



INTRO:

Good morning! This week I was reminded of just an unbelievable historical tid-bit about Nelson Mandela. When he was elected President of South Africa back in 1994, he set up something called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission - TRC - to stop the pattern of revenge that had been occurring during Apartheid wherein the party in power would punish outsiders, lose power, be punished themselves, regain power and exact revenge. And so the TRC rules were simple: “if a white policeman or army officer for example, voluntarily faced his or her, usually black accusers, confessed their crime, and fully acknowledged their guilt, they could NOT be tried and punished FOR that crime.”... Well, in one particular instance BEFORE the TRC, a policeman got up and faced an elderly black woman to confess HIS crime. He told how he’d shot and killed her 18-year-old son...and then roasted his body on a spit, “like a piece of barbecue,” in order to destroy the evidence. To make matters worse, 8 years later he returned to the same house, dragged the boy’s father out, bound him to a woodpile, poured gas on him, and ignited it...all while the mother/and wife was forced to watch. So upon hearing the confession, the TRC judge gave this elderly woman a chance to respond/asked her “*What do you want from Mr. van de Broek?*” She paused as the courtroom waited in silence, before finally saying that: She would like the officer to go to the spot where he burned her husband’s body, and gather up the dust so she could give him a decent burial - to which the policeman, head down in shame, nodded. But THEN she added: that she forgave him; that GOD forgave him; and that to PROVE the forgiveness was real, she wanted to embrace him, AND for him to come to her ghetto twice a month and spend the day with her, so that she could be a mother to him and give him some of the love that she still had to give.¹

Here’s my question for us this morning: ***Where do you learn that kind of love?*** That kind of RADICAL ***hospitality?***... There’s only one place!... So, if ya have a Bible/your Order of Gathering, follow along as we hear the reading of God’s word and what it says ABOUT that one place... **(PAUSE RECORD)**

TEXT:

So if you recall, Paul is attempting to woo the Corinthians back to belief in the Gospel. And he’s shifted from sharing his ministry *motivations* to now expounding his Gospel *message* - a message we’ve seen in the last two weeks, is ROOTED in the reality that Jesus Christ has, not only died and risen for all, BUT for those of us who place our confidence IN His death and resurrection on our behalf, we GET, as our life-purpose, living for him rather than ourselves.

Well if you look at our focal verses today/first half of **v.16** and all of **v.17** - we’ll look at the second half of **v.16** next week - ya notice, Paul begins with a little conjunction translated “*so*” or “*therefore*.” And that’s BECAUSE he’s introducing here what it SPECIFICALLY looks like TO live for Jesus. As one commentator puts it, “*the consequences of Christ’s death for our living.*”² And you see those “consequences” take a two-fold shape; namely, seeing both Jesus and others

¹ Story adapted from *Still Standing // “Repairing Relationships”* // Proverbs 19:11; Proverbs 15:28; Proverbs 17:9; Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 25:21–22 - J.D. Greear

² Murray J. Harris, “2 Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 353.

differently! Again we'll talk next week about how we're to see Jesus, but just notice that Paul coulda said we do any number of things to live for Christ right? - ya know, read your Bible, be committed to a local church, share your faith, give generously - any number of things! But what he says is, in light of "*Jesus dying and rising for our sake*" WE "*regard*" people in certain way! And you see there's two groups of people we "*regard*" in light of the Gospel. The first being who he calls, "*anyone*" / "*we regard no one*, he says, *according to the flesh.*" And the second group being those, he says, who are "*in Christ.*" We regard THEM as "*new creations.*" **See that?** In other words, what Paul's saying is, "the Gospel transforms not just your relationship with God, but your relationship with people too/how you see and interact with EVERYONE! Both non-Christians AND Christians alike. One of the ways you know a person truly lives for Jesus is in how they view everyone around em. One of the ways you know a church family has Jesus at the center of everything is how they interact with everyone around em. The church father Tertullian, said that the one thing that converted him to Christianity was not the arguments Christians gave, but rather, as he said, "*(that) they demonstrated something I didn't have; namely, a certain way in which they loved each other.*" So if you're taking notes: **3 Things We Learn About "Regarding" Those Around Us: 1. How We Do It. 2. Why The Gospel Empowers It. And 3. What It Means For Us As A Church!**

So **First**, HOW We "Regard" Others In light Of The Gospel: And the answer is: **Hospitably... Hospitably**, meaning with a view toward welcoming-in. Cuz notice, Paul says we "*regard*" "everyone" "*not according to the flesh.*" That literally translates not according to a worldly view or as Calvin said, "*not taking into account all the external endowments we normally hold in estimation.*"³ When you first meet someone what do you do? Ya size em up a bit right? How do they look? Do they seem successful, trustworthy, put together, date-able, so-on. Gather a first impression. And THEN gauge your level of relational-investment in em BASED ON that first impression **right?**... This is why Facebook is so popular: Because we can literally curate first, second, third, fourth, even fifth impressions/entire personas. That's the appeal. BECAUSE from a worldly perspective, these kinds of externals? They matter **right?**

Now, of course there's a number of problems with "*regarding people according to the flesh*" like this. **Number 1:** You're not actually getting to know a person/just your impression OF the person. You ever seen impressionist paintings - Monet, Renoir - beautiful, but definitely not realistic. When you "*regard people according to the flesh*" / judge and esteem all these externals and impressions, you literally turn em into a work of fiction... AND they you! **Number 2:** You're impressions of people are often wrong. So "*regarding people according to the flesh*" means you're actually setting yourself up to have a warped sense of judgement. And **Number 3**, when you "*regard people according to the flesh,*" you understand, it just furthers division and discord in an already divided culture. In the middle of the pandemic, Author and Columnist David French noted how, what he calls "factional friendships," have become the norm; meaning those friendships and groups of friends that say, "*you're either with us or against us.*"⁴ And it's true!

³ John Calvin and John Pringle, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 231.

⁴ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/covid-affected-friendships/>

More-and-more we're hiving off into these relational echo chambers organized around some social, political, racial externality, that makes it even hard to have a conversation among people with different viewpoints. That's BECAUSE, we're "*regarding people according to the flesh.*"

So Paul says, we don't do that/"*we regard NO one according to the flesh.*" In other words, WE are to have a ***hospitable*** "DIS-regard"⁵ of everything superficial about a person...which honestly, IS everything, save the state of our relationship with Jesus, since Jesus himself said, everything BUT that will pass away.⁶ That's how we're to view those around us!...BUT not just those around us, those WITHIN us too/those who are apart of God's family/as Paul says are "*in Christ.*" He says, "*if anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. The old has passed away; the new has come.*" And of course what he's referring to there is, ***listen:*** "the biography of every Christian."⁷ Cuz Friend, if you're "*in Christ*" today, which is to say, you're united WITH Him through faith IN Him, then you understand, "*you're a new creation and the old has passed away.*" So BOTH that old condemnation, alienation, guilt, lostness, loneliness; that's gone with Jesus' forgiveness of you! But not JUST that, you're a "*new creation*" too/a recipient of ever-new blessing "*in Christ.*"...It's like on this episode of NCIS. You know, the show about naval/military police stuff. On this particular episode the main character, played by Charles Durning, is this poor, broken-down, former Marine. In his 80's, BUT being accused of murder! And at one point in the episode, these two big Marines and an angry Navy lawyer come after him. And they're just about to arrest him, as he's kinda slouched over, standing accused/nowhere to go. And right before they go to cuff him, one of the guys moves the old man's neck tie aside... exposing...a Congressional Medal of Honor...And so these officers/that angry lawyer, they see this medal/see what it is and immediately snap to attention...saluting the old man. Just like that! This poor, condemned man, suddenly and totally justified.⁸

Friend, if you're "*in Christ,*" that's YOUR story. Even IF you continue to struggle and in some way be accused/and we all do, you gotta understand the biography that God's already written about you says, "JUSTIFIED!" Literally, Just As If I'd...Never Sinned! "*In Christ*" "*the old has passed away, the new has come and you're a new creation.*" And what do we do with "*new creations*" - parents think about new babies - we have a kind of HEIGHTENED "*regard*" for em ***right?*** We cherish em with incredible warmth and gentleness. Welcome and attend to their needs. Look out for their best interests. Are totally committed and...***hospitable*** to em right?

Paul's saying, THAT'S how we're to see each other who are "*in-Christ*"/view each other in the church!...I mean, can you imagine if, AS a church, our "*regard*" for people - both each other and those around us, was, instead of in anyway being superficial, external, "*according to the flesh,*" simply based-on need for Christ? So people around us viewed not as some set of externals like beauty, accomplishment, etc, but simply needing to hear about and trust-in Christ

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 117.

⁶ Matthew 5:18, 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33, et al

⁷ R. Kent Hughes, *2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 119.

⁸ Adapted from Tim Keller, *The Power of the Gospel: Bible: The Whole Story—Redemption and Restoration—February 8, 2009: Romans 1:1–7, 14–17*

for their salvation. And you and I, not as “*do I like you/get along with you/connect with you,*” but as fellow-brothers and sisters enjoy the privilege of getting to trust and rest-in Christ for our sanctification...together? Imagine how, not only, ***hospitable*** and welcoming of a church we’d be, but how much we’d show-off, in practical ways, the ***hospitality*** of a God, who welcomes-in and makes people “*new creations*” APART from any “work of the flesh.” It’s one of the reasons why we say that we want these Brunch Church gatherings to be where “***simple hospitality and surprising grace collide for weekly encouragement!***” Written right there on the front of your Order of Gathering...Cuz you understand, that’s **WHY** someone like that amazing woman in South Africa can display the quality love and ***hospitality*** she did! It’s because she understands that the only place you can learn to love and welcome like that is...in the Gospel!

Cuz ***Second***, here’s **Why The Gospel Empowers Hospitable Regard For All**: It puts a mirror to your soul/a mirror to your soul. Ya ever been walking around a shopping center or just some place with a lot of people/been people-watching? There’s inevitably that person or two, right, who passes-by wearing something crazy and you think to yourself, “*that looks ridiculous; glad I have better taste than that; don’t look ridiculous like that.*” But then as you go your way, perhaps in God’s providence, you pass a mirror, and see that the whole time you were “*regarding*” others based on “*the flesh*”: YOUR zipper was down, ya had a booger on your face, and toilet-paper on your shoe...In other words, seeing yourself in the mirror; humbles you, AND changes your view of everyone ELSE. We’re ALL ridiculous/just in different ways!...When you look into the mirror that is the Gospel, the same thing happens, BECAUSE you see 3 things: ***First***, you see a God who’s utterly and totally perfect, to the point of, as Paul said earlier in our series-passage, needing to be “*feared*”/“*the fear of the Lord*” - He being so removed from evil, so pure/morally superior, as to be terrifying to those of us full of pride, pretense, and sin!...But then ***Two***, you see YOURSELF, as a sinner, therefore incapable of doing anything/any “*work of the flesh*” to make yourself worthy of being welcomed-in BY this perfect God. As ***Romans 3:20*** says, “*For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*”...I’ve told you before that underneath all our problems/every experience of brokenness we have - whether personal or societal - is a function of our broken relationship with God going all the way back to Adam and Eve, such that no matter what you do or how you perform spiritually, it won’t get you welcomed-back-in by God. And that’s BECAUSE the Law OF God/like any law can’t actually repair what’s broken. It can only show you what’s BEEN broken. A law against crime doesn’t FIX crime ***right?*** It only shows you what is and is not crime. The same is true with God’s Law and any kind of spiritual performance. It can’t fix your heart and justify you before God. It can only show you where you fall short. Diagnose rather than repair. It’s like a thermometer which can measure the spiritual temperature of your heart, but not adjust it like a thermostat. And so you look at the Gospel and see a perfect God, for whom you can DO nothing to get Him to welcome you back-in. Which is why ***Three***, you have to look into the Gospel and ALSO see Jesus having DONE everything you couldn’t, TO welcome you back-in. HIMSELF, on the Cross, for example, becoming hated, marginalized, tortured and ultimately made totally UN-welcome - literally kicked out of the Father’s presence - so that by mere confidence in His work/nothing external/no “*work of the flesh,*” YOU might be welcomed into the Father’s family AND assured that He’ll NEVER turn His face on you! Because how could

He? “*The old things have passed away*”/you’ve been made His “*new creation.*”...In other words, you look at the Gospel and what you see is that even though you couldn’t attain it and didn’t deserve it, you nevertheless received God’s ***hospitality***...Friend, you take that in and it’s like a mirror: You can’t help but start to see yourself and others differently. I love the way one scholar puts it: “*When we see that we’re ALL sinners dead in our sins and needing reconciliation from God, and when we accept Christ’s shameful death on the cross as our death, then all previous canons we use to appraise others MUST be scrapped.*”⁹ ***Don’t you see? THAT’S why the Gospel empowers a hospitable “regard” for all!***

So ***Finally*** and briefly here, **What Does All This Means For Us As A Church Family**. I think it means 3 things/write these down as sorta blueprints for stepping into having more of a “hospitable regard for all”: ***Number 1: Pray!*** Seeing ourselves/certainly others through a lens of simply needing to trust Christ, rather than, in some capacity, “*according to the flesh;*” you understand, not only does that not come naturally; apart from the Spirit it’s impossible. We need to ***pray*** and ask the Lord to, BOTH remove our “worldly eyes” AND give us HIS eyes. Ya gotta be ***praying***. And if you need an easy/consistent opportunity for doing that, join us on Fridays when we meet on Zoom! It’s 30 minutes, start-to-finish, and focused EXCLUSIVELY on praying for our church, upcoming Brunch Church gatherings, and neighborhood. Super easy. Add it to your calendar. We gotta ***pray!***...***Number 2: Confess!*** Sadly, a lot of us tend to think of ***confession*** as this kind of spiritual duty, in which, ya know, we sorta pull at God’s heart-strings to get Him to forgive us. We even quote ***1 John 1:9***, “*If we confess our sins, he’s faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” And we ASSUME that means, as long as we go through the routine of ***confessing***, God’ll forgive and again be good to us ***right?*** But ya understand, that’s not what that’s saying. That verse doesn’t say that if you ***confess***, God’ll show you MERCY. No! It says that God forgives you on the basis of His justice - that He’ll forgive you BECAUSE He’s “*faithful and just,*” meaning if He DOESN’T forgive you, He’s being UNjust.¹⁰ ***How can that be?*** It’s because “*in Christ*” you’re forgiveness has already been purchased, such that not giving you what’s already yours, would be unjust. ***CONFESSION*** then is the means by which we RECEIVE what’s already ours “*in Christ.*” NOT a means of attaining forgiveness, but a means of ACKNOWLEDGING the forgiveness we NEED and HAVE in Jesus! When you ***confess*** - be that to God or others - say in your Missional Family, which is the PERFECT place to practice ***confession*** - safe community of friends all hungry to connect around the grace of Jesus - when you do that, what you’re doing is acknowledging, for example, that you need God’s forgiveness because you tend to see people “*according to the flesh;*” don’t value fellow-Christians as “*new creations,*” or just in some way put too much stock in external things. And IN doing that, you’re necessarily untangling your heart from it’s tendency to “*regard people according to the flesh.*” We have to be a continuously-***confessing*** people....And then ***Finally/ Number 3: Celebrate! Pray, Confess, Celebrate!*** Author Jay Kim astutely said that “*the church has always been most dynamic and effective when she’s stood in stark contrast to the dominant*

⁹ David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 284

¹⁰ Insight about confession from “The God Who Can Be Known—Part 1 - To Know the Living God; The God Who Can Be Known—November 28, 2010 - 1 John 1:1–2:2 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

culture of the day.” In other words, zigging when the world zags.¹¹ I think one of the best ways we can zig is to constantly celebrate simplicity as the world around us continues to celebrate the showy. Ya know, celebrate the simple joy of pausing here each week to share a meal and study the Scriptures together! Celebrate connecting with each other around good news like we do within Missional Families. Or just celebrate having opportunity to go throughout life meeting new people, hearing new stories about how God is at work IN people, inviting folks into your home, these kinds of things. Because as you celebrate the simple moves of God, what you’re telling yourself AND others is: things “*of the flesh*”/showy externalities/that’s not what we “*regard,*” because it’s not what GOD “*regards.*”...***Praying, Confessing, Celebrating!*** THAT’S a people who are learning to love and welcome-in even the “unwelcome” in profoundly beautiful ways. And that’s a **CHURCH who can BE truly ___ hospitable...*Let’s Pray...***

¹¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/analog-church-digital-world/>