longer forced out of us because we have to do it and it's no longer a boring end of this repetition of different stories because the word is life and the

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word is light these things are then part of the new creation and God's people ought to remember just how great a work has been done and if you're one of the Lord's people you ought to remember and recognize what has been done whatever your failings are as a Christian and it's right to acknowledge our failings as well if you're a true believer in Christ then a great work has been done within your life a work by the living God who created this world and he regards himself as a new creation whatever limitations there might be within ourselves because of our human personalities and so on he sees it as a work Christ has done the work and therefore if he sees it as something to be recognized then how much more ought we to recognize it and to live in the light of this recognition and not look at all the flaws and the faults all the time but to see what he has done see how he puts it here if anyone is in
Christ he's a new creation the old has gone the new has come now the Greek scholars will no doubt tell us that the word that's used for the word gone is something in the past the nearest tense something that has passed that's completed but the word is used for the new has come as a present it speaks of the ongoing it's not just something that has happened it has but it's ongoing the new creation is everlastingly new it is something ongoing the well of water that springs up into everlasting life there's a spring there's a source a divine source within the life of each Christian whereby he can know newness the newness is going on all the time and we've got to rediscover that newness that work that is going on that work that Christ has done so each day is never a drudgery you should never be a graduate of the Christian which each day is new in a very positive way because there's new life in Christ not just it has a beginning there's a newness that continues right through and it's for the
Christian to explore that newness to enjoy that newness to develop that newness in order that it might not become stale it shouldn't be now for those who don't know the Lord Jesus Christ and you don't know this newness you don't know this new creation we can't say in one way you don't really know you're living you need this newness and this newness is something as you say again not this church can give you this denomination or any minister can give you it's a newness that comes directly from God and that's where we go to to find it we read his word we pray that God will grant us more light into the understanding of the truth but most of all we need to pray that we might come to know Christ whom to know his life eternal new life as then we remember today this day whatever familiarity there might be about our conditions our circumstances our situation is still a new one whatever blessings we received in the past is still a new one and it's up to us to pray and to seek the newness of life in Christ
[26:39] Jesus that he has purchased for us in order that we might be new and renewed in Christ at this particular time may the Lord then bless our thoughts on his word let us sing again to God's praise in Psalm 107 Psalm 107 praise God for he is good for still his mercy is lasting be let God's redeemed say so whom he from the enemies handed free and galled them out of the lands from north south east and west they strayed in desert pathless way no city found to rest but what is true of the children of Israel is true of each one who has come to know the Lord himself and these facts we can see with respect to our own experience so shall we sing verses 1 to 8 of Psalm 107 praise God for he is good praise God for he is good for still his mercy is lasting be let the tree is his name so whom he from him is and victory and other men out of the land from north south east and west west

Vel unjust But lest with no city come to rest For thirst and hunger in them Please their soul when strays them prayers They cry unto the Lord And He then frees from their distress Then also they come away To walk and ride
Tis He denied That they might to us If he go where in they might abide O God, name to the Lord Who give praise for His goodness there And for His words of wonder Come unto the sons of men
We come now to a part of our service which we traditionally refer to as the fencing of the table
To benefit perhaps of those who are not familiar with our form of worship and what this involves I'd like just to explain one or two things Why we have such a thing called the fencing of the table The words themselves maybe don't convey as much as you would perhaps like the idea of fencing It sounds as though if a fence is put up that no one is allowed in And there certainly is some truth in the sense that the fence is supposed to be some sort of barrier But it's only a barrier to a certain type of person And when we read in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 27 We are told therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of Christ A man ought to examine himself before eats of the bread and

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drinks of the cup for anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself
So this idea of setting a barrier up is not really to prevent people from coming but to prevent an abuse of this great privilege which the word of God reminds us is quite a solemn responsibility to come forward to the Lord's table is a solemn thing that involves our personal recognition of who Christ is a recognition of what he has done our confession our outer confession that we believe that Christ's atoning death the way in which he died on the cross was not only a worthy death it was a death that took place in my stead and so when we come we're told to eat worthily means giving due recognition to what Christ has done and if we are not living a Christian life if we have never exercised personal faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour then there is a fence put up not made just to preserve ourselves or to separate us but also for the benefit of those concerned in order that they might not commit a sin serious sin at that in coming to the Lord's table when they ought not by the teachings of God were to do so it's a fence which in our own denomination sometimes is too high because others take another point of your own denomination and that is that they feel themselves to be quite unworthy now it's not that these people have not believed in Christ they've believed in Christ and they wholeheartedly believe in his work believing that he has died to take away their sins and they're living in the light of that work of Christ and they're believing in his work they're not believing in what they have done for themselves they believe in Christ has done the work that needed to be done to save them but they have this sense of unworthiness they feel they don't deserve to come to the Lord's table because the Lord has done such a great thing for them he has done he has given his whole life and they feel that the sort of lives that we are living well compared to what he has done they're really a rather insignificant if not sinful but remember when we consider the worthiness of the Lord
[35:00] Jesus Christ that is what we're looking at we're not looking so much at our worthiness but his worthiness we're looking on recognizing and confessing that he is worthy of all praise and all devotion and all worship and if we have committed our lives unto him then we ought to be at the Lord's table we ought to be found amongst the Lord's people and we ought to be receiving the blessing that comes from such fellowship and from the blessing of this particular moment in time it's better for us to be with the Lord's people than to be apart from him and so as I say we don't want this fence to be too high we don't want it to be too low in order that no one shall cause offence to themselves or to the cause of Jesus Christ we don't want to prevent anyone who feels sincerely that they ought to be here that they ought to be with the Lord's people that they ought to confess the Lord publicly in this manner and so this fence as we say is something we have to think about but having considered it the responsibility falls upon all who hear as to what they do whether they come or whether they stay the invitation to the Lord's people to those who know him is undoubtedly to come not to refrain and may it be then that as we continue to the remaining part of this service that the Lord's people shall indeed come to the table and do and do a good while that if it is to pass into the people so you

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