

Behold I Make All Things New

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Bible Text: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

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Take your Bibles and let's go to 2 Corinthians 5 this morning. 2 Corinthians 5. I'm pausing in our look at Luke. The next section of Luke, the Lord gives a lengthy preaching in the narrative of the last days, particularly the tribulation and the awful things of judgment that are coming but I thought for the Christmas season and especially to help the choir, the orchestra, ourselves to think on all that this musical is about, I wanted to look at some of the Christmas passages and this is one of them. 2 Corinthians 5, beginning in verse 14, Paul writing to the church at Corinth in advocacy of himself and describing and defending the authenticity of his authority and apostleship before them, he says in verse 14 of 2 Corinthians 5,

14 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. 16 Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. 17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

I've entitled this "Behold I Make All Things New." Behold I make all things new. Now, Jesus came. Jesus was born in order to make all things new. Jesus died on the cross to purchase the right to make all things new.

In Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion of the Christ" there is a scene where Jesus battered and tortured and bleeding and weak and is carrying the cross and he falls on his knees there on the Via Dolorosa and his mother Mary comes up to him and as she reaches down to tend to him, he looks up at his mother, blood coming down his face, strength almost

diminished, and he says to her, "I am about to make all things new." It's a powerful statement and though biblically there is no record of that particular event happening, it's scripturally very sound in its doctrine. That's what he was doing. As Revelation tells us, Jesus died on the cross and with his blood purchased for himself men from every people, tongue, tribe and nation. So on the cross, he purchased the right to make all things new. He was born to make all things new. On the cross, he purchased the right to make all things new.

Then Revelation records that when he comes again, he will do the actual work of finalizing the making of all things new. Revelation 21:3-5, "I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes,' that will be new, won't it? No more tears. "There will no longer be any death," that will be new. ""There will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.' And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' And He said, 'Write, for these words are faithful and true.'"

Now, this new thing Christ is doing is sometimes called the new creation. Now, this new creation God is presently bringing about through Christ, has a centerpiece and the centerpiece is the church. The church is the center work, the main work of this whole new creation. It is the people he's recreating to be his people and to be the eternal inhabitants of his new work, his new creation. Now, in 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, Paul elaborates on how God is actually doing this work of bringing about this new creation; how he's creating this new people, the church, that will be in his new creation.

So let's look at it together as we see something, first of all, I. Of Jesus' transforming power. If God's going to have a people to be a part of this new thing he's doing, this new creation, they must be transformed out of the old creation that is corruptible, that is decaying and that is passing away. They must be made into a new type of creation that has immortality that cannot decay or corrupt and that will never pass away. So Paul, first of all, talks about under Jesus' transforming power there is a love transfusion that happens in the heart. Every single person that becomes a new creation individually to be a part of his greater new creation work he's doing, has to have experienced a love transfusion in their hearts.

He says here in verse 14 of our text, "For the love of Christ controls us." Paul says, "Something has happened inside of me." Now, Paul's talking about himself and his associates in this particular context but, of course, it applies to all true believers everywhere that we are those people to whom something has happened inside of us and I've used the phraseology it's a love transfusion. Paul uses the phrase "the love of Christ controls us." It literally means the love of Christ presses us in and holds us here. If I tried to squeeze out his love that's happened inside of me, the love transfusion that has taken place in my heart just holds me to God's will and God's purposes for my life. There is no law that requires me to do this. This is not about legalism or rules. Something has

changed inside of me. I've become different and it's all about a new love that has welled up in me that I can't get over.

Now, we know this new transformation, I call it a love transfusion, is wrought about by the work of the Holy Spirit. Child of God, listen to me: nothing we do has any profit lest it's empowered by the Holy Spirit. It's a spiritual work. Titus 3:5, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds," not works, "which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." There is something that happens as God is about the sovereign – listen to me – perfect work that he perfectly performs of going throughout the earth and bringing his Gospel to his children and one after the other, a love transfusion is happening in hearts and they're coming to embrace this God and his gift of salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ, and it's a spiritual thing wrought in the heart. Romans 5:5, "and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts." That's what Paul is saying here in 2 Corinthians when he says, "the love of God controls us." It has been put in there. It's poured out within our hearts, how? "Through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

The Bible uses many other phrases, one of them that he does a work on us whereby we become alive spiritually. Well, that new life is completely intertwined with new love. We could just say the Holy Spirit comes in, that's true, but Paul says, "It's just bigger than a new force. It's a love factor that comes to become alive in our hearts where we become overwhelmed and grateful and humbled and overjoyed at this love this God could have for us." And that's what controls us. I bring my tithes and offerings because this love controls me. I want to be faithful in my local church and I want it to be a true, biblical, glory of God focused, Christ honoring, Bible saturated, local church centered, evangelism mission impassioned, Holy Spirit empowered local church. Why? Why do I want it to be a sound church? Because this love controls me. I want to be about God's work, God's way, for God's glory. That's what Paul is saying to these folks. He's writing to the Corinthians, he said false teachers come into his church plant here in Corinth and try to undermine his authority, so in defending himself, he says, "Look, I am the one true apostle that God's changing power and infusing love has changed to make me a true apostle."

Ephesians 2:1-5, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world," that's the way you used to be, "according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." That's what you once were; you were a son or a daughter of disobedience. Verse 3, "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh," that's what we were, "indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind," that's what we were, "and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." Our very core being before Christ changed us called for God's wrath to come upon us. That's how decrepit and wretched we were. Oh, the conjunctive word though in verse 4, "But God, being rich in mercy," why? "Because of His great love." There's that love factor. You can't talk about the regeneration of the Spirit, the Spirit coming in and converting us, the Spirit coming in and making us a child of God without talking about a great love factor that comes in too.

"Because of his great love," verse 4, Ephesians 2, "with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions," here it is, "made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." That's what Paul is saying. Paul is saying, "This isn't of me. You've got to understand, I didn't go to a school somewhere and learn a new approach to religion and I'm going around teaching it to everybody. No, there was a divine intervention in my life and because of that, there's this love element in me where I cannot get over the great, great love God has for me."

Can I challenge you, church? Is that what propels you? Is that what holds you? Is that why you can't quit? Is that why when it's a little grievous you go ahead and return tithes and offerings? Is that why even though you'd like to goof off a little more, you say, "I must be faithful and serve with my brothers and sisters in my small group. I want to sing God's praises in the choir, not because I want to be seen or I'm a special singer, the love of Christ controls me. It propels me on to do these things though everyone else and everything else in the world seems to try to pull me away from this."

And this love transfusion occurs when we are changed by the Spirit. Now, the Bible uses a lot of words for that event of being changed by the Spirit. Jesus used the phrase "being born again." The Bible uses the phrase "being born of God." The Bible uses the phrase "being born of the Spirit." The Bible uses the phrase "being created in Christ Jesus." They asked John Wesley in his ministry, "Why do you constantly, constantly preach you must be born again?" And John Wesley replied, "Because you must be born again." Have you had this love transfusion? Have you had this spiritual change in you whereby you see? Now look, it comes in as a germ and needs to grow as you grow in Christ, but it does come in and it begins to propel you in a different way and in a different direction. I submit to you with absolute clarity and affirmation this morning: if the Spirit of God is not in this, I'm quitting. I'm not here to teach you a new approach to life based on my wisdom or something I gleaned somewhere. It must be God's Spirit accompanying God's Gospel changing God's children for God's glory.

Well, so Paul as he writes to the Corinthians in effect reflects back and says, "Why am I God's apostle? Why am I going through this? Why am I fighting for the spiritual and biblical health of these churches that get off track? Why do I endure?" He endured incredible discrediting and ingratitude from the Corinthian church. He had done so much for them and some little hotshot false teacher come in and they all turn against Paul, but he still loved them and still tried to work with them and get them back on track. Why would Paul do that? Because Paul knew that God in holy wisdom set his hear on him before the foundation of the world and Paul understood that in divine determination, in divine wisdom and power, God set out to get Paul and claim him for his own. And in God's great divine power, he redeemed the Apostle Paul and restored the Apostle Paul and began to reform Paul into the image of Christ Jesus. And as Paul contemplates, "Why would this God of such infinite wisdom devise a plan before the foundation of the world where by he would set his sights on me? And then in divine power and determination set out on a course to apprehend me? And never fail at all but completely bring to fruition that task of bringing me to my senses, letting me see my sins, letting me embrace Jesus Christ, seal me by the Spirit of God and then give me the fellowship of the Spirit of God

and the fellowship of the saints of God? It's overwhelming to me this great, great love that's come into me that I now grasp and understand and glory in." That's why Jesus came, that you and that I could have a love transfusion. Not just any love but divine love coming into our hearts through the mysterious but unmistakable work of the Holy Spirit of God.

One of the factors, he says, that comes out when you've had this love transfusion, last part of verse 14, "that one died for all, therefore all died." What he's saying is all of us for whom Jesus died and we've been redeemed by his precious blood, he's changed our hearts so that we also recognize and, if you will, throw down a gauntlet that from this point onward we've died to the old. Now, in this particular context, the old would primarily mean the old view of heritage or works as a means to make one righteous. No longer do I look to the old views. No longer do I hold to the old teachings, but you have to be born of the blood lineage of Abraham; that you had to keep the laws and the rituals of the old religion of Judaism to somehow obtain a righteousness. He said, "We've all died to that approach. We've now embraced a brand new approach and that is salvation is by grace through faith in God's promised Messiah, the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ." It's pretty good death and resurrection right there. Dying to what only will kill you and embracing what only will bring you eternal life.

Well, not only a love transfusion in the heart, this corresponds and flows out to a love transformation of my standard for righteousness. This change, this love change has given me a new view of what is truly righteous. Verse 16, "Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh." Just what I just said. No longer do we look and examine, "Are you a descendant of Abraham? Were you circumcised on the eighth day? Have you participated in the feasts and the rites and the rituals and the requirements in the sacrificial system required of a child of Abraham?" He said, "That's the flesh way of analyzing are men righteous."

Now, could we not bring it to our time and find in principle the exact same parallels? Were you baptized in the right church? Did you keep the right do's and not perform the right don'ts? Did you check off the right boxes? That's all of the old. That's viewing becoming righteous according to a fleshly view of righteousness. In other words, fleshly means it's just nature. Look, you don't have to teach a child to be a legalist, a child will be a legalist all by himself. I mean, it's just in our system. Now, in the human economy, there is good in people working and getting rewards, amen? There are things we must do and perform to get paid or whatever else it might be in the human economy, but before God, that is a fleshly, fallen, worldly and bankrupt view of how to achieve a right standing before a holy God. So Paul says, "From now on, everything's changed. I'm now, do not go out into the world as an Orthodox Jew examining people according to their heritage and their religious rites and practices." That's an old fleshly way. That has gone. No longer according to the flesh.

Verse 16, he even goes on to say, "Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh." He said, "Originally when I heard of this Jesus and I heard the teaching of Jesus, I examined

Jesus." What an audacious thought. "I examined Jesus to see if he qualified according to the old fleshly way of evaluating people: are you a descendant of Abraham? Are you doing the rites and rituals? Have you checked the rights boxes off in our religion and in our system?" He said, "I even looked at Jesus that way."

Then he goes on in verse 16 to say, "but we know Him that way no longer." So though I used to view Christ that way, he was just a normal Jewish man, a Jewish teacher and I examined to see if he kept all the commandments and was a good Jew, now I know better. Why? There's been a love transformation of my view of what is righteousness. My whole view of what righteousness is has changed and, that is, I know now that in love he chose me and in love he's changed me and this love has transformed my view of things. Everything is so different in the way I view righteousness.

Verse 17, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." He said, "That's the way I view it now. It's simply this now: it's not whether you're Jew or Gentile; it's not whether you've been an outwardly grievous sinner or a relatively mild sinner as far as man's way of measuring sin." We know we can't measure sin for a holy God but we sometimes do try to measure sin one to another. Though it's an invalid approach, we do do that. "Well, I'm not as bad a sinner as she is and I haven't done what these Muslim extremists have done." No, you haven't done that but in your heart you crucify God all the time as you deny his Lordship of your very life. Do you think crucifying God in your heart is less a crime than murdering people? So it doesn't matter. You're either a new creature in Christ and therefore in Christ's merit stand as righteous, or you're not a new creature in Christ and you are still in a standing of guilt and condemnation before a holy God. He said, "That's the way I view it now." But if you're in Christ, you're a new creation, a new creature.

Now, if you're not saved in Christ, then you're part of the first creation only. You're a descendant, a physical descendant of father Adam from the Garden of Eden only, and therefore you are bound to God's law and keeping God's law in order to attain righteousness before God which you never can do; which 100% of everyone who is in the first Adam only, haven't been born again to be in the second Adam, Jesus, they're only in the first Adam, you are bound to keep the law of God perfectly to attain righteousness and no one has ever done that except Jesus. But we are of the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:10, "For we are His workmanship." God didn't send Jesus down here and say, "Okay, we've got a new and better teacher now." He was that, but he was far more than that. "And if you'll do all the things this new and better teacher says, then you can be righteous before God." God didn't do that. God said, "No, look, I can't teach dung to do anything." That's what Paul said he was before he was converted. He said, "If you take everything good about me naturally, I'm a pile of manure." That's not my word, that's Paul's word. Jeremiah said the heart is desperately wicked. That means to the tiniest molecule of the heart, it's just completely defiled and polluted and God is saying, "I can't take that kind of corrupt material and teach it to do anything." So there's only one option: if God's going to have a people who will be his people for time and for eternity to be a part of his new creation, he's just going to have to start over and create them all over again. Just a brand new creation.

Now, it happens very differently than the physical creation because it comes through what the Scripture says the foolishness of preaching. The brilliant, esteemed elitists of the world consider our approach to changing people and we say, "Well, primarily the means is the preaching of the Gospel." They say, "How foolish is that? That's not the way to get people to change." Well, how good is their way working?

So God uses the preaching of the Gospel infused with spiritual power and he begins in the spirit of men a new creation. A new germ of creation starts in the heart and then through the process of time in fellowship in a local church under the preaching of the word, in loving, encouraging, ministering accountability one to another, those who've had the germ of a new creation put in their hearts begin to grow and grow and grow and grow and more and more of the new creation becomes who they are. That's called sanctification. And then one day, after you've grown so much, I don't know how much you're growing is going to be, I just know you've got to be going in that direction or you didn't get the germ. Not perfectly but you're going in that direction if you've got the germ, the new creation life germ, the new love infusion transfusion, then one day he's going to take you from having the germ that's growing new life as a part of a new creation and he's going to complete it in perfection which he calls glorification and that's the journey we are on.

"Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. We are his workmanship," Ephesians 2:10, "created." Notice the word. It's the same word you would use if you talk about the coming into being of the universe. Boom! God spoke it and it was created. God speaks it, there is a creation of new life beginning in us. It was God "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Now, here's something wonderfully good that we just, Paul just has to throw this in there. He doesn't give some particulars, I'm going to give you a few particulars, though. In verse 17, "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation." Let me say something. We're going to receive new members in this church in a moment. Listen to me: nothing matters about those people but one thing, they've genuinely experienced the new creation. That's it. It doesn't matter to me what they struggle with. It doesn't matter to me where they've been, what they've done. It just doesn't matter. If God has brought them to faith in Christ, they've experienced that new creation work inside of them, then they are qualified members for Jesus' church. Red, yellow, black, white, rich, poor, it doesn't matter. We welcome the God wrought in God's church. Isn't that good?

Now, God says, "When I created new life in them and I begin a new creation work within them and I start that process of working it out, all things have become new." Everything you used to think about what God is, who God is and what a right standing before God was, everything is new about that. You just have a new outlook. It's all grace now. No works, it's all grace.

Then he says, "the old things have passed away," verse 17. Hey, do you know what's passed away? Are you listening? Do you know what has passed away? Your past has

passed away. I don't know about you but that's good news. I know some of your past. I'm going to put it on the screen tonight before the musical so we can just see what ugly stuff has passed away. You don't know which one it is, you'd better come and make sure you see who it is. Now if I ever do that, I'll start with me so you never have to worry about it.

Your past has passed away. Your old notion, your old burdened down, weary, defeated, crushed, I'm a wretch, of trying to somehow look to yourself to achieve God's acceptance, that has passed away. It's gone. It's gone. "Yeah, but I..." Gone! "But I did..." Gone! It's gone. Did I tell you it's gone? Your old view of "somehow I must do, somehow I must be, somehow I must think so that God will accept me," gone. Passed away. Phew, passed away.

You say, "Pastor, that's too good." That's God's love and that's why Paul could say, "That kind of love just controls me." That makes me want to serve my Jesus. That makes me want to love him. That makes me want to go to small groups. That makes me want to join a real church, not just a religious social country club. That makes me want to give to missions. That makes me want to help my pastor and the staff win souls for Jesus. Not all of us can do the same but when I think of that kind of love, it controls me, Paul says.

Guilt. Guilt. Listen to me: guilty is not primarily something you feel. Guilt is primarily the status you hold before a holy God. There are a lot of people in the world and, folks, they don't feel guilty but they are. But unfortunately there are true new creations, true children of God, who still walk around under the burden of guilt and they're not guilty. Listen to me: in Christ, he became your guilt. He became your sin. He became your wretchedness and the weight of your guilty standing was placed on him and he extinguished the full blow of it in his death on Calvary. Your guilt is gone. It's gone. It's passed. It's not there anymore.

Condemnation, the righteous consequence of guilt, it's gone. "There is therefore now," now, presently, now, "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." If you have been born again, if you're one who has believed on Christ, that new creation germ has come into your life, you still flounder, you still wonder at times, you still stumble, you still fail, but you cannot unsave yourself. You cannot place yourself in condemnation. That would be double jeopardy because the condemnation has already fully fallen on our elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, in our place. It's gone. It's passed. It's passed. It's passed.

I could go on doing this forever. I've got to be quick. There is this transforming power of Jesus and then Paul moves into his particular role, which has parallels to all of us, and that is the transforming ministry of Jesus. That's II. The transforming ministry. In other words, how does God carry out this work. I've just been talking about it a bunch so I don't need to talk about it a whole bunch more.

Verse 18, he uses men, that's sub point A. God in his perfect providence and sovereignty has chosen to bring about this work of creating new beings from the inside out through the ministry of men. Verse 18, "Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to

Himself through Christ," Paul talking about himself and his associates, "and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." He said, "Now my particular role and calling is to be a preacher whereby others can hear the message, experience the Spirit's power, and they too become new creations and know united oneness with God to which they could have never known in any other religion or means or philosophy or approach. Only through the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

So God calls men to the ministry of preaching the word. Now, preaching the word and the ministry of reconciliation are basically the same thing. It is through the preaching of the word that is the primary means of God reconciling men to himself. Now listen to me: though there are certainly those called to preach and they, in a sense, are like Paul, they are called to ministries of reconciliation, help men find God through the Gospel. However, every Christian is an associate minister and is on the team.

He elaborates further in verse 19 and he says, "namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation." It gets very specific here. It's a word and it emphasizes, again, what I said a few weeks ago: Christianity is a teaching religion. It is the preaching and the teaching of the truth about Christ that God has ordained – now listen to me – as his means to be accompanied by spiritual power to birth new life in men and begin that new creation work in men. Now listen to me: we cannot improve on God's ordained means. Paul didn't just preach the word and be a preacher of the Gospel everywhere he went because he didn't have time to create a drama troupe; or he didn't have time to get a magician for Jesus; or he didn't have time to put on whatever else the culture of the age might have said, "That will work if you'll do that. That will get men interested." You know, he stayed with what God called him to be and do, even to the cultural elitist Corinthians whereby he said to them, "I came to you in the foolishness of preaching. Your people in your culture would say this is a foolish way to change men, but it's God's means."

Now, here's what you're going to find. Let's be balanced. Not all things that you do other than preaching are wicked or necessarily wrong, it's just that they cannot and should not be primary or foundational in our efforts to win men. That's the key. I've been at this 35 years in the same church. Here's what you'll find: you'll find the great majority of those that are "won to Jesus" through means other than being under the extended preaching of the word, usually don't last. I don't care how you slice it, Jesus said, "The true convert will have lasting fruit. There will be a perseverance of the saints until the end."

Now, there is a concert and a complementary role that we all play. You're a soul winner. Your family is trying to be a witness for Christ. You're being a witness at work and in your small group you're part of a team effort to reach others and be a witness for Christ. Hallelujah, don't ever stop that, but humble yourself to acknowledge God's primary means and say that all of this should be in concert and in connection with the faithful preaching of the Gospel. You see, that let's you off the hook to a great extent.

Now, there will always be a few of those who are very arrogant about their soul winning abilities and they don't want to consider that they need to work as a team with their preaching pastor and other Christians to win souls, but God has caused us all to need each other in this work of bringing the Gospel that reconciles men to God to the world. There is a complementary role we all play, though the preaching of the word is the primary means God has ordained. If it wasn't the primary means, Jesus would have done something different and the Apostle Paul would have done something different, but from Matthew 1 all the way through to the end of the Scriptures, we find God's preachers preaching the Gospel.

When we, excuse me, I'm losing my voice. When we send out our church planters, I say it over and over and over and over and they're good guys, by the way, I mean, they're good guys, but most of them...well, I don't know any of them at the beginning, they don't get it yet. "Well, we're going to do this and we're going to do this. Then we're going to do this. Then we're going to do this. Then we're going to do this." I say, "Look, that's all fine, but if you have to get momma and the baby in the den, get you a little pulpit and preach the word every week and invite everybody you can to come and hear it." Do you know why? It's God's ordained means. You don't stop witnessing in the coffee shop; you don't stop witnessing at the school; you don't stop other stuff but you make sure you don't diminish God's primary means of the word of God being preached to change men's hearts.

So God uses men. He uses all of us in many different ways centered on the preaching of the word but, secondly, B. It all flows from Jesus. It all, it's not men who win people to Christ, it flows from Jesus. Look at verse 20 and 21, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ," here it is, "as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." He said, "Here we are preaching," he says, "and it's as if God himself is preaching to you. It's as if God himself is telling you, 'Be saved.'" Here's what Paul means: you're not getting another approach. God's not going to flash something in the heavens and you go, "Oh, look at the signs in the heavens. I want to be saved." Paul, "That's not going to happen." God's not going to write it on the side of a mountain somewhere. He's saying, "God has ordained to use men but Jesus is the power. He just flows it through the preaching of the word." You must always never, ever, ever connect your conversion to the personalities, style, charisma or power of any human instrument. You must leave this service under Jeff Noblit's preaching with 100% resolution, "My Savior is Christ the Lord. I'm thankful for my pastor, but Christ is my Savior."

Years ago someone said this little illustration that said: Jesus was raised from the dead. He appeared to his disciples and gave them their last instructions. He ascended back up into heaven. The angels were rejoicing as he entered the portals of glory. Then he said, "Jesus, you've done so much. You died on the cross for the sins of the world. You were buried. You rose for men's justification. What's going to happen to that ministry?" Jesus said, "I left it in the hands of 12 men." "Jesus, what happens if those men, they're just men, what happens if those men fail?" Jesus says, "I have no other plan. That's my ordained means. I flow my power through men."

Now, the humbling thing for those called in the ministry is God has a way of showing us our glaring unworthiness and weakness in ways you probably don't even understand because we need to be aware that it's not us, it's Jesus, though men are his ordained means to get the message to others.

Now lastly in verse 21, Paul summarizes what his whole ministry and message is about and, by the way, what Christmas is about. This is why he came. He came, verse 21, that "He made Him who knew no sin," that's Jesus, "to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." The incarnation of Jesus Christ, him being born of a pure virgin without sin, the incarnation was to the final end of him going to a cross and God looking on him as if he were all your sin past, present and future, and your sin propensity in your heart. He looked upon Jesus as if he had all the vile, corrupt offensiveness that you have and he crushed Jesus, he imputed onto Jesus the just wrath all of your sin and unrighteousness deserves and then in love, not because you're lovely but because God can love this big and love he turns and places the very righteousness of Jesus Christ, he imputes that into you. And having done nothing but receive it as a free gift, you stand before Jesus, not in some derived righteousness from father Adam from the Garden, but in the righteousness of our second head, Jesus Christ himself, before God. And look, and nothing can change that standing you have. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. And when you think on that kind of love, if you're his, something inside of you says what Paul said in verse 14, "This kind of love controls me." I'm weak at times, I stumble at times, get a bad attitude at times, but I'm telling you, I have to repent and get back on my Lord's team, doing my Lord's work, my Lord's way. That kind of love has changed me. That's why he came. That's what we're going to sing about tonight. Hallelujah, what a Savior.

Let's stand in prayer.