

Ambassadors To The Dead
2 Corinthians 5:1-6:2 August 28, 2022



For 22 years, I loved everything about this world.

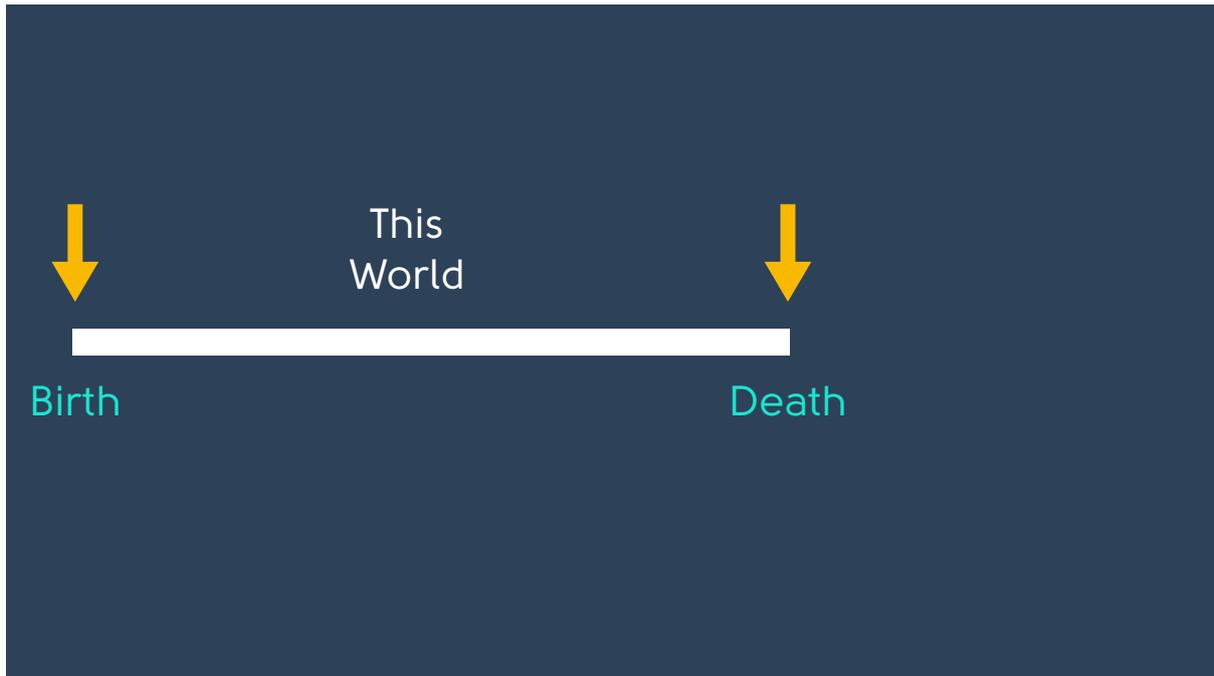
Then I came to Christ – and I have never felt fully at home in this world since.

Things I once loved – I now hated.

My goals, ambitions and hopes – all changed.

My life diverged from that of my closest friends. They saw me as weird, deceived and throwing my life away. Sometimes I wondered if they were right.

It took me awhile to understand what was going on.

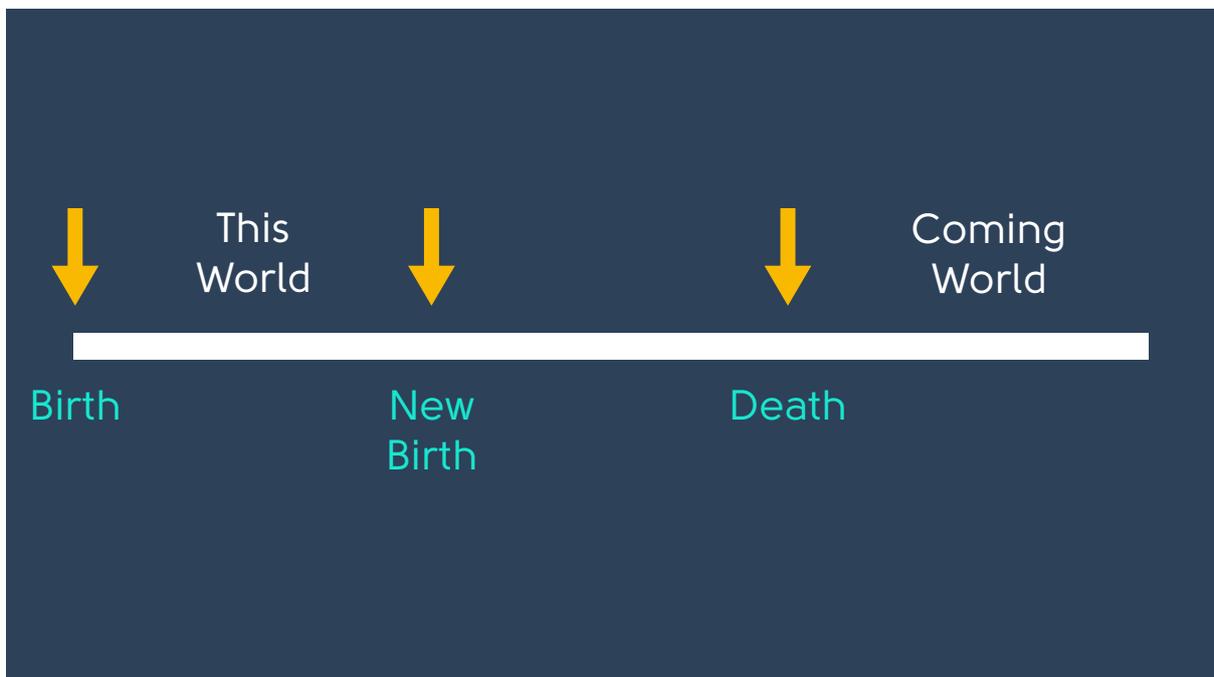


For 22 years, I was convinced – this world was all there was – so I better suck every bit out of it.

I got 80 years to live a full life – then I die – and that is it.

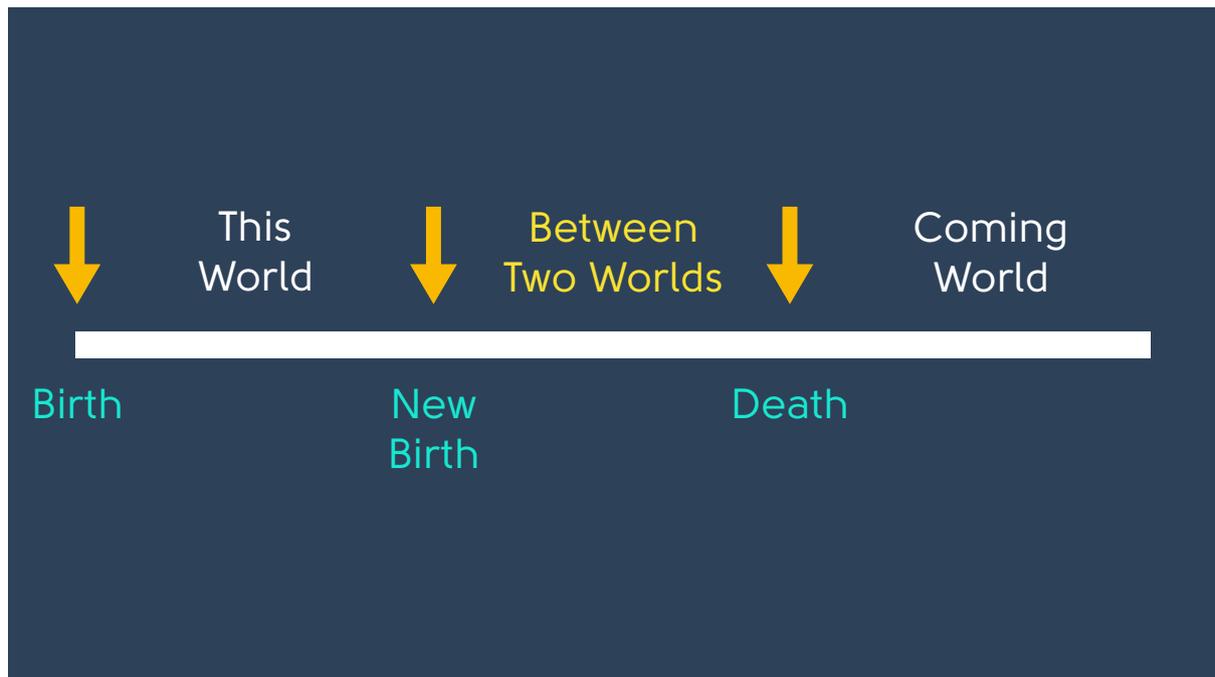
Birth and death are the only two really major life events.

But then a *third* major life event happened to me.



I was born again – the new birth.

And, I came to realise that death is **not** the end – there is a coming world after death.



I came to realise that much of the reason I felt so strange, so fish out of water is that between the new birth and death – I was living *between two worlds*.

Today, I am in a temporary world, in a temporary body. A world and a body groaning for redemption.

But I am headed to the real world – the new heavens and new earth. But I am not there yet.

So, it is like I have a foot in this world – a foot in the coming world – and the longer I am a Christian – this world is fading to me – and the world to come is becoming more real – but I am not there yet.

This morning, Paul tells us – there is one major reason we are still in this world.

One major reason God did not call us home as soon as we were saved.

God has left us between two worlds – to be ambassadors for Christ – to call on the dying to join us in living.

If every person went straight to glory at the new birth – who would tell the world the gospel?

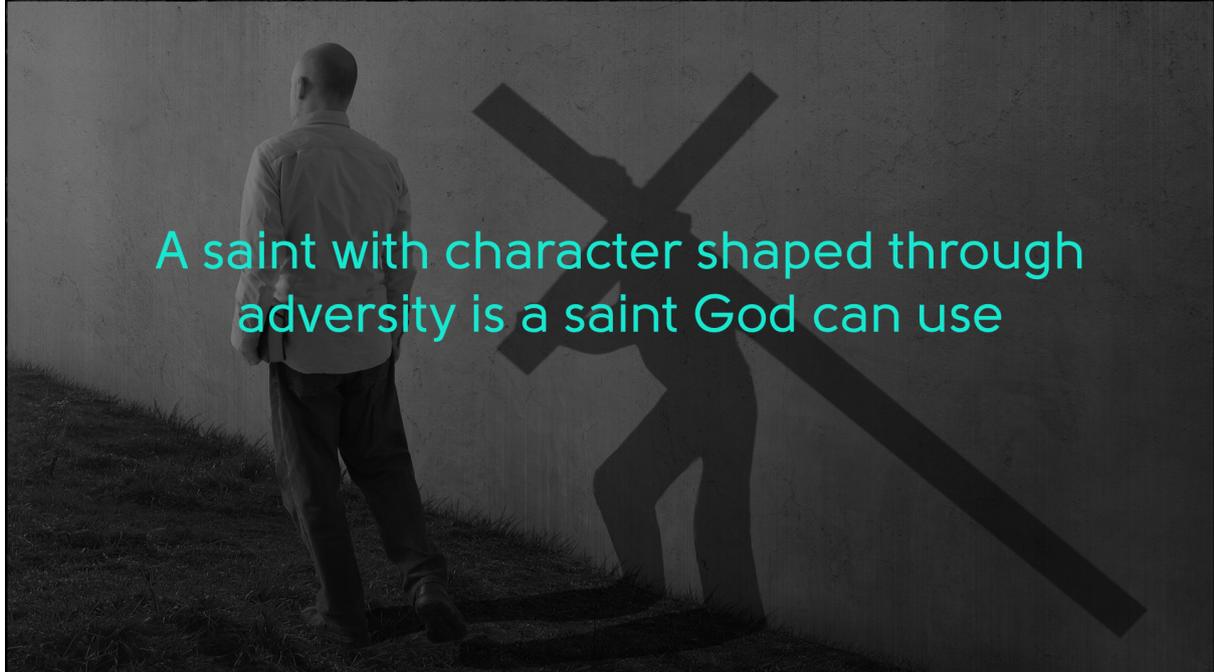
We are working our way through the book of 2 Corinthians.

Paul wrote this book because a group of men – self-styled super apostles – turned up in Corinth preaching a twisted man-centred version of the gospel.

And they sought to discredit the ministry of Paul.

2 Corinthians is Paul's defence of his ministry.

I have titled the series on this book – **crucified leadership**. And I want to sum up this book this way:



A saint with character shaped through adversity is a saint God can use

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In this book, Paul gives the Corinthians and us a long series of:



1:1-2 God's church - God's leaders

Marks of Crucified Leadership

Marks of crucified leadership.

Leadership in the church is not like leadership in the world.

The head of the church is a crucified Saviour so the leaders of His church must exhibit crucified leadership.

This morning we come to the **seventh** mark:



Ambassador.

What is an ambassador?

When there is conflict – a King sends His ambassador – with His full authority – to declare the terms of peace.

An ambassador can't set the terms – the King does. All he does is carry the message of his King.

God has sent us as ambassadors – with an offer of reconciliation.

To understand this, we need to realise that not only are we dealing with two worlds:

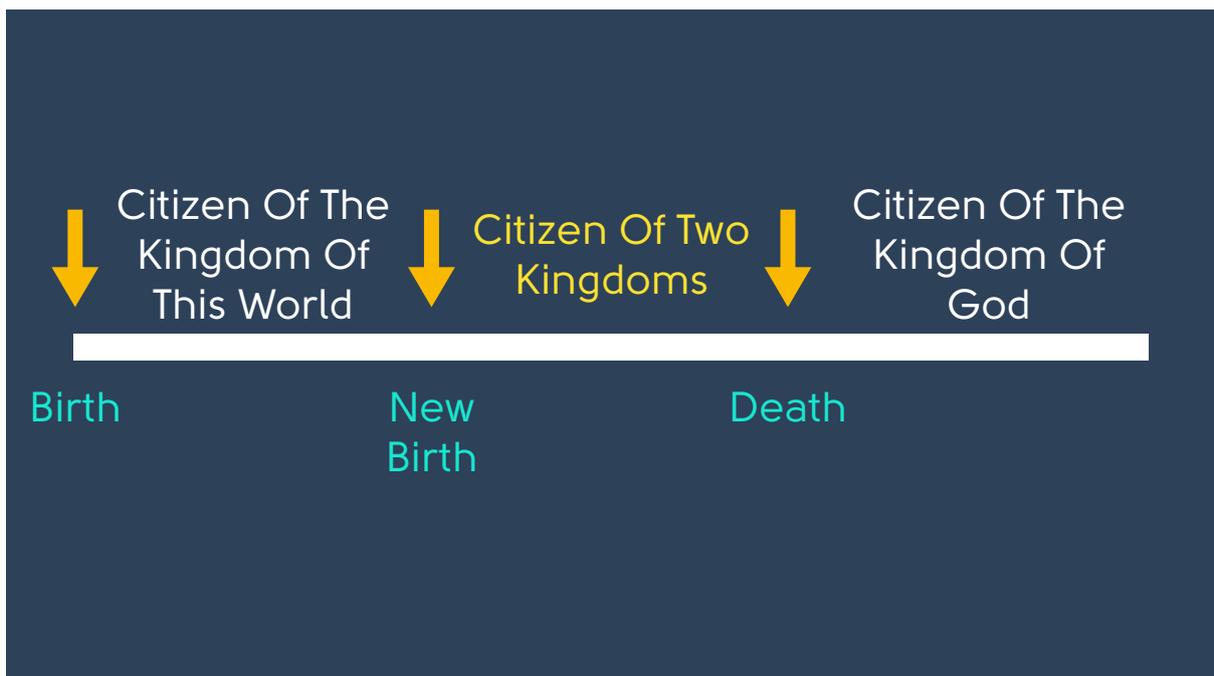


There are **two kingdoms** – the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God.

And every single citizen of the kingdom of this world – has at some time rejected God as King.

And that has dire consequences because unless you become a part of God’s kingdom – you will be destroyed along with the world that is passing away.

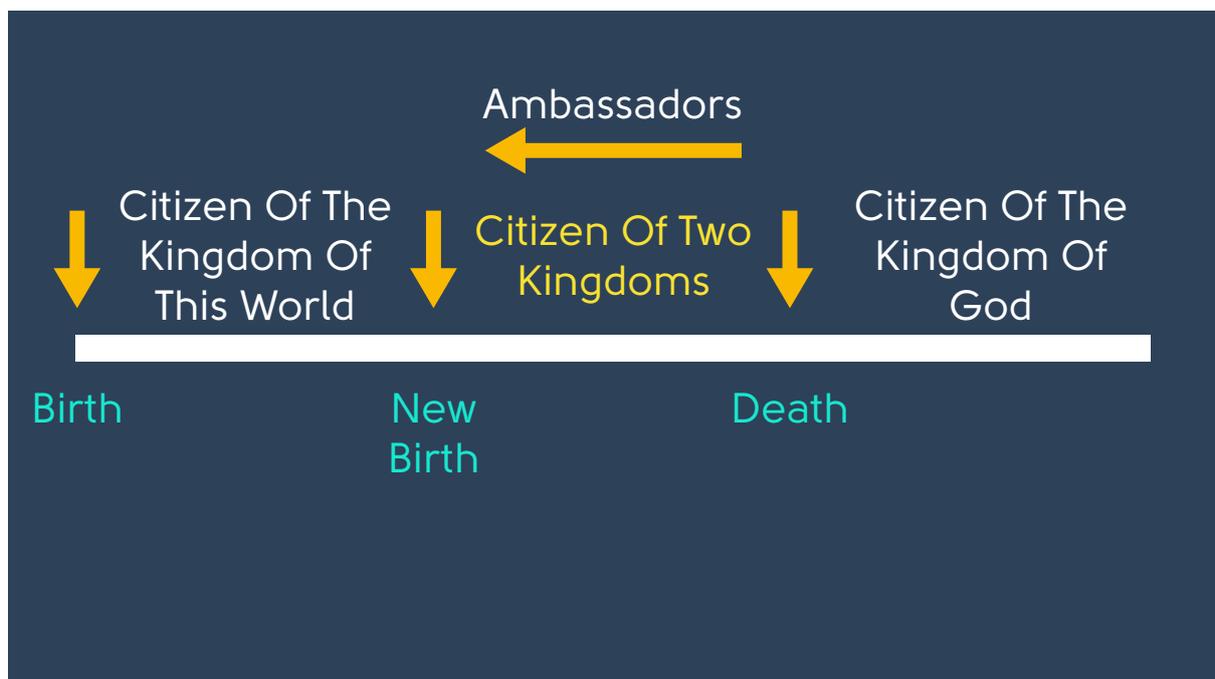
But God is gracious and has offered a way of reconciliation to all who are in the kingdom of this world.



If you accept that offer – it is not that you immediately renounce one citizenship and only have citizenship in God’s kingdom. While you are in this world – you have dual citizenship. You are a part of two kingdoms.

That has so many implications.

We live under earthly authorities and spiritual authorities. We have obligations to both kingdoms.



But crucially, God left us in this world as His ambassadors to the citizens of the kingdom of this dying world – with an offer of peace – whereby they can join God’s kingdom and escape His judgment.

These two kingdoms are not equal.

You have one true King. Now you know this world is passing away and you are heading to a world that will never pass away.

So, while we do not neglect our responsibilities in this world to family, to nation, to neighbours – we are diligent to serve our true King with our labour and resources and time.

Paul knows, the super apostles were too interested in the wrong citizenship – the citizenship of this world.

They invested too much time into it and their gospel focused too much on this world – health, wealth and happiness.

It was almost as if instead of going to heaven – in their gospel God had promised heaven in this world.

Our message is not – we can make heaven in this earth.

Our message is – through Christ – you can become citizens of the world to come.

And because they changed the message – they took out the concept of slaves for Christ – they failed as ambassadors.

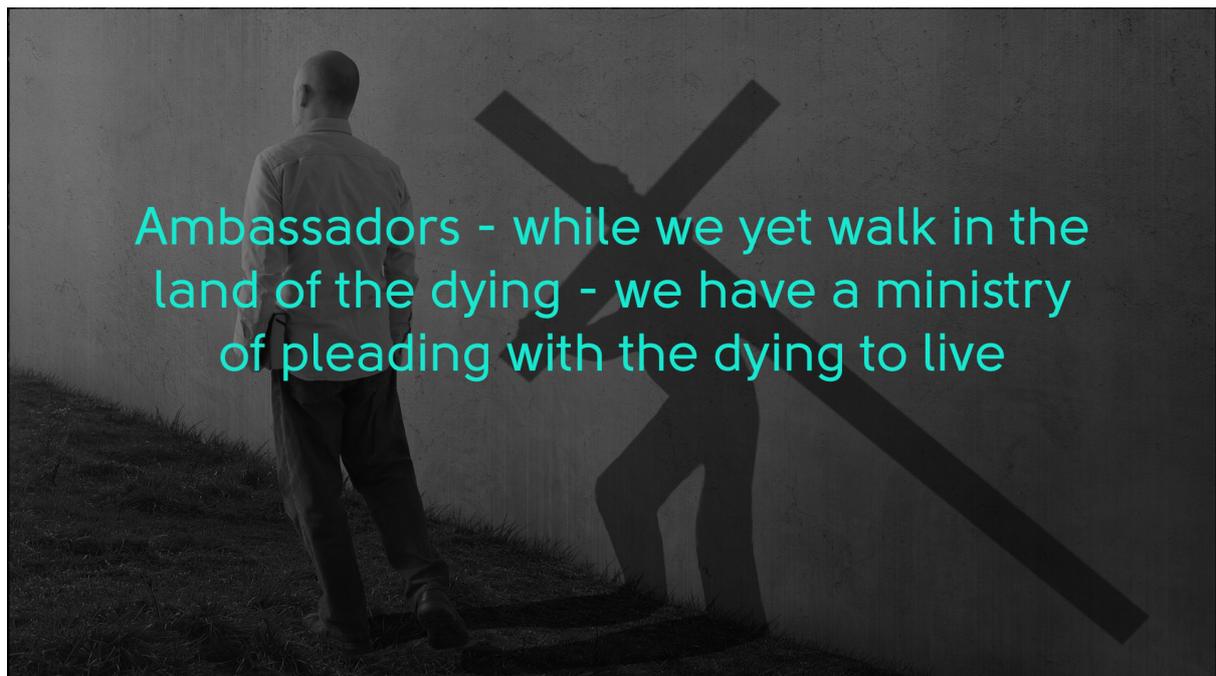
Paul says – a mark of a true man or woman of God is we are an **ambassador** – accurately conveying God's message – calling people into the true kingdom – the kingdom to come.

As John Newton lay dying he said this:

I am still in the land of the dying; I shall be in the land of the living soon.

You and I, for a time – a brief time – we walk in the land of the dying, but we are heading to the land of the living. But while we are still here – we have a ministry – a consuming calling.

Here is how I want to sum up our passage this morning:



Ambassadors – while we yet walk in the land of the dying – we have a ministry of pleading with the dying to live.

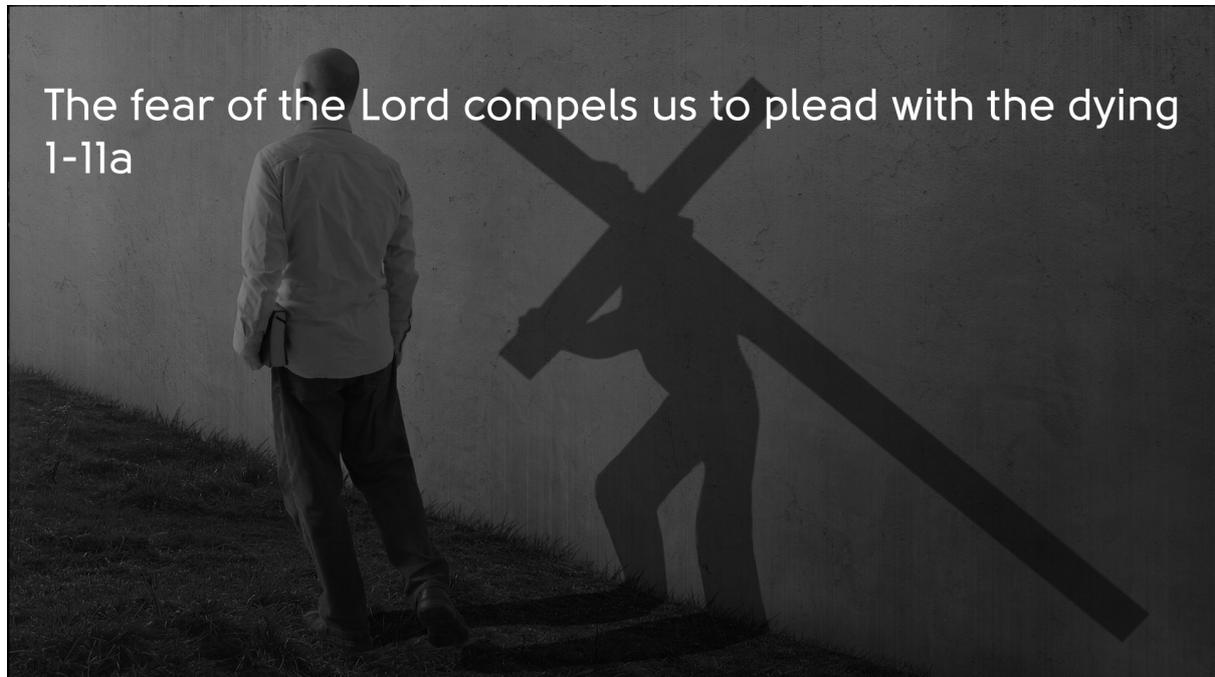
Ambassadors – while we yet walk in the land of the dying – we have a ministry of pleading with the dying to live.

This passage is the heart of 2 Corinthians.

If you get nothing else out of this book – get this week's message.

This is a passage that has deeply influenced my life and shaped the ministry of our church.

Hear the heart of the Apostle.



The fear of the Lord compels us to plead with the dying 1-11a

There are two errors we can make in this life.

1. We can live as if this life is all that matters.

Even Christians can live this way. We can tell ourselves – I get heaven no matter what – I have my heaven ticket – so why not live for this world and then go to heaven?

Except – as a slave of Christ – an ambassador of Christ – He has a task for you in this life.

2. We can live as if the coming world is all that matters.

Again, this is a tempting error. I am just hanging on until Jesus calls me home. I have pulled back from the world – just mixing with the saints – waiting for glory.

Except – as a slave of Christ – an ambassador of Christ – He has a task for you in this life.

To plead with the dying – to find life.

And as slaves and ambassadors of Christ – the day will come when we have to give an account for what we did with the 80 years entrusted to us.

The older you get, the more suffering in this life – the more tantalizing heaven becomes.

If you believe death is gain. If you believe your last breath ushers you into Paradise, any sane person would prefer to be in the heavens with Christ awaiting the new heavens and new earth – rather than suffering in this world ... **but** – that is not for us to decide.

Our Master says when our ministry is done.

Until then, He gave us the words of eternal life and we are surrounded by the dying who need them.

So, look with me at 2 Corinthians 5:1:

For we know that if our earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal dwelling in the heavens, not made with hands.

As Christians, we no longer fear death.

The Tabernacle was temporary – the Temple was permanent.

Our earthly tent is temporary – but we have a permanent building waiting – a resurrection body.

You don't make it with your hands – with your effort – it is a gift from God.

Man has long sought the secret to eternal life. Today, medicine and science are trying hard to create bodies that last forever. They can't – and even if they could – this world is dying – and even if it wasn't – who wants to live forever in a fallen world of pain and suffering and loss?

Look, Paul knows – his clay pot is wearing out – and the opposition is growing – he may well be killed for the sake of the gospel – and a few years later he was.

But whether you die as a martyr, whether you give your life to Christ and wear out early or if God allows you to die of old age in bed – this tent – these bodies are designed to last only a short time.

Giving our earthly bodies in Christ's service is not loss – for we have a better body – one that cannot be destroyed waiting in the age to come.

Verse 2:

Indeed, we groan in this tent, desiring to put on our heavenly dwelling.

The creation groans for redemption – Romans 8 – and we groan.

When you know there is a new body and eternal life with Christ waiting – every bit of suffering makes you groan.

Our earthly tents – our clay jars – are being worn down by this life. Suffering, persecution – yes – but also illness and old age.

Most 20-year-olds don't groan for their heavenly dwelling.

Every 80-year-old groans for it – a lot.

We know Paul had some health issues. We know his clay pot had a lot of mileage on it from beatings, lashings, deprivation, stoning. He groaned for the body to come.

Verse 3:

Since, when we are clothed, we will not be found naked.

His hope was not just death – but to live clothed – in a resurrection body – with Christ.

You will not spend eternity as a ghost – unclothed – a spirit.

And that body does not wear down and is not destroyed.

Verse 4:

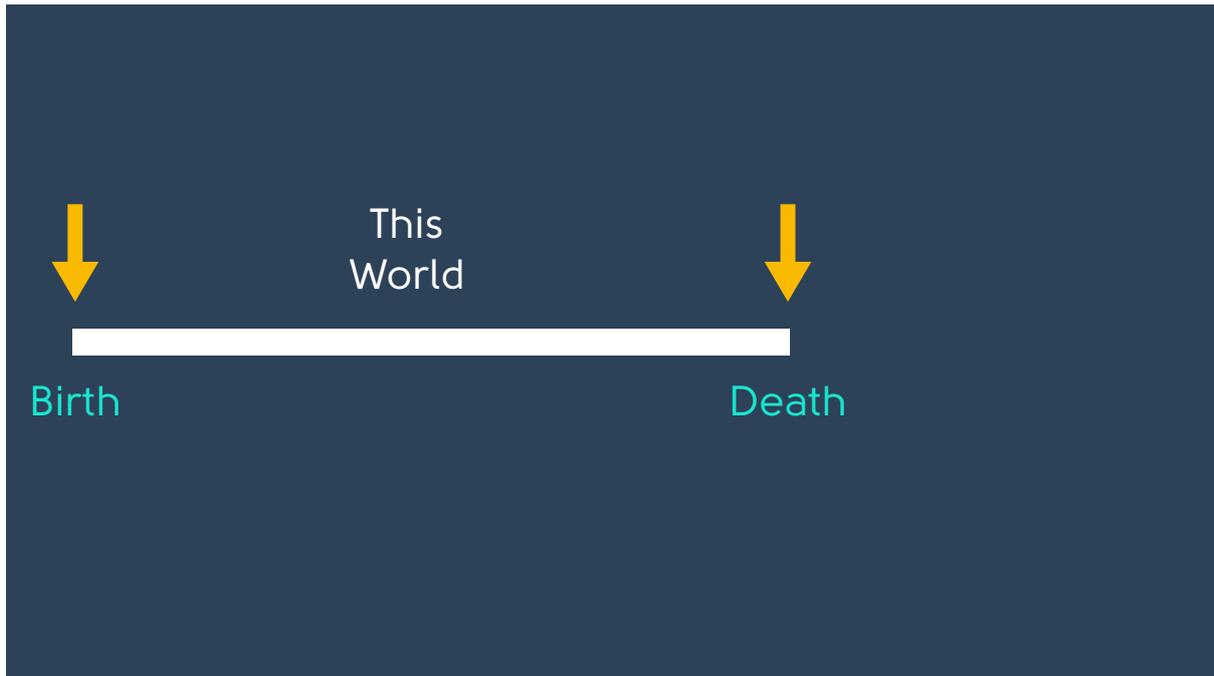
Indeed, we groan while we are in this tent, burdened as we are, because we do not want to be unclothed but clothed, so that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

Paul groans – not to die and be unclothed – but to die and be clothed.

To live in the world to come in a resurrection body.

Mortality is not swallowed up by nothingness – but by life.

These verses stand in sharp contrast to the view of most Australians.



Those around us cling to life in this world.

YOLO – you only live once.

Their motto is – **to live is me – to die is loss.**

Most of our friends and family believe this world is it. It came into existence by sheer chance, it has no meaning, our lives are a product of evolution – and death is the end.

The day you draw your last breath – that is it.

So, they groan to stay in this life. They will eat nothing but salads – wear out the gym – and beg their doctor for a few more years.

This world is all they have so they cling tenaciously to it.

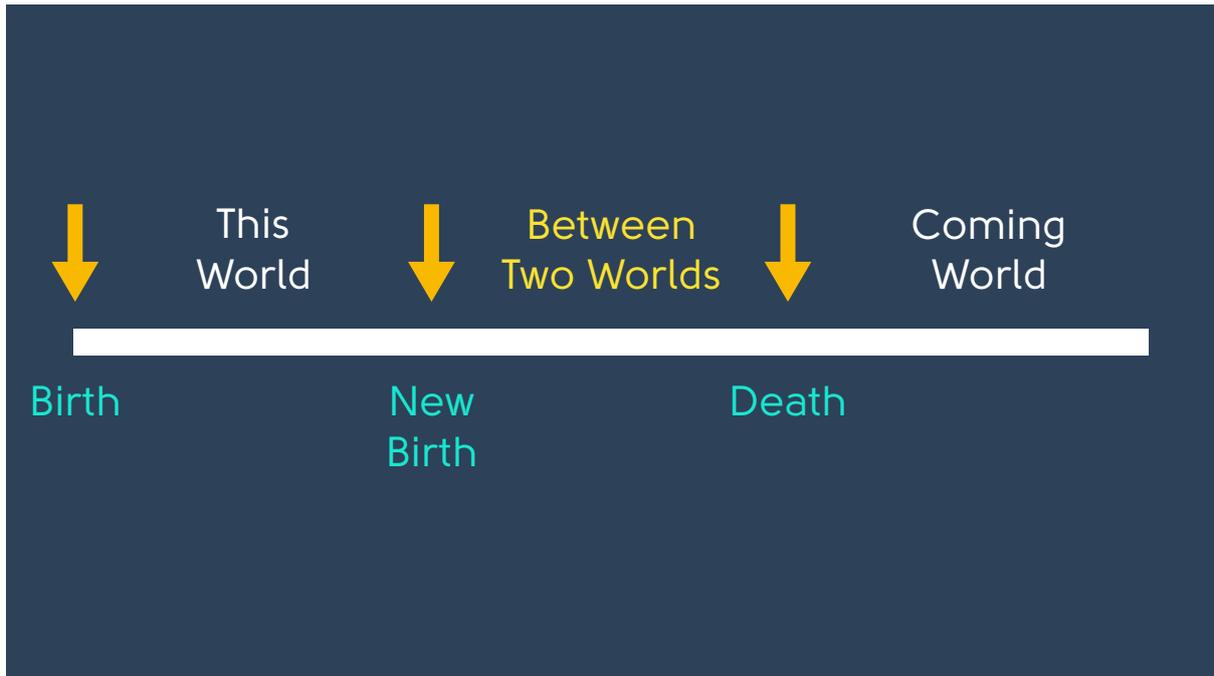
This body is all you will ever have.

This world is all you will ever know.

They have no hope.

Death is to be feared – it ends this life.

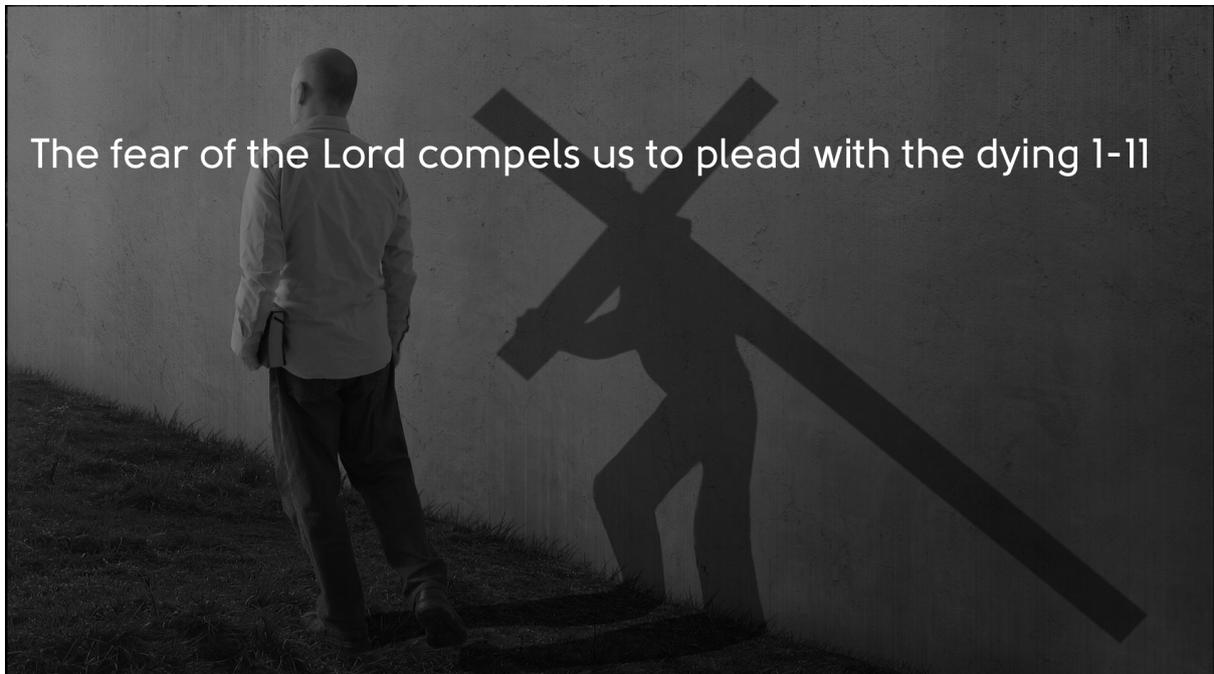
So, live for today. Do whatever it takes to make this body last, do whatever it takes to enjoy this life.



But, the believer knows the world to come is the real and lasting world.

To live is Christ, to die is gain.

Our fading mortality is swallowed up in immortal life.



Verse 5:

Now the one who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the Spirit as a down payment.

This hope of life to come is all of God.

God created us, called us, redeemed us and He will clothe us.

In this life – the Spirit within us is a down payment, a pledge, a promise – that death is not the end.

We have the Spirit within that tells us – this is not the real world – our home is not here – do not fear death.

The Spirit gives us assurance. Verse 6:

So we are always confident and know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.

These bodies – these temporary wearing out, painful, fragile bodies are a home – but a temporary home.

While we are in these bodies – we are away from the Lord – away from our true bodies and true home. But we have the Spirit as a down payment – a promise that our true home awaits.

We do not cling to this world.

When John Paton was preparing to head out with his wife to the New Hebrides where every previous missionary had become food for cannibals, an aging Christian took him aside and warned him against going. Here was his reply:

Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honouring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by cannibals or worms; and in the Great Day my resurrection body will arise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer.¹

Amen!

Verses 7-8:

For we walk by faith, not by sight. In fact, we are confident, and we would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

We have not seen these new bodies that are waiting.

We have not seen the new heavens and new earth.

¹ James Paton, ed., *John G. Paton: Missionary to the New Hebrides, An Autobiography*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965, originally 1891), p. 56.

But we have the down payment of the Holy Spirit, we have the resurrection of Christ and the promise of God – so we are confident that death – leaving these bodies – is not the end – it is the beginning – we will be with the Lord.

Since we have this faith – staying in this dying world is not our preference – we want to be at home with the Lord – we would prefer to be in the new heavens, in our glorified bodies, fully united with the Lord.

But – we are slaves – so it is not our preference that matters.

We serve as slaves to the King.

We give our bodies and lives to the task of producing an absolutely incomparable weight of glory in the world to come.

Brothers and sisters, let me ask you – can you actually say with Paul – I would **prefer** to be away from the body and at home with the Lord?

I think for many of us – we absolutely want to go to heaven – **just not yet**.

After I get married. After we travel to Italy. After I have kids. After my kids come to faith. After I tick a few more things off my bucket list for this life.

I absolutely want to go – just not yet.

When my health starts to deteriorate – then please take me.

But, there is only one genuine reason you should desire to remain – verse 9:

Therefore, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to be pleasing to him.

I remain because it pleases Him.

If I were my preference – take me to heaven.

At home in these bodies or away from these bodies there is a constant reality. We are slaves of Christ bought at a cost and we have to please our master.

If He says stay – we stay. If He says come – we die and go to him.

And when the day does come that we die – Paul says – remember that we must give an account for our life in these bodies – did we please our Master? Verse 10:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Scripture says again and again – every believer will have to give an account for their lives.

Jesus described it as a Master going on a journey who returns after a long time and asks for an accounting of the resources and talents He left with his slaves.

Paul uses a metaphor well known to the Corinthians – a bema seat. It was a raised platform. Men and women are brought before the bema seat and judgment was given.

Paul says – don't ever forget – every one of us will appear before the bema seat of Christ.

And all of our actions done in the body – in this life – good or evil will be judged.

I will tell you now – I do not really understand this judgment and reward of believers. But Scripture speaks of it in many, many places.

Believers will have a day of reckoning – we will give an account for how we served Christ in this life.

Jesus called you – made you His slave – gave you His Great Commission – sent you as His ambassador and empowered you.

And the day is coming when He will ask – so what did you do with the 80 years of life I gave you. What did you do with My message and My authority? What did you do with My talents, money, resources, abilities entrusted to you to spread My kingdom?

And you don't want to say – well – I was going to do kingdom stuff – but life happened – kids, work, mortgage so I buried it – I hid it under a bushel – but I only meant it to be for a time – you know my heart Lord – I did plan to get it out and do something – but I got too old.

I don't fully understand this accounting.

If you wasted your life – I am not quite sure the consequences for a believer.

If you spent your life well – again – I am not quite sure what the reward is.

All I know is that when we are face to face with God – we don't want to appear with a life that has borne no fruit – a life where we wasted the gifts entrusted to us.

Verse 11:

Therefore, since we know the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade people.

Don't mistake this. It is not that we serve out of fear of retribution.

You wasted your life – you are actually not a Christian.

Or – you wasted your life – live in fourth class heaven for all eternity.

I don't think so. There is no condemnation for those in Christ.

The world here – fear – when you think of standing before the bema – we are to think of the majesty and awe and reverence.

Ultimately, we have an audience of One. We are:

The creature before the Creator.

The slave before the Master.

Knowing the majesty and glory of the one we serve – we want to be found faithful.

We want to have something to add to the glory that we will share in eternity.

All we are – is slaves of Christ. So, as those who have to give an account before the Lord – we strive to be faithful to do what He commanded us to – persuade people.

Telling them the gospel – Christ and Him crucified.

Let me sum this up.

The super apostles looked at Paul and thought he was wasting his life.

He spent a lot of time in prison – on the run – being persecuted. His life had a lot of suffering.

Paul says – I am not wasting my life. Giving everything for Christ is no waste – it is a life well spent.

Paul lived his life with the world to come in mind. And he was happy to stand before the Lord and give an account for his ministry.

The fear, the awe, the majesty of God is ever before him – so he pleads with the lost – he persuades people.

Not using techniques and tricks – but by telling them the truth – they are lost – judgment is coming – and Christ is their only hope.

Brothers and sisters, the fact that we are so privileged to be called to serve almighty God – to be ambassadors of the King – to carry the message of life – this should motivate us.

We want to be good, faithful slaves.

I can't imagine standing before the Creator of all – and saying:

Thank you for the 83 years on earth Lord. Loved it! Marriage was fun, kids were a blast, your sunsets were amazing. Oh and thank you that I got to live in Brisbane – beautiful, prosperous, no wars – a little taste of heaven on earth I think.

But, there was so much going on that I really didn't get much chance to serve the church and yeah – pleading with the lost – my personality is such that I found that too hard. I did mean to try – but didn't get to it. Sorry – but I am ready for heaven.

No! The fear of the Lord compels us.

If you are still breathing – you need to be about your Master's work.

Second:



The love of Christ compels us to plead with the dying 11b-15

Verses 11-12:

What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your consciences. We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to be proud of us, so that you may have a reply for those who take pride in outward appearance rather than in the heart.

Again, the super apostles were comparing themselves to Paul.

Him – old, weak, poor, suffering, unpopular message.

Them – younger, stronger, wealthier, healthier, more popular.

They used these outward appearances to shame Paul.

They were enjoying their best life now.

Paul's life was suffering – what a waste!

Basically, Paul says – yes – from a worldly perspective I am making crazy decisions to serve Christ – I am giving my life – my strength, my resources – but these are actually good kingdom decisions.

He says – God knows my heart in this – it is plain to Him – and Corinthian church – your consciences know it as well.

I am faithfully doing what God told me to while I am in this body – doing whatever it takes to tell the dying – there is a way to life.

In saying this I am not commending myself – but pointing out the truth – something you should know.

You should be proud of me not ashamed of me.

You should defend me to the super apostles. You should tell them heart and character matter over looks and flash.

Verse 13:

For if we are out of our mind, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.

People looked at Paul and said – he is out of his mind.

He gave up position and wealth.

He chose a path of suffering and struggles.

He is an object of ridicule and mocking.

But, he does it for God – that is what a slave does.

But, in terms of the gospel – the good news of Christ – I am in my right mind – what I say is absolutely true – and I do this for your sake.

I do whatever it takes to share the gospel faithfully and accurately – that is what an ambassador does.

Verse 14-15:

For the love of Christ compels us, since we have reached this conclusion, that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for them and was raised.

This is one of those typical Pauline verses you have to read 10 times to get.

Basically, Paul is saying – Jesus died for all believers. He died to save them.

If you are a Christian – you also die – in the sense of you choose to die to self and follow Jesus.

So, if you are Christian – you are no longer your own – you belong to Christ – the One who died for you and was raised.

Basically, Paul is saying part of being joined to Jesus in His death is you chose to give up your life for Him.

It is Galatians 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

You can't say – awesome Jesus died for me – my place in heaven is assured – so it is OK if I live how I want now.

No – your life is no longer your own.

You choose Him as your Lord – you became His slave – so you do what He commands.

And we do it because the love of Christ compels us.

This verse could be saying – our love for Christ compels us – but more likely it means – His love for us compels us.

His love that sent Him to the cross to save us – should compel us to live for Him.

The love of Christ that sent Him to this world to save sinners compels us.

Look brothers and sisters, there are so many obstacles to us sharing the gospel.

One of them is fear of man – we will seem foolish – out of our minds. No one will respect us. That is true!

Paul says that can't stop you – you have the only message that can save men and women from eternal death. The love of Christ that saved us compels us.

Many will sneer and think you have checked your mind at the door.

Some will put you in the flat earth category.

But some will listen and the Spirit of God will open their eyes and they will live.

How can we be silent?

Third:



The ministry of reconciliation compels us to plead with the dying 16-6:2

The dying are at war with God – and they will lose.

They have picked a fight with the Almighty.

But in His grace he offers a way to peace.

And we are His ambassadors with that message of peace.

Verse 16:

From now on, then, we do not know anyone from a worldly – or fleshly – perspective.

When he says – from now on – he is referring to verses 14 and 15 – now that we are those who Christ died for.

Now we understand the dying tent is not what makes someone important. Once we evaluated people by externals – looks, social status, wealth.

But no longer.

Even if we have known Christ from a worldly perspective.

When you read 1 and 2 Corinthians – it seems likely that these false apostles had claimed to have seen the risen Christ – as a way to gain legitimacy.

Paul **had** seen the risen Christ.

Yet now we no longer know him in this way.

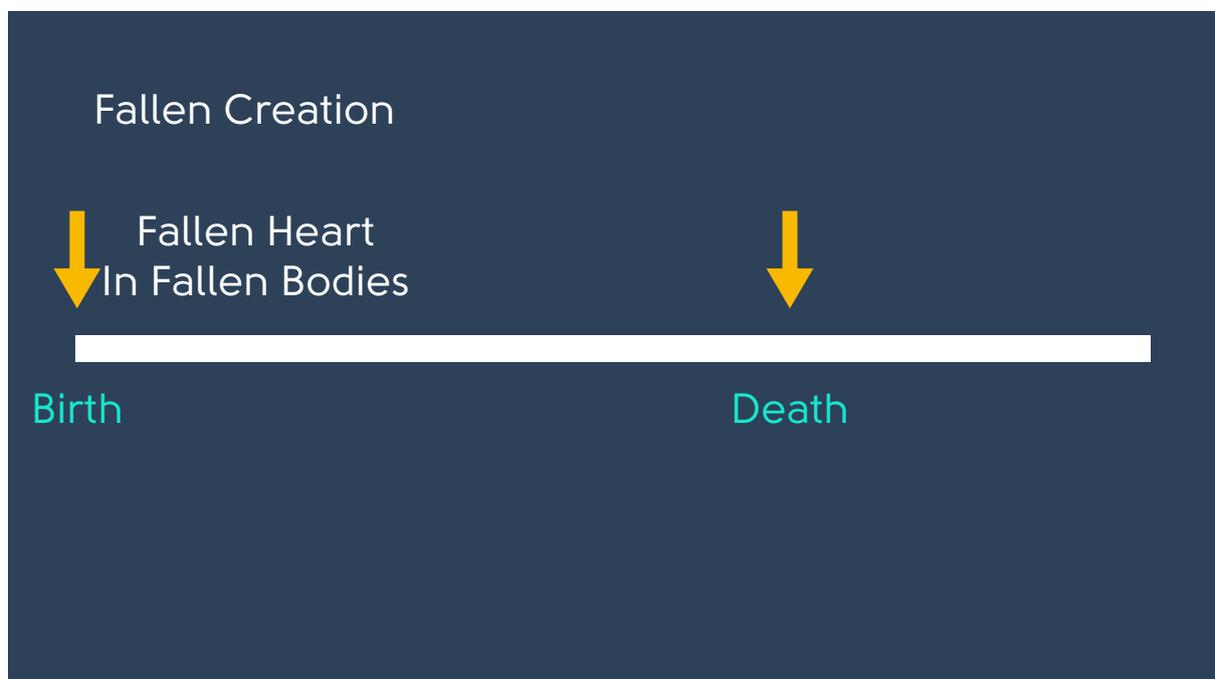
Even Christ – it is not externals – even one as amazing as His resurrection body that is truly important about Him.

We know Christ's real worth – His divine glory. His sinless character, His sacrificial love.

And because His Spirit is in us – we have a taste of what is truly important – verse 17:

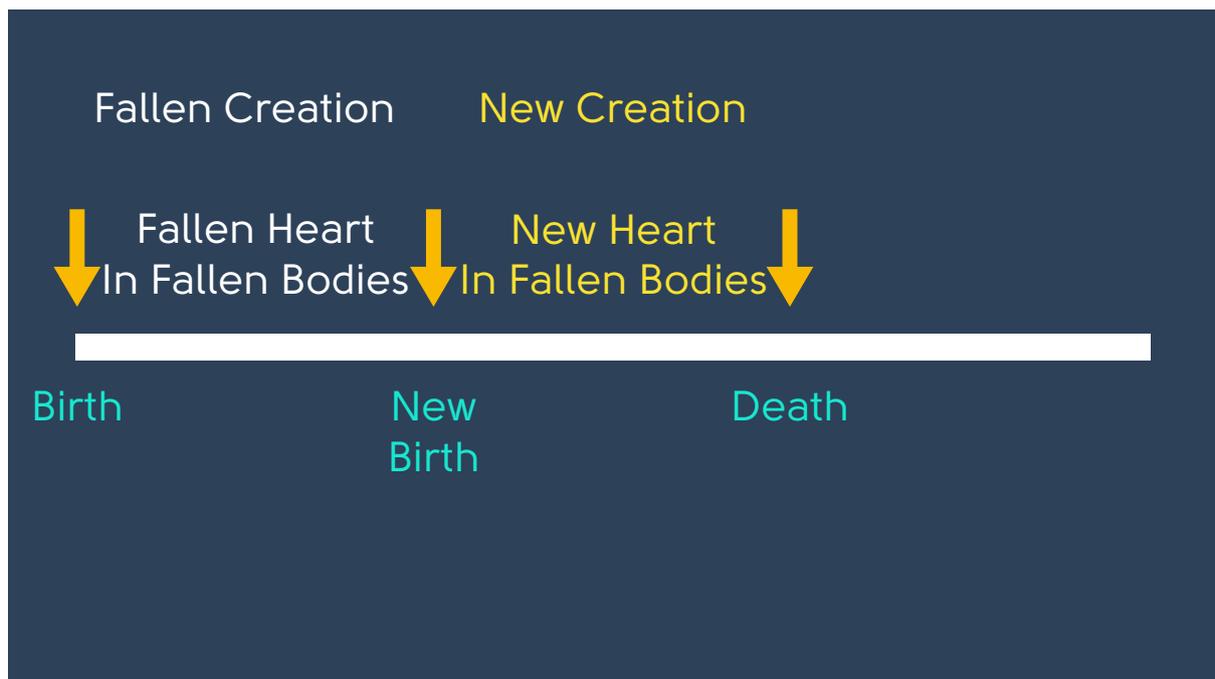
Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!

What does Paul mean?



Once, this was us. We were born as a *fallen creation* – we had fallen hearts that rebelled against God – in fallen bodies – that get sick, injured, age and die.

Overall – pretty depressing.



But then we were born again.

Paul calls us – *new creations*.

Importantly this does not mean we are totally new.

The old has passed away, and see, the new has come!

It means the new age has dawned in us.

This is only possible because we are not under the Old Covenant but the New.

Our old heart of stone is gone and we have a new heart.

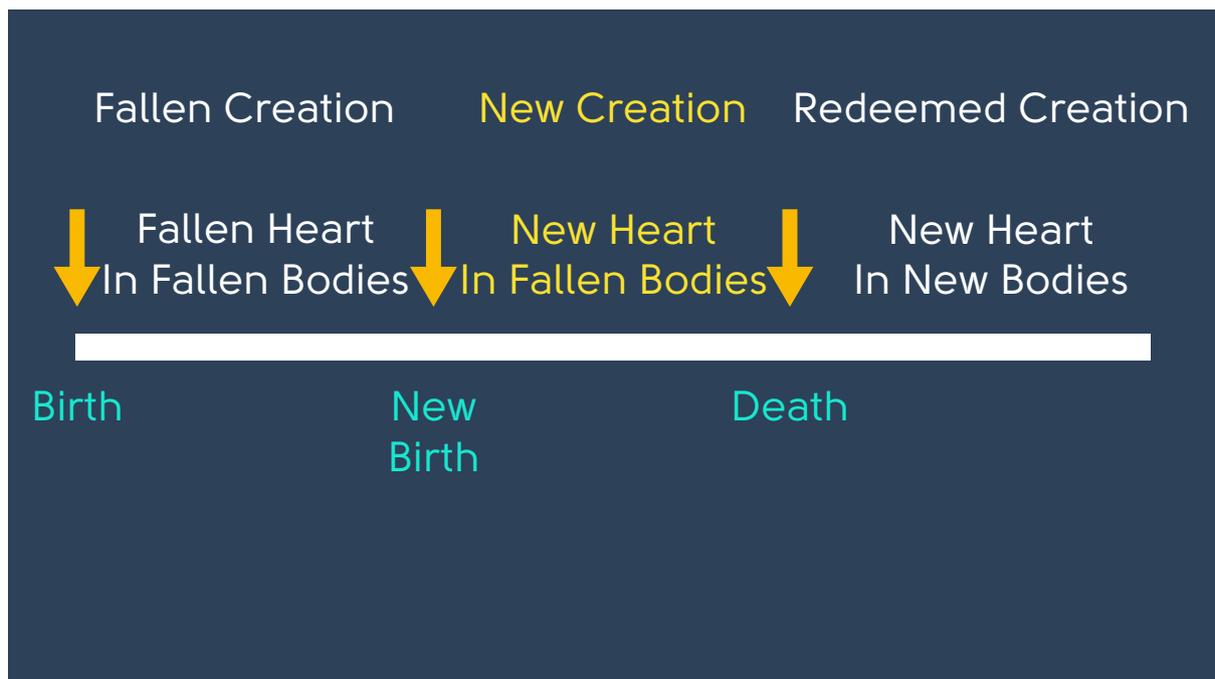
Things of the flesh we loved – we no longer love.

But, we are not finished. We still live in fallen bodies. The old man, the old woman within is defeated but not yet banished.

We still sin.

And our bodies still decay and die.

But, the Spirit within, the new heart is a promise that Christ **will** finish the work He began.



One day – we will be a *redeemed creation* – new hearts in new bodies – no sin, no consequences of sin.

This is Revelation 21.

But, today – we live in between two worlds.

We are a new creation – in that we are not what we once were. The new age has dawned.

Some of the old has gone and the rest is going.

But, Paul's point is that what is truly important about us as new creations is not the externals – this fallen body – this clay jar – this dying flesh.

What is truly important about us is the treasure within – the glory of God – the new heart.

And – this treasure is all of God.



Verse 18:

Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ.

If we are in Christ – we got there only one way. We didn't reconcile ourselves to God – He reconciled Himself to us.

Reconciled – means to end hostility and renew relationships.

Our sin meant our relationship with God was destroyed, we were under His judgment and His wrath would banish us to hell forever.

We can't reconcile ourselves to God – but He did something to reconcile us to Him – He sent Christ.

And all of this leads to what Paul really wants to say:

And [God] has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

Reconciliation is the greatest news in history – and now God sent us as ambassadors with His message of peace.

What comes next are some of the best known and most precious verses in the Bible.

Verse 19:

That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.

The world – the entire fallen world – has rebelled. Jews, Gentiles, men, women, rich, poor, slaves, free, straight, queer, young, old.

Every last one of us has trespassed against God and fallen short of His glory.

And when you rebel against an infinitely holy being – the King of all creation – He must respond in wrath – His justice demands it.

We are under condemnation. And we are without hope of avoiding it.

Except for these two words – **in Christ**. In Christ God provides a way of reconciliation – to anyone from any group in this rebellious world.

But that message has to get there – so:

He has committed the message of reconciliation to us.

The news that the record of trespasses may be wiped away is entrusted to us to take to the world.

Listen to the way John Piper describes this message:

God is the King of the universe; He has absolute creator rights over this world and everyone in it. Rebellion and mutiny are on all sides, however, and His authority is scorned by millions. So the Lord sends preachers into the world to cry out that God reigns, that He will not suffer His glory to be scorned indefinitely, that He will vindicate His name in great and terrible wrath. But they are also sent to cry that for now a full and free amnesty is offered to all the rebel subjects who will turn from their rebellion, call on Him for mercy, bow before His throne, and swear allegiance and fealty to Him forever. The amnesty is signed in the blood of His Son.²

Verse 20:

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us.

God didn't send angels – He sent us – you, me, every believer – as ambassadors for Christ.

Christ makes His appeal to the world to be reconciled to God through the work of Christ on the cross.

That is an amazing statement. Ambassadors in the first century were not nobodies. They were important figures – trusted to carry a message that ends hostilities. Lives were at stake.

We are nobodies – but we carry a message not just from a King – but from Almighty God. And eternal life is at stake.

² John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), p. 23.

Verse 21:

We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God."

When was the last time you pleaded with someone – "Be reconciled to God?"

Christ pleads through us.

He could demand unconditional surrender – and one day He will. But for now the message is – "Be reconciled to God."

He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

None of us can meet the demands of the Law and be saved under the terms of the Old Covenant. We have all trespassed and transgressed against God.

But Jesus Christ – come in the flesh is the one man who kept the Law perfectly.

On the cross – this One who knew no sin – became sin for us.

Not that He sinned – no He bore **our** sins. We are united with Him such that our sin is within Him when the wrath of God falls on Him.

He paid our penalty in full.

And in the great exchange – we receive His righteousness and we become righteous before God.

God looks at us and sees Christ in us and declares us righteous.

At the cross – two things happen – our transgressions – our trespasses – our sins are paid for by Christ – there is therefore no punishment – no condemnation for those in Christ.

And, we are declared righteous. We are declared to have met the standard of the Law and fit to become new creations – vessels for the Spirit of God to live in.

This is the gospel in one verse.

Once, we were under condemnation – but Christ pleads – be reconciled – have your sins wiped away.

Trust Him to wipe your sins away.

Trust Him to count you righteous.

Trust Christ and live – rather than face the wrath of Almighty God.

This message is a ministry of righteousness – not of death.

Paul's message – our message is not from us – it comes from Christ.

We have no authority to change it – as the super apostles did.

Their Law, their externals, their watered-down gospel kills.

We have a responsibility to deliver it accurately and let the Spirit work on hearts.

And we plead with the world to accept it.

2 Corinthians 6:1–2:

Working together with him, we also appeal to you, “Don't receive the grace of God in vain.” For he says: **At an acceptable time I listened to you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.** See, now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!

In chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 – Paul is validating His Apostolic credentials – over against the super apostles.

There is a sense in which all of those chapters just apply to Paul and the Apostles – not to us.

There are some aspects of being an Apostle that don't apply to us.

But – in these two verses – Paul makes it clear – the ministry of reconciliation – the ministry of the New Covenant – being ambassadors for Christ – while it was first given to the Apostles – it now rests with us.

Working together with God – we appeal to **you** – the church – Corinth and every church.

You received the grace of God – the message of reconciliation – salvation – forgiveness – amnesty.

Don't hide it under a bushel. Don't fail to shine it.

He quotes Isaiah 49.

This is in the section of promise. Promise of a day of redemption – a day of salvation – through the coming Servant who will be pierced for our rebellion and bear the iniquity of us all.

Paul is saying – Christ the promised One has come – the New Covenant has dawned – salvation is not just promised but accomplished.

This is the acceptable time – the day of salvation – so it is not just a mark of God's leaders that they are ambassadors – it is a mark of all who are part of the new creation.

Brothers and sisters, if you are a new creation, if you believe the real world is the world to come, if you believe Christ is the only way of reconciliation, if you believe that we are surrounded by the dying and Christ has sent you to appeal to them – it absolutely must change how you live.

You know you will have to give an account for what you did in the body.

You know you have the message of the grace of God.

So, you must shape your life around this ministry of reconciliation. Live for the world to come not this world. Take your role as ambassadors, slaves, messengers of the King seriously.

If there are any here this morning who have never accepted the grace of God in Christ. I plead with you – make today the day of salvation – talk to me or an Elder.

Kids, young men and women – you live in a world that seems so real – it can consume you. You are not saved because your parents are saved or because you go to Grace Youth. You are only saved when **you** accept His offer of reconciliation. Trust Christ and live.

Church – you work in this world as teachers, doctors, administrators, household duties – but your real job the one you will give an account for is as an ambassador.

Ambassadors – while we yet walk in the land of the dying – we have a ministry of pleading with the dying to live.

Ambassadors To The Dead **2 Corinthians 5:1-6:2 August 28, 2022**

Main Point: Ambassadors – while we yet walk in the land of the dying – we have a ministry of pleading with the dying to live.

General Questions:

1. Even for Christians – why can this world feel far more real than the world to come?
2. What are the dangers of living too much for this world? What are the dangers of living too much for the world to come?
3. How should we balance our responsibilities as citizens of two kingdoms? I.e. How do we balance obligations like family, work, kids and also church, evangelism, God?
4. How do we know the new heavens and our new body are real? How does this change how we live today?
5. What reasons did Christ leave us in this world for a time?
6. How does the idea we are slaves of Christ who please Him affect how we live?
7. How does knowing there is a judgment for believers affect how we live our lives?
8. What do you think the rewards or the consequences of this judgment might be for believers?
9. How does the love of Christ compel us to plead with the dying?
10. How does it reconcile us to Himself through Christ?
11. What does this verse say happened on the cross?

He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

12. Why is this sometimes called the Great Exchange?
13. What does Paul mean – now is the day of salvation?

Application Questions:

1. What are your biggest obstacles to evangelism?

2. How do you balance living between two worlds?
3. Who in your life might you plead with to be reconciled to Christ?