



Living More Like Jesus - Part 3

Broadening Our Acceptance

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I'm sure my high school was like your high school, and at lunch everyone divided up into their appropriate groups. You had the cool kids and the nerds. You had the drama team and the band geeks, cheerleaders and the jocks, the preppies and the skaters, the stoners and the loners and, you know, the gamers and the mean girls. And everyone took their appropriate places and we all kind of kept to ourselves. And aren't you glad that season of your life is over? I'm glad that we took none of that stratification into adult living. There's none of that among adults, but certainly none of that made its way into church life. There are never any cliques among adults. That kind of got you quiet, didn't it?

You know, I did pray that when I asked you this question you would be honest before God. But I just wonder when you come to church are there people whom you gravitate toward? And are there people whom you quietly seek to avoid? And I wonder if you think any of that matters to God. And do you think any of that speaks to your spiritual health? Of course it does and the Bible has a lot to say about that. And I think in the two verses I want us to focus on today, there is a lot of conviction in this passage and a lot that can help us. And at the end of the day, though, there's a lot of conviction here there's a lot of encouragement as well. And I going to help you to realize that if we can understand these two verses we can move a lot closer to the kind of living that God would have us enjoy now, a foretaste of what we're going to live with in eternity, which is going to be a whole lot better than anything you're going to experience here in the world.

And I know that in the church, it's supposed to be better, and I trust that it is here at Compass Bible Church. It's better than what you're going to experience out in your jobs and in your neighborhoods. But it can still be better. It can be a lot better. And I think this verse is going to help us. Now there are two verses here in Second Corinthians Chapter 5. One of them we quote all the time, it's very famous, and that's in Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 17. And I'll quote it for you now. I'm sure many of you have memorized it. It says in verse 17, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." Now, turn to this passage and look at it. Make sure I'm quoting it correctly for you. It says in Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 17, "If anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." Correct me if I get it wrong. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation and the old is passed away; behold, the new has come." Did I nail that? Am I missing something? What word am I missing? "Therefore." That's kind of a throwaway word, isn't it? We don't need that word.

As the old seminary professors used to say, you ought to know why the "therefore" is there for. What's the "therefore" there for? That's the question you should ask. And if you go back to verse 16, you'll find another "therefore," there for, right? You should ask why that "therefore" is there for in verse 16. "From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh." Now you have to go back up to verse 15 to remember where we were last time. Right? "He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their



sake died and was raised." Now, this is all about being all in, totally all about God's priorities. It's a lot like Matthew Chapter 6 verse 33. We "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and we don't worry about all the other stuff that the pagans are chasing after, all the Gentiles are chasing after all these worldly things. We don't worry about that. We worry about God's kingdom. We know this life is short. The temporal things in this world don't really matter as much as all the non-Christians think they matter. So we worry about God's priorities. We seek first the kingdom. We care about living for the priorities of Christ. That's what should matter.

Yeah, we give ourselves to our work. Sure, we love our families. Yes, we care about a lot of stuff that matters in this life, but it's not the kind of care we give to things that matter for eternity. And because of that, it says here, "we regard no one according to the flesh." That really is where we're going in verse 17, though we often quote the passage as it relates to the gift of regeneration. And while I don't think there's enough ink spilled on the doctrine of regeneration, there should be more books written on it, there should be more sermons preached on it. And I believe that wholeheartedly so I do quote often this great summary verse on what it means to be born again, a new creation, old passes away, new comes. I'm all about it. But I do need to know that this verse is really all about what comes on the heels of this very important phrase that Paul is saying I don't regard anyone according to the flesh. This is an oft-repeated principle in the New Testament that I'm not going to consider you the way the sociological stratification of people in the world is based on appearances or affluence or personalities or wealth or ethnicity or power or whatever your background is. We don't care about those things. Even though Paul says, "Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer."

Now, did Paul ever regard Christ just according to appearances or wealth or sociological markers? Of course he did. I mean, he would look at the Old Testament promises regarding Christ, and he'd say he doesn't seem to measure up to what I would expect the great prophet, priest and king to do. He expected more. And we see that throughout the New Testament. Nathaniel would say, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" I don't even like the city he comes from. Oh, yeah, he was born in Bethlehem. But that was only because of a law regarding taxation. Yeah, he was born in the city of David, and I suppose that's good, but that fulfills Micah Chapter 5 verse 2, but he was raised in Nazareth, where everyone has that hick accent and it's just out in the middle of nowhere. And his nondescript family and his teenage mother, it's just like, what are you talking about? Nazareth?

Well, people who were close to him knew that he was the mighty Son of God, right? I mean, certainly John the Baptist knew. But of course, when he was about to be killed and he was in prison in the Transjordan, he had to send disciples and he even asked, hey, are you the one we're supposed to be looking for? Or should we be looking for another? I mean, everyone at some point started to question, are you the one? Because all the things we expected regarding the Messiah, we expected the powerful, strong right hand of God to come in and smite the enemies of the Lord. And I don't know, the gentle Jesus. It just seems like it's not all we expected. The suffering servant is really not all we had in mind.



Now here's the problem with everyone and their expectations regarding the Messiah. They didn't expect the coming of the Messiah to come in two installments. They thought really, Christ would come in one installment. Now, Jesus talked about his second coming a lot. He would come in the glory of his Father on the clouds with the angels, and he would come in a very spectacular second coming. And he would judge the peoples, and he would separate the nations like a shepherd separates, you know, the sheep from the goats. He said that often. And he made it clear he was coming in glory. But his first coming didn't look like that. And so people just like the Apostle Paul at one time they regarded him according to the flesh. And they wrote him off. And Paul did, too. But at the end of his ministry, and with the real bodily resurrection of Christ, it was hard to ignore him any longer. And they started to look at his life and see him differently. Now they realize, well, the humble nature of the incarnate Christ wasn't all there was to Christ. And even as he prayed in John 17, he'd be restored to the glory he had before the foundation of the world. He was indeed the second person of the Godhead. He did, in fact, have all the glory of deity dwelling in bodily form, even though he was veiled with a kind of humility in his incarnation.

So we don't regard him as just this gentle traveling rabbi. And so we don't regard anyone according to the flesh, particularly if they're in Christ, because if they're in Christ, they're a new creation, and the old has passed away whoever they were regarding the flesh, I don't even worry about that. The new is come now. That comes with a lot of things regarding their sanctification. But really the context is we don't regard you as just anybody regarding your job or your background or anything related to your fleshly, sociological standing or ethnicity in life. We regard you as a child of the King.

I guess what they would call it if you were over in the high school group right now, it became really common that we would talk about the problem sometimes in church is the problem of cliques, right? You've heard that. And we need to reject it because though we don't like to speak in those terms, it seems so juvenile, I think the world certainly has that, though it's much more sophisticated, I suppose. But we still make a lot of differences and distinctions and draw barriers between people based on appearances and affluence and personalities and jobs and income and ethnicities and power and all the rest. I think we need to recognize that in verse 16, not regarding anyone according to the flesh certainly means that we reject, number one, the world's clique-making. We don't make cliques as Christians because we don't regard anyone according to the flesh. Number one, if you're taking notes and I wish that you would, we need to "Reject the World's Clique Making." And there was plenty of that going on in Corinth. Corinth, as I've often said, was the Orange County of the ancient world. There was a lot of money there, and because there was a lot of money, it was easy to look at the haves and the have-nots and to start making cliques. And even within the church, that kind of stratification was taking place.

Go back with me once you write that down to First Corinthians Chapter 3, let's see how Paul had already tried to set them straight as it relates to things that they were doing. He started in First Corinthians Chapter 1, talking about how they had split with divisions, but he really leans into it in Chapter 3. First Corinthians Chapter 3 verse 1. Follow along as I read this for you. It says, "I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people." I would like to think you were



mature, but you're not mature. I had to address you "as people of the flesh." Now he's talking about them as though they are just normal non-Christian people. At best, you're infants. This is the world. Like your children. Your children in Christ. "I fed you with milk." I had to go back to the basics. "Not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you're not yet ready, for you're still of the flesh." What are you talking about? "While there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?" You're acting like non-Christians. You're acting like the world. How come? Verse 4, "when one says, 'I follow Paul,' and another says, 'I follow Apollos,' are you not being merely human?" And that's what you're doing. You're acting like the world. The world likes to divide up into these groups based on their leaders. Right? That's not how we're supposed to be in the church.

Now, this is the kind of "I want you in my group" person. "I want you on my team." So let's think of that as the first heading under this clique-making. We like to have our cliques even in the church like the Corinthians did. And we build cliques sometimes based on the celebrities of the church who are not actually in our local church. And that's what was taking place here. And in Chapter 1 they added the name of not only Apollos and Paul, they added the name Cephus, which of course was Peter, the first megachurch pastor over there in Jerusalem. So let's think about that and let's just call it what sometimes they call it today, let's call it celebrityism. And let's put the word that Paul puts here in First Corinthians 3, fleshly celebrityism. Okay?

Just jot that down if you're taking notes. We need to think about the problem of fleshly celebrityism when it comes to the church. And you know what I'm talking about because some people came to Corinth with the Cephus Study Bible, and when they came with the Cephus Study Bible, they're always saying, well, what are they saying here in Corinth? Does it really match what Peter would say, or does it really match what Apollos came through teaching? Because Apollos, according to the book of Acts, is a very powerful preacher. And, you know, our local preachers at Corinth, they don't really have the big radio ministry that Apollos has. He's a real heavyweight. And so they're always comparing what they were teaching here locally with the big celebrity who was over the shoulder of their local pastors. And so they always started to coalesce around the celebrity preachers of the first century. And that was a problem. And Paul is saying that's a fleshly thing to do, and it's causing within your church jealousy and strife. And that's like, aren't you on my team? Aren't you a part of my group?

Now, what's the problem with that? It is a lot like children. And speaking of children, there are children who seem to coalesce around their favorite athlete. Let's just talk about that for a minute. You get a favorite athlete, a baseball player. I remember when my kids were young, a favorite baseball player, and they liked that baseball player and that's their favorite baseball player. And they act like they're all about the team that the baseball player is on. And they buy the jerseys and the hats and all of that, and they save up their allowance. And they're all about the team that their favorite player is on. The problem is that the player gets traded to another team. Now all the cheering they did for that team and all the other players and they're all about all the players and they know all the players' names, now all of a sudden their favorite player gets traded to another team. Guess what? They're not very loyal to the team at



all. Now they're all about the other team. They want to sell their hats on eBay and go buy the hats for the other team. They're not very loyal at all.

Now, guess what happens in Corinth if, in fact, you're carrying around the Cephus Study Bible and you're all about judging everything in Corinth based on what Cephus does, which was happening, by the way, in the Galatian churches as well. Because Paul has to address it over there in the book of Galatians, because they were all about what Cephas was doing. And Cephas, who of course is Peter, when he was hit with the Judaizers, he started to back down from having his table fellowship with those who were the Gentiles, because he said, I can't do this. And he was weakened in the face of pressure. And guess what? He did the wrong thing. And a lot of times, if you were there in the Galatian churches, you just followed your favorite celebrity preacher right into error because he switched teams on you in the middle of all this, and you didn't follow your local leaders, and all of a sudden now you're in trouble because you didn't think for yourself in this, and you didn't maybe even follow who you should have followed, the influence of the person who you should have followed because you were too busy looking over the shoulder of who you were learning from. And that was a problem. Fleshly celebrityism can be a big problem, and it's really not fair. It's not fair and it happens a lot. It happens in our church, it happens in a lot of small churches in particular, a lot more in smaller churches. It's a problem. It creates a kind of clique that we should be careful about. And people have left our church because of it, and certainly in a lot of smaller churches that happens all the time.

Galatians Chapter 4 verse 17, there's a different kind that happens on the ground. In other words, there are leaders on the ground, not just over the shoulder, who are out there, the big Apollos and Paul and Cephus who aren't there in the church. They are people actually in the church and Paul is speaking to the Galatians in the Galatian churches and he says this in Galatians 4:17, talking about people who are actually there. And he says, there are people there among you who "make much of you," verse 17, "but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them."

Now, Paul says, "It's always good to be made much of for a good purpose." But the problem is, these people are making much of you, that's called flattery, "to shut you out," to make a division here so, "that you may make much of them." In other words, they're trying to include you in their tribe. Right? This is not a celebrity. This is just someone on the ground maybe in a small group here who is trying to say I want you on my team. And the way they're doing that is they're buttering you up, they're flattering you, they're trying to get you on their team, but they're clearly trying to shut you out of other people. Let's just call that fleshly tribalism. There's fleshly celebrityism and that goes on and it's always about the big luminary out there. But then there's the fleshly tribalism and that takes place right here on the ground in churches. And we have to be careful about that. And whenever a staff member can get involved in that and Satan works hard to make that happen, then we always have a break off. Always a big piece of the iceberg breaks off in that direction. And that's why I work really hard to make sure all of our staff can stay on the same page, because if ever we get a staff member involved in that, then a big chunk breaks off. We have to be careful.



It can happen on a lay level and we have smaller chunks break off. But whenever that happens, the jealousy, the strife, the division takes place. And we see this, we see that kind of I want you on my team and the tribalism takes place and it's you're with us, you're great, we love you, you're a part of our team. It's all in the name of fellowship. But all it does is drive wedges. And it's always, don't worry about those guys. Those guys don't know what they're talking about. Follow me. And it's a kind of thing that is always done in the name of fellowship, but really it's a kind of flattery we see warned about throughout the Scripture.

Here's one, I know it seems beyond you, but it's not. Let's go to James Chapter 2 and look at this one with your own eyes. This is a third kind of fleshly division that takes place in churches. James Chapter 2 verse 1. He says, "My brothers, show no partiality," James 2:1, "as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory." I love that he adds that "the Lord of glory." He's the great and glorious one. And then he says, "If a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothes comes into your assembly," Mr. Rich man, let's just update it. Some guy pulls in with a \$250,000, you know, Maserati or whatever, a Lamborghini and he comes in or something, "and a poor man in shabby clothes comes," off the, you know, the bus here, and "you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothes," and the sports car, and you say, "'Sit here in a good place,' while you say to the poor man, 'You stand over there,' or 'Sit at my feet.'" Or you say, why don't you join me for my age of Jesus week, Mr. Sports Car man. And you say to the other one, well, you sit over there. "Have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?"

Now, how subtle is this? See, this is what we call in Scripture, fleshly favoritism. You start to treat people better because there's something about them. And it may not be money, but it may be money. It may be how they look. It may be because you think they're cool. It may be you think it's because it's their job, or it may be because they have some kind of accomplishment in the world. It may be because of the status they have in their jobs or their accomplishments or their degrees. Who knows what it is? But you favor them and you want them around. It's that kind of, as I said at the outset of this sermon, it's an attraction, a gravitation toward them because of something that you think is like, I want that around me, and you're gravitating toward them as opposed to the opposite, they're the people you just quietly eschew. You quietly just say I'm not interested in having that person join our small group. I'm not going to ever invite them to lunch after church. With that kind of distinction you become judges with evil thoughts.

He says, "Listen, my brothers," verse 5, James Chapter 2, "has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith?" Does that not sound like the juxtaposition of what we see here in Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verses 16 and 17? We don't consider people according to the flesh, but anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. New creation. The old has gone away, the new has come. God has "chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he's promised to those who love him." You know, the person who gets off the bus and the person who drives up in the richest car in this parking lot, if they love the Lord, they're both heirs of the kingdom, and they're rich in faith. Think about that. "But you've dishonored the poor man." This is a great text just to remind us that if you make distinctions based on whatever it is, affluence, looks, accomplishments, we now



have had fleshly favoritism sink into our lives. Fleshly celebrityism, fleshly tribalism, fleshly favoritism. That's all I want you on my team.

Let's turn it around. I don't want you on my team. Who is it? Now, I know we already saw a little of that in James 2, the poor, but let's just think about this. The damaged. The other side of this is I reject you. I don't want you on my team. I don't want you in my Home Fellowship Group. Who would it be that I don't want? Let's go to First Corinthians Chapter 6 and see if any of this lurks in your heart anywhere. First Corinthians Chapter 6, First Corinthians Chapter 6, let's start in verse 9. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" Oh yeah. Let's pound the pulpit on this. Of course I know that. "Neither the sexually immoral," well of course. Right? The perverts aren't going to be there. "Nor idolaters." Of course not. Bowing down at those temples in Corinth, right? Burning, you know, their incense and sacrificing their meat to the idols. Of course not. "Nor adulterers." Of course not. "Nor men who practice homosexuality." Of course not. "Nor thieves" No. "Nor the greedy." No, of course not. "Nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers," in the marketplace. No, they're not going to "inherit the kingdom of God." Of course not.

And he says, oh, yeah, "and such were some of you." You used to be that. "But you were washed. You were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. Do you see again the connection between those verses and what we're seeing in Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verses 16 and 17? So we don't judge anyone according to the flesh anymore. And this also relates to what they were in the past. See, the point is, you can reject someone based on their past and you can say, well, I don't want you around because you're damaged because of who you were. And yet the Bible says it doesn't matter who you were if you've been washed and sanctified and justified. It doesn't matter. It does not matter. Do you understand that God was trying to impress the early church really strongly on this principle? This is one of the first lessons God taught the early church in the book of Acts. I mean by Chapter 9, this was what God was trying to impress on the early church. You cannot judge someone's past. You just can't. The bias against someone's past is intolerable. That's what God is trying to teach through these verses. It is intolerable for you to judge and reject someone because of their past, their non-Christian past. You can't do that.

And thankfully, there was a guy named Barnabas who was used, the Son of Encouragement, who was used to put his arm around an ex-persecutor of the Church, a murderer, and say, guys, this doesn't matter what he was, it matters what he is. And he's been washed, he's been sanctified, he's justified. And now here he is. And the guy who was persecuting the Church, as Barnabas introduces him to the apostles, becomes an apostle, and he takes over the spotlight for the second half of the whole book of Acts. He's writing most of the books of the New Testament. Think about that. It's the whole point. You cannot judge someone at this church because of their past, non-Christian past. You can't. I've been doing this for a long time in South Orange County. I've been the pastor to DEA agents and former gang members and former drug dealers. I've been the pastor to judges, and I've been the pastor to ex-murderers who've done time in prison. I have been the pastor to IRS agents, and I have been the pastor to tax evaders who've done time in federal prison. I mean, you name it, I have been the pastor to people who have been in the Marine Corps protecting our country, and I have



been the pastor of people who have actually been in the Nazi Party in World War II. I can go on and on.

It doesn't matter what their past is, they can sit right next to each other in our church and worship together. It doesn't matter what you were, right? It matters who you are. It matters if you have been washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord. If you at any point put up a wall because of what someone was, you've absolutely done something intolerable. That was one of the first lessons God was trying to teach the early Church. I'm going to put at the front the apostle who is going to take center stage in the second half of the book of Acts. A guy whom everyone struggled to accept because of his past. You can't reject someone because of their non-Christian past.

How about this? Sometimes we reject people because we think of their past and they're damaged. How about this? Because you're weak, right? Look at how Jesus picked his leaders. He picked James and John in the first part of Acts. And in Chapter 4, the leaders, the Pharisees and the rulers of Israel, they called them uneducated and common men. And yet there they were speaking up in Acts Chapter 4. And they were laying it out and God was fully supporting them. I mean, Peter was a fisherman and then he was the pastor of thousands of people standing on the Temple Mount. The first pastor of the first megachurch. That's who Christ put in charge of the first big church dominating the first half of the book of Acts.

Weak? Jesse. He excluded his own son from even coming to the small group because his son was weak. You can't even come when Samuel shows up. You're too weak and someone's got to watch the sheep after all. Ouch. Think about that. You can't exclude someone because they're weak. I mean, if there's one thing you learn from the Bible over and over and over again, whether it's, you know, we need someone to fight the Midianites, God picks Gideon. We need someone to go be a prophet to Israel, to Judah. We'll pick Jeremiah, the youngest. We'll pick someone to go speak in front of Pharaoh. We'll pick Moses, he stutters. We could go on and on and on in the Bible. God chooses the weak things of the world. I'll take you to that passage in your small groups this week. First Corinthians Chapter 1.

How about the poor? Jesus looked at a man in Luke Chapter 9 verse 57 who said, "I'll follow you." And he said, no, you won't. We're too poor for you. Jesus said, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man," I don't have a place to sleep tonight. I know you don't want to follow me because we're too poor for you. Just like the rich young ruler in Matthew 19 verse 22, he left. I don't want to be with you guys. You're too poor. We already saw that in James Chapter 2 verse 5. God chooses sometimes the poor to "be rich in faith." It doesn't matter how much money you have. It doesn't matter how little money you have. It doesn't matter how weak you are. It doesn't matter what your past was. We can't reject people because of any of that. It doesn't matter. It does not matter if someone's a fisherman, a house cleaner, a welder or an executive, or the richest man in Orange County, or the poorest man in Orange County. We don't make distinctions based on any of that.

We used to consider people according to the flesh. And maybe as a non-Christian you worked that way but we're Christians now. We don't regard anyone according to the flesh. We



regard people according to one thing. Go back to our passage, Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 17. "Therefore," here's what we care about, "if anyone is in Christ." That's what we care about. If anyone is in Christ, that's what we care about. Are you in Christ? That's what we care about. If you're in Christ, then you're one of ours and you're in. If you're in Christ, you're in. If you're in Christ, you're in. That's what matters.

Number two on your outline, you need to "Recognize What Defines a Christian." Let's go to First John Chapter 3 after you write that down. And I love this text for a number of reasons. One is it's embedded in the verbiage for the first two verses of First John 3, that it's not going to be seen on the surface that we're Christians. I mean, in terms of the world. The world sociologically is not going to see that we're Christians. Look at what it says in First John Chapter 3 verse 1. "See," it's an imperative verb, but you can't see it on the surface, "See what kind of love the Father has given us." That's a theological "see" that's a "see" looking at theology. We can study that, but we can't see it, we can't see it in our lives. Right? We can see it in our hearts. We can see it theologically. "See what kind of love the Father's given us, that we should be called the children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us, is that it didn't know him." It doesn't recognize the Father, it doesn't recognize us, and it doesn't see us. It's poor, it's rich, it's middle class, it's attractive, it's ugly, it's talented, it's untalented, it's boring, it's exciting. It's all different kinds of people. But they don't recognize us. They didn't recognize him.

Now, "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared." Now we're going to be really glorified one day. "But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." But you can't tell by looking at us now. Now, if you were to look at royalty in David's house, in his palace, if I said, can you tell that Solomon is the king's son, you'd say, yes. I can tell that Solomon is the king's son. I mean, Solomon was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, absolutely. Best clothes, chariots, horses. And you could say that guy, he's handsome, he's got it together, hair gel, the whole thing. He's got it going on. But here's a guy who was also royalty, and you probably couldn't tell at first glance. His name was Mephibosheth. Do you remember him? Mephibosheth. He was also royalty. He was made royalty because of David's promise to bless the house of Saul and Jonathan ultimately. And he sat at the king's table, eating at the royal banquet hall every day. He couldn't walk and yet he was royalty. Both Solomon and Mephibosheth were children, if you will, of the king. Royalty.

Now let's just picture this theologically. One had it good in life it seemed, one didn't have it good. They were both royalty. And if we see this theologically as Christians, one day they would both be a whole lot better than they were, just to use Jesus' words in Matthew 6. Even Solomon in all of his regalia doesn't look like a lily of the field. There's going to be a glorification of even the best among us if you're living comfortably and the worst among us. What we are has not yet been seen, right? But one day we know when he appears even the best among us is going to be way better than you are and the worst among us is going to be way better than you are. We're all going to be glorified. We preach that earlier in this book. It's going to be great. But you need to realize what matters is, are you an heir of the king? Are you royalty? That's what matters. And any of us can be royalty. It doesn't matter who you are.



And what's interesting is you can trace this all the way back to the first book that we see God speaking in. I mean, the Ten Commandments were the first time God put his thoughts in writing. Think about it. He etched his Ten Commandments on stone. And we see that in Exodus Chapter 21. Well in Exodus Chapter 12, in the exodus, we see the story of them leaving Egypt. There are an interesting two words in verse 38 of Exodus 12. Exodus 12 is the Passover when they leave Egypt. And in verse 38, there are two words there, that out of Egypt comes a "mixed multitude," a mixed multitude. Do you know what a mixed multitude means? It wasn't just the Israelites who left. There were other people who put the blood on the doorpost. There were a lot of other people who said, I don't want to stay in Egypt if God's punishment is coming on this land, I'd like to go with you. And there are provisions even later in the book of Exodus after that passage that say here's what you can do with the mixed multitude. Here's what you can do with the foreigner who travels with you. Here's what you can do with the sojourner. They're going to go out with you. Yes, they can be blessed among you. What matters is are you going to go with them? Right? You need to go if you're a foreigner, go with them, stay with them. And all I'm telling you is it doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter how poor you are, it doesn't matter... None of it matters but whether or not you stay, you stay with the Lord. You're a child of the King.

I love the verse we read not long ago in our Daily Bible Reading, Psalm 119:63. David, who I believe wrote Psalm 119, though it doesn't say it explicitly, he says, "I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts." And I don't care who you are. "I'm a companion of all who fear you, of all who keep your precepts." Now, I'm not talking about every single person who just happens to wander into the church. Are you still in First John 3? Look at verse 3. "Everyone who thus hopes," if you really are a child of God, if you thus hope, if you have that hope, "in him, purifies himself as he is pure." I'm talking about someone if you really are a Christian, if you're in Christ, well then old things passed away, new things come and you're going to have evidence of that. There are wheat and tares in this church, I know that. And I am saying this, there are people who don't fear God who come here, and there are people who do not keep his precepts who come here. There are people, as Titus Chapter 1 says at the end of the chapter, "they profess to know God," with their mouth, "but they deny him by their works."

But this text says, you know, you'll purify yourself. You won't make that same practice of sinning. Verse 4 says, "Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there's no sin." Verse 6, "No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him." The person who is in Christ is going to have the old things start to go away and the new things come. Now, what happens instantly is a new identity. You become royalty, then the evidence of that follows. So we recognize what defines a Christian. You become royalty and then you have evidence of regeneration. It's what James Chapter 2 verse 14 says, right? "Faith without works is dead." You're going to see that follow. And that is what matters.



I like this verse. It makes it as clear as it can be. It's a good transitional verse into the last point. First John Chapter 5 verse 1, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God." Okay. And evidence is going to follow, by the way, and here's one of the main evidences. "Everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him." "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God." And "everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him." See, now all of a sudden, my barriers come down to anybody who's been born of the Father. I love them. That's what the Bible says. We're all on the same team. We all now accept those who now are in a right relationship with God. New things come. One of the new things that comes is that I now accept without distinction anyone who is in Christ. That's the whole point of so much of not seeing anyone according to the flesh anymore. Jot it down this way. Verse 17 of Second Corinthians 5, the second half, the new things that are coming partly is this, number three, "Accepting Christians Without Distinction." I don't accept you based on anything other than the fact that you are a Christian, and evidence is coming on the heels of that. I see evidence of your regeneration and you are an heir of the King. Therefore, I fully accept you as a child of God. That is evidence of my Christianity is my full acceptance of you.

Let me turn you to this text real quick. Romans Chapter 15, please. Romans Chapter 15. Romans Chapter 15 verse 5. This is a great and encouraging text. One of the great things that comes to real Christians is the acceptance of other Christians without any distinctions. It doesn't matter who you are. Romans 15 verse 5, "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another." Guess what that means. There are no cliques in this church, right? That's what it means. "Such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus." And that's where some people may argue with me. But if you're in accord with Christ Jesus, then we're going to be in harmony with one another. Not every non-Christian, I know there are wheat and tares, there are sheep and goats in every church. I get that. But with real Christians, I'm going to be in harmony with real Christians because I'm going to be "in accord with Christ, that together you may with one voice glorify God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We're going to be unified. We're going to be synched up. We're going to be in harmony with one another and in accord with Christ, and we're going to glorify God together.

Therefore, what do I have to do? Here comes the one imperative verb in this whole section. Here it comes. "Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." Welcome. I love this. "Proslambanō." Lambanō is "to receive." "Pros" is "come." Bring them in and accept them. Some translations actually translate it that way. To accept. Therefore, accept one another, welcome them, bring them in and pull them in and accept them. Accept "one another as Christ has welcomed you to the glory of God."

You have been adopted by God. There are a lot of people in our church who have adopted children, and it's a great picture of our redemption, right? God has adopted us. I see parents in our church adopt children. They put it on social media, they're in the courtroom and all that. It's so great, the adoption of children. They don't partially accept these children. They celebrate the full welcoming of these children into their families. Full welcome. They don't partially say, well, you know, I'll give you a partial welcome. Full welcome. I'll take the child.



They don't say if he's cool or, you know, unless he becomes a nerd or, you know, if he doesn't have a lot of baggage or if he's interesting. It's like full welcome. That's what we see, full welcome. You're my child now. In the full welcome that we've received from God, what we now do for the other children is we accept all the other children whom God has. That's the picture in the Bible. We have been accepted. Therefore we accept his other children fully no matter what the distinctions are.

You've heard the passages and I just need to say it only because the New Testament church, and I mean in the first century, had a lot more barriers than we have. I don't know what the barriers you might see in the church. Someone irritates you. Oh, man. I'm sorry. Think about the first-century church. He says think about it. "There is neither Jew nor Greek." Do you know what a big distance there was between Jews and Greeks in the first century? He says, "there's neither slave nor free." Do you know what a big difference there was between slave and free in the New Testament? The Scythian and slave and barbarians. I mean, these were big distinctions. He says, in Christ those are gone. It's hard for the first-century Christians looking over the rails of heaven, looking at us, seeing people quietly avoid each other on a Sunday morning at our church, thinking I don't get it. You guys don't have half of the things that we had. We had kosher laws. We had the days, right? The holidays, Sabbath days. We had all kinds of issues. We had the temple worship where we worship. Think of John 4, the woman at the well, the Samaritans. We worship on this mountain and you say there in Jerusalem is where we must worship. They had so many things that divided them, and now we threw them all in the same church. We said forget about all of that. You guys all get along now. And now we don't get along. Why? Because of what? Because you make more or you like this and you don't like that? I don't care who irritates you in this church. Personality problems? There's no excuse for us.

Let me end with this. Go to this cross-reference, Ephesians Chapter 4. We accept one another without distinction, fully welcoming them, looking past all the differences. Here's why. Because we are going to focus on the commonalities, on the commonalities. It's like being on the same team. Think about it. It's like a sports team. If we were on a sports team, a professional sports team, it wouldn't matter what our backgrounds are or upbringings, what city we grew up in, or personalities or styles or hairstyle, our appearance. It wouldn't matter how many kids we have. None of that would matter. All that would matter is we have one coach, one mission, one goal, common jersey, common owner, trainer. All of it we would have one thing we're aiming for.

Now read this, Ephesians Chapter 4 verse 1, "I urge you," Paul says, "as a prisoner of the Lord to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called." Well, what is that? Well, "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another." Think about that. Let's do that. "Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." How eager are you to do that this week? "There's one body," we have one body, "and one Spirit -- just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call -- one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Do you get the point here that we have a lot more in common than anything that we might make an excuse that we don't have in common? "There's one body and one Spirit -- just as you were called to



the one hope that belongs to your call -- one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." We have no excuse to quietly avoid and not accept, or to somehow build wedges between people.

Tertullian wrote in the second century about how the Romans viewed the Christians. And he spoke against the backdrop of how the pagans in the second century, how they hated one another. He used the word envy, how they envy each other, and they divide over things. There's so much dissension between the pagans. And he said this. Here's how the Romans viewed the Christians. He said, they say things like this. See how they love one another, see how they're ready to die for one another. I hope you could say that about any single person in this church who is a Christian who is in Christ. God's heroes who he's proud of in this church, who he wouldn't say are fleshly and childish, but the mature ones are the ones who see themselves on the same team, no matter what role they play.

Modern politicians, many of them are out there seeking their photo ops. They have to be at the right place, at the right time, make sure their cameras are on. You've seen that. Photography was still in its infancy in the 1860s, and our 16th president, Abraham Lincoln, was not heading out for photo ops to boost his political clout. Had there been photo pools in the 1860s capturing the daily habits that his biographers used to write about would have made him even more admirable than he was already considered by many. But President Lincoln was known, at least by his biographers, as being an amazing person who cared about the least of those around him. He would visit Army hospitals. He would linger, talk about going the extra mile, staying the extra hour, and spending the extra dollar. He would shake hands and stay as late as he needed to stay to visit every soldier he could. He would listen to their stories late into the night. He would write notes to their families.

And when he was at the White House he would greet personally every White House staff member he would see, he would square up to them. He knew them by name. He would learn their name. He would address them by name. He would treat them with respect and dignity. Everyone felt honored by the president in his presence. He was known always for doing whatever he could for every orphan and widow whom he was introduced to, anyone who sent him a request, he would do what he could to meet them. Of course, in his second inaugural address, he was known for the famous words of his merciful posture toward the defeated Confederates. He said, with malice toward none and you could certainly believe it by his action, "With malice toward none with charity for all with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right." I think of how honorable that is, someone who cared, and it seemed like he had malice toward none and charity for all. And I sure hope that Christians, the average Christian in Orange County, California in the 21st century, can do better than any politician in the 19th century. We have a high calling "to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called with humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another ... eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." No cliques, this isn't high school, doing all that we can.

Let me pray for you now. God, thank you so much for this opportunity that we have now to put this into practice this week. Even today, I know it's hot. We're outside, but please give us a



chance to show that we care about the people around us. There are no barriers between us. We don't have a select group of people with whom we are exclusive. We're willing to love the people in this church; they're our fellow members of the body of Christ here. Part of the flock that we're a part of. Fellow stones here, living stones. Part of the building that we're a part of. God, we are so grateful to be in a church that shares the mission, making a difference in our community and even beyond that. We want to be as eager to maintain the unity of this church as we possibly can. We don't want to be fleshly. We don't want you to rate us as childish. We want to be mature. We want you to see us as being as patient and as kind and as accepting and as magnanimous and merciful and as loving as we possibly can be. So help us in this God. Please just root out any of the problems that might be in our hearts secretly there and fuel us to love even better this week.

In Jesus' name. Amen.