

“Basic Biblical Beliefs Series: “The Abundance of Salvation”

2017: The Reflection Year Series

Scripture: 2 Cor. 5: 17-21 (NIV)

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:^[a] The old has gone, the new is here!

¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin^[b] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Subject Question: What three ideas concerning the Abundant life of Salvation of those who have become believer's in Christ, does the Apostle Paul sort-out in the second chapter of his second letter to the church at Corinth?

Compliment answer: Abundance in a Charmed Choice (Vs.17), Abundance of a Compelling Career (Vs.18-20), and Abundance with a Certain Conclusion (Vs.21).

Big Idea: The three ideas concerning the Abundant life of Salvation of those who have become believers in Christ that the Apostle Paul sorts-out in the second chapter of His second letter to the church at Corinth are: Abundance in a Charmed Choice (Vs.17), Abundance of a Compelling Career (Vs.18-20), and Abundance with a Certain Conclusion (Vs.21).

Homiletical Idea: “Abundance from Beginning to End”

Purpose: I want the congregation to have a personal appreciation for and a better understanding of the abundance life of Salvation that Christ has provided for them as His cherished and called brothers and Sisters.

Being “in Christ Jesus” is a stupendous reality. It is breathtaking what it means to be in Christ. United to Christ. Bound to Christ. If you are “in Christ” listen to what it means for you:

1. In Christ Jesus you were given grace before the world was created. “He gave us grace in Christ Jesus before the ages began.” *2 Timothy 1:9*.

2. In Christ Jesus you were chosen by God before creation. “God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.” *Ephesians 1:4*.

3. In Christ Jesus you are loved by God with an inseparable love. “I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” *Romans 8:38-39*.

4. In Christ Jesus you were redeemed and forgiven for all your sins. In Christ we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” *Ephesians 1:7*.

5. In Christ Jesus you are justified before God and the righteousness of God in Christ is imputed to you. “For our sake God made Christ to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” *2 Corinthians 5:21*.

6. In Christ Jesus you have become a new creation and a son/daughter of God. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” *2 Corinthians 5:17*. “In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith” *Galatians 3:26*.

7. In Christ Jesus you have been seated in the heavenly places even while he lived on earth. “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” *Ephesians 2:6*.

8. In Christ Jesus all the promises of God are Yes for you. “All the promises of God find their Yes in Christ” *2 Corinthians 1:20*.

9. In Christ Jesus you are being sanctified and made holy. “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus” *1 Corinthians 1:2*.

10. In Christ Jesus everything you really need will be supplied. “My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” *Philippians 4:19*.

11. In Christ Jesus the peace of God will guard your heart and mind. “The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” *Philippians 4:7*.

12. In Christ Jesus you have eternal life. “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” *Romans 6:23*.

13. And in Christ Jesus you will be raised from the dead at the coming of the Lord. “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive”¹ *Corinthians 15:22*. All those united to Adam in the first humanity die. All those united to Christ in the new humanity rise to live again.

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◀ 2 Corinthians 5:19 ▶

NASB Lexicon

NASB ©	Greek	Transliteration	Strong's	Definition	Origin
namely,	ὥς	ōs	<u>5613</u>	as, like as, even as, when, since, as long as	adverb from <u>hos</u> ,
that God	θεὸς	theos	<u>2316</u>	God, a god	of uncertain origin
was in Christ	Χριστῷ	christō	<u>5547</u>	the Anointed One, Messiah, Christ	from <u>chriō</u>

reconciling	καταλλάσσω	katallassōn	<u>2644</u>	to reconcile	from <u>kata</u> and <u>allassō</u>
the world	κόσμον	kosmon	<u>2889</u>	order, the world	a prim. word
to Himself,	ἑαυτῷ	eautō	<u>1438</u>	of himself, herself, itself	from a prim. pronoun he (him, her) and gen. (dat. or acc.) of <u>autos</u>
not counting	λογιζόμενος	logizomenos	<u>3049</u>	to reckon, to consider	from <u>logos</u> (in the sense of an account or reckoning)
their trespasses	παραπτώματα	paraptōmata	<u>3900</u>	a false step, a trespass	from <u>parapiptō</u>
against them, and He has committed	θέμενος	themenos	<u>5087</u>	to place, lay, set	from a prim. root the-
to us the word	λόγον	logon	<u>3056</u>	a word (as embodying an idea), a statement, a speech	from <u>legō</u>
of reconciliation	καταλλαγῆς	katallagēs	<u>2643</u>	reconciliation	from <u>katallassō</u>

Benson Commentary

2 Corinthians 5:17. *Therefore* — Since all Christ's true disciples do thus live to him, and not to themselves, and only know him in a spiritual manner; *if any man be in Christ* — By living faith and the indwelling of his Spirit; if any man have an interest in and union with him; *he is a new creature* — **Καινη κτισις**, *there is a new creation*, in the soul of that man. His understanding is enlightened, his judgment corrected, and he has new ideas and conceptions of things. His conscience is informed, awakened, and purged from guilt by the blood of Jesus, Hebrews 9:14. His will is subjected to the will of God, his affections drawn from earth to heaven, and his dispositions, words, and actions, his cares,

labours, and pursuits, are all changed. *Old things are passed away* — All old principles and practices; *behold* — The present, visible, undeniable change! *all things are become new* — He has new life, namely, a spiritual and divine life; new spiritual senses, new faculties, new desires and designs, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, passions and appetites. His whole tenor of action and conversation is new, and he lives as it were in a new world. God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, angels, men, sinners, saints, and the whole creation — heaven, earth, and all therein, appear in a new light, and stand related to him in a new manner, since he was created anew in Christ Jesus.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

5:16-21 The renewed man acts upon new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in new company. The believer is created anew; his heart is not merely set right, but a new heart is given him. He is the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Though the same as a man, he is changed in his character and conduct. These words must and do mean more than an outward reformation. The man who formerly saw no beauty in the Saviour that he should desire him, now loves him above all things. The heart of the unregenerate is filled with enmity against God, and God is justly offended with him. Yet there may be reconciliation. Our offended God has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. By the inspiration of God, the Scriptures were written, which are the word of reconciliation; showing that peace has been made by the cross, and how we may be interested therein. Though God cannot lose by the quarrel, nor gain by the peace, yet he beseeches sinners to lay aside their enmity, and accept the salvation he offers. Christ knew no sin. He was made Sin; not a sinner, but Sin, a Sin-offering, a Sacrifice for sin. The end and design of all this was, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, might be justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Can any lose, labour, or suffer too much for Him, who gave his beloved Son to be the Sacrifice for their sins, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him?

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Therefore if any man be in Christ - The phrase to "be in Christ," evidently means to be united to Christ by faith; or to be in him as the branch is in the vine - that is, so united to the vine, or so in it, as to derive all its nourishment and support from it, and to be sustained entirely by it. John 15:2, "every branch in me." John 15:4, "abide in me, and I in you." "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in me." See also John 15:5-7,

see the note on [John 15:2](#). To be "in Christ" denotes a more tender and close union; and implies that all our support is from him. All our strength is derived from him; and denotes further that we shall partake of his fullness, and share in his felicity and glory, as the branch partakes of the strength and vigor of the parent vine. The word "therefore" (ὧστε Hōste) here implies that the reason why Paul infers that anyone is a new creature who is in Christ is that which is stated in the previous verse; to wit, the change of views in regard to the Redeemer to which he there refers, and which was so great as to constitute a change like a new creation. The affirmation here is universal, "if any man be in Christ;" that is, all who become true Christians - undergo such a change in their views and feelings as to make it proper to say of them that they are new creatures. No matter what they have been before, whether moral or immoral; whether infidels or speculative believers; whether amiable, or debased, sensual and polluted yet if they become Christians they all experience such a change as to make it proper to say they are a new creation.

A new creature - Margin, "Let him be." This is one of the instances in which the margin has given a less correct translation than is in the text. The idea evidently is, not that he ought to be a new creature, but that he is in fact; not that he ought to live as becomes a new creature - which is true enough - but that he will in fact live in that way, and manifest the characteristics of the new creation. The phrase "a new creature" (καινὴ κτίσις kainē ktisis) occurs also in [Galatians 6:15](#). The word rendered "creature" (κτίσις ktisis) means properly in the New Testament, creation. It denotes:

- (1) The act of creating [Romans 1:20](#);
- (2) A created thing, a creature [Romans 1:25](#); and refers:
 - (a) To the universe, or creation in general; [Mark 10:6](#); [Mark 13:9-11](#); [1 Peter 3:4](#).
 - (b) To man, mankind; [Mark 16:15](#); [Colossians 1:23](#).

Here it means a new creation in a moral sense, and the phrase new creature is equivalent to the expression in [Ephesians 4:24](#), "The new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." It means, evidently, that there is a change produced in the renewed heart of man that is equivalent to the act of creation, and that bears a strong resemblance to it - a change, so to speak, as if the man was made over again, and had become new. The mode or manner in

which it is done is not described, nor should the words be pressed to the quick, as if the process were the same in both cases - for the words are here evidently figurative. But the phrase implies evidently the following things:

(1) That there is an exertion of divine power in the conversion of the sinner as really as in the act of creating the world out of nothing, and that this is as indispensable in the one case as in the other.

(2) that a change is produced so great as to make it proper to say that he is a new man. He has new views, new motives, new principles, new objects and plans of life. He seeks new purposes, and he lives for new ends.

If a drunkard becomes reformed, there is no impropriety in saying that he is a new man. If a man who was licentious becomes pure, there is no impropriety in saying that he is not the same man that he was before. Such expressions are common in all languages, and they are as proper as they are common. There is such a change as to make the language proper. And so in the conversion of a sinner. There is a change so deep, so clear, so entire, and so abiding, that it is proper to say, here is a new creation of God - a work of the divine power as decided and as glorious as when God created all things out of nothing. There is no other moral change that takes place on earth so deep, and radical, and thorough as the change at conversion. And there is no other where there is so much propriety in ascribing it to the mighty power of God.

Old things are passed away - The old views in regard to the Messiah, and in regard to people in general, [2 Corinthians 5:16](#). But Paul also gives this a general form of expression, and says that old things in general have passed away - referring to everything. It was true of all who were converted that old things had passed away. And it may include the following things:

(1) In regard to the Jews - that their former prejudices against Christianity, their natural pride, and spirit of seducing others; their attachment to their rites and ceremonies, and dependence on them for salvation had all passed away. They now renounced that independence, relied on the merits of the Saviour, and embraced all as brethren who were of the family of Christ.

(2) in regard to the Gentiles - their attachment to idols, their love of sin and degradation, their dependence on their own works, had passed away, and they

had renounced all these things, and had come to mingle their hopes with those of the converted Jews, and with all who were the friends of the Redeemer.

(3) in regard to all, it is also true that old things pass away. Their former prejudices, opinions, habits, attachments pass away. Their supreme love of self passes away. Their love of sins passes away. Their love of the world passes away. Their supreme attachment to their earthly friends rather than God passes away. Their love of sin, their sensuality, pride, vanity, levity, ambition, passes away. There is a deep and radical change on all these subjects - a change which commences at the new birth; which is carried on by progressive sanctification; and which is consummated at death and in heaven.

Bengel's Gnomen

2 Corinthians 5:17. **Εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ**, *if any one be in Christ*) so as to live in Christ. *If any one of those who now hear us, etc. Observe the mutual relation, we in Christ in this passage, and God in Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:19; Christ, therefore, is the Mediator and Reconciler between us and God.—καινὴ κτίσις, a new creature*) Not only is the Christian himself something new; but as he knows Christ Himself, not according to the flesh, but according to the power of His life and resurrection, so he contemplates and estimates himself and all things according to that new condition. Concerning this subject, see Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10.—**τὰ ἀρχαῖα**, *old things*) This term implies some degree of contempt. See Gregor. Thaum. Paneg. cum annot., p. 122, 240.—**παὸρῆλθεν**, *are passed away*) Spontaneously, like snow in early spring.—**ἰδοῦ**, *behold*) used to point out something before us.

(I See God's People...)

- A. Abundance in a Charmed Choice. (Vs.17)¹⁷ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:^[a] The old has gone, the new is here!*
- B. Two questions need to be asked here. First, why?... (about the phrase In Christ), why does it seem God chose **me** to be **IN** Christ? And second, what, what does this new creation look like; the old being gone and the new being here?
 - 1. Why? Rick warren (Author of the Purpose Driven Life) God says your salvation is no accident. He chose you long before you chose Him. He took the

initiative. The Good News translation puts it this way: "You were chosen according to the purpose of God."

Why would God choose you, or me, to be a part of his family? Because he is a God of love. He is a God of grace. The more you understand grace, the more you're going to be amazed by it. God chose you. Did you deserve it? Not a chance. Do you deserve to go to Heaven? No way! Are you good enough to be in God's family? No. He just chose you. And that's good news.

On what basis did He chose you? First Peter 1:3 says, *"For it is His boundless mercy that has given us the privilege of being born again so that now we are members of God's own family."* God chose you based on his mercy, not your performance. You'll never earn it. You'll never deserve it. You couldn't work hard enough for it. You couldn't be perfect enough. It's only because of God's grace and mercy that the Creator of the universe says, "I want you in my family." If that doesn't encourage you, you'd better check your pulse.

2. Secondly, What? What is this being a new creation all about—the old being gone and the new being here? Jerry Bridges (Author of *Who Am I, Identity in Christ*) To understand the new creation, first we must grasp that it is in fact a creation, something created by God. [John 1:13](#) tells us that this new birth was brought about by the will of God. We did not inherit the new nature, nor did we decide to re-create ourselves anew, nor did God simply clean up our old nature; He created something entirely fresh and unique. The new creation is completely new, brought about from nothing, just as the whole universe was created by God *ex nihilo*, from nothing. Only the Creator could accomplish such a feat.

Second, "old things have passed away." The "old" refers to everything that is part of our old nature—natural pride, love of sin, reliance on works, and our former opinions, habits and passions. Most significantly, what we loved has passed away, especially the supreme love of self and with it self-righteousness, self-promotion, and self-justification. The new creature looks outwardly toward Christ instead of inwardly toward self. The old things died, nailed to the cross with our sin nature.

Along with the old passing away, "the new has come!" Old, dead things are replaced with new things, full of life and the glory of God. The newborn soul delights in the things of God and abhors the things of the world and the flesh. Our purposes, feelings, desires, and understandings are fresh and different. We see the world differently. The Bible seems to be a new book, and though we may have read it before, there is a beauty about it which we never saw before, and which we wonder at not having perceived. The whole face of nature seems to us to be changed, and we seem to be in a new world. The heavens and the earth are filled with new wonders, and all things seem now to speak forth the praise of God. There are new feelings toward all people—a new kind of love toward family and friends, a new compassion

never before felt for enemies, and a new love for all mankind. The things we once loved, we now detest. The sin we once held onto, we now desire to put away forever. We “put off the old man with his deeds” (Colossians 3:9), and put on the “new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).

What about the Christian who continues to sin? There is a difference between continuing to sin and continuing to live in sin. No one reaches sinless perfection in this life, but the redeemed Christian is being sanctified (made holy) day by day, sinning less and hating it more each time he fails. Yes, we still sin, but unwillingly and less and less frequently as we mature. Our new self hates the sin that still has a hold on us. The difference is that the new creation is no longer a *slave* to sin, as we formerly were. We are now freed from sin and it no longer has power over us (Romans 6:6-7). Now we are empowered by and for righteousness. We now have the choice to “let sin reign” or to count ourselves “dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11-12). Best of all, now we have the power to choose the latter.

The new creation is a wondrous thing, formed in the mind of God and created by His power and for His glory.

- C. In other words, we now live a celestially charmed life... a wondrous new life, a fulfilling blessed life, a loving lie of devotion all because of His choice of us and our growing choices we make to be more like Him.
- D. Think about it this way—where would you be now in your life if God hadn’t at some time called you to be His. Even now, folks may make fun of you for being a Christian. They may consider you weak or gullible. Your kids may not understand you. Your older grandchildren may think that you’ve “gone over the edge in this religious thing of yours.” But... but, in your own heart, you know that it’s worth it. In your own mind, you know that every true Christian shares the same hope you have, the same feeling you feel and considers themselves not only blessed but privileged to have the opportunity to live such a wondrously charmed, chosen, life here on earth... a life that is bigger and better than anything we could have made for ourselves. A life of fewer regrets and a growing certainty that when our times comes, we will indeed be with this One who called us to Himself, who charmed us with His love... who changed us with His power, and who captured us though His grace, so long ago.

(I See God’s People...)

- A. Abundance of a Compelling Career. (Vs.18-20), ¹⁸ *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*
- B. It's quite a daunting realization to consider that the Bible teaches that we, the charmed ones, have more of a role than just being the recipients of God's awesome calling and love. We also have a work, a job that we are to be about-- a life ministry that has been entrusted to us. Being a Christian is about being and doing—receiving God's love but sharing God's love. These verses inform you and I as Believers, that alongside and in addition to our life work and passion, beyond our chosen and cherished careers, there is an ongoing and overarching, eternal profession that we are each to be working at as we live out in our lives. This job is called influence. Our task is called advising, enlightening, caring and informing. It is not only being, but doing. Not only a silent example, but a verbal informant. I say this because I honestly believe that most of us really want to make a lasting difference in our lives, with our lives, for Christ. Our hearts ache for spiritual effectiveness. Our eyes see a world that could be different if people, if our kids, if our friends, just could come to know the Christ that we have come to know. We love God and deep down inside we would really give anything just to be a person who could truly know what to say and be in front of others. But of course, fear, doubt, feelings of incompetency or inadequacy affect is all. Maybe we should consider the following:
- C. How? John Stott (author of *Four Ways Christians Can Influence the World*)

To many of us, the verses of Matthew 5 are becoming increasingly familiar. We see their great importance today, and we begin to look at them again. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus proclaims, in verse 13: "You are the salt of the earth." Verse 14: "You are the light of the world." Verse 16: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, which is in heaven" (ERV).

In both these metaphors of the salt and the light, Jesus teaches about the responsibility of Christians in a non-Christian, or sub-Christian, or post-Christian society. He emphasizes the difference between Christians and non-Christians, between the church and the world, and he emphasizes the influences Christians ought to have on the non-Christian environment.

The distinction between the two is clear. The world, he says, is like rotting meat. But you are to be the world's salt. The world is like a dark night, but you are to be the world's light. This is the fundamental difference between the Christian and the non-Christian, the church and the world.

Then he goes on from the distinction to the influence. Like salt in putrefying meat, Christians are to hinder social decay. Like light in the prevailing darkness, Christians are to illumine society and show it a better way. It's very important to grasp these two stages in the teaching of Jesus. Most Christians accept that there is a distinction between the Christian and the non-Christian, between the church and the world. God's new society, the church, is as different from the old society as salt from rotting meat and as light from darkness.

But there are too many people who stop there; too many people whose whole preoccupation is with survival—that is, maintaining the distinction. The salt must retain its saltiness, they say. It must not become contaminated. The light must retain its brightness. It must not be smothered by the darkness. That is true. But that is merely survival. Salt and light are not just a bit different from their environment. They are to have a powerful influence on their environment. The salt is to be rubbed into the meat in order to stop the rot. The light is to shine into the darkness. It is to be set upon a lamp stand, and it is to give light to the environment. That is an influence on the environment quite different from mere survival.

What is the nature of this influence? Let me suggest to you a few ways in which we Christians have power.

First, there is power in prayer. I beg you not to dismiss this as a pious platitude. It isn't. There are some Christians who are such social activists that they never stop to pray. They are wrong, are they not? Prayer is an indispensable part of the Christian's life and of the church's life. And the church's first duty toward society and its leaders is to pray for them. "I urge, then, first of all," writes Paul in his first letter to Timothy, "that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" (1 Tim. 2:1-2). If there is more violence in the community than peace, more indecency than modesty, more oppression than justice, more secularism than godliness, is the reason that the church is not praying as it should? I believe that in our normal services, we should take with increasing seriousness the five or ten minutes of intercession in which, as a congregation, we bow down before God and bring to him the world and its leaders, and cry to him to intervene. And the same is true in our prayer gatherings, in our fellowship groups, and in our private prayers. I think most of us, myself included, are more parochial than global in our prayers. But are we not global Christians? Do we not share the global concerns of our global God? We should express these concerns in our prayers.

Second, there is the power of truth. All of us believe in the power of the truth of the gospel. We love to say, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). We are convinced of the power of the gospel in evangelism—that it brings salvation and redemption to those who respond and believe in Jesus. But it isn't only the gospel that is powerful. All God's truth is powerful. God's truth of whatever kind is much more powerful than the Devil's lies. Do you believe that, or are you a pessimist? Do you think the Devil is stronger than God? Do you think lies are stronger than the truth? The Christian believes that truth is stronger than lies, and God is stronger than the Devil. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 13:8, "For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth." As John said in his prologue to the fourth gospel, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." Of course it cannot; that light is the truth of God.

How are we going to see the power of truth at work? Persuasion by argument. Just as we need doctrinal apologists in evangelism to argue the truth of the gospel, so we need ethical apologists in social action to argue the truth and the goodness of the moral law of God. We need more Christian thinkers who will use their minds for Jesus Christ, who will speak and write and broadcast and televise in order to influence public opinion.

Our third power as Christians is the power of example. Truth is powerful when it's argued. It's more powerful when it's exhibited. People need not only to understand the argument. They need to see the benefits of the argument with their own eyes. It's hard to exaggerate the power for good that a thoroughly Christian family can exert, for instance, in a public housing development. The whole community can see the husband and wife loving and honoring one another, devoted and faithful to one another, and finding fulfillment in one another. They see the children growing up in the security of a loving and disciplined home. They see a family not turned in on itself, but turned outward—entertaining strangers, welcoming, keeping an open home, seeking to get involved in the concerns of the community. One Christian nurse in a hospital; one Christian teacher in a school; one Christian in a shop, in a factory, or in an office—we will all make a difference, for good or for ill. Christians are marked people. The world is watching. And God's major way of changing the old society is to implant within it his new society, with its different values, different standards, different joys, and different goals. Our hope is that the watching world will see these differences, and find them attractive, that they "may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Fourth, Christians have the power of group solidarity—the power of a dedicated minority. According to the American sociologist Robert Bellah, at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University, "We should not underestimate the significance of the small group of people who have a vision of a just and gentle world. The quality of a whole culture may be changed when two percent of its people have a new vision." That was the way of Jesus. He began with a small group of only 12 dedicated people. Within a few years, Roman officials complained they were turning the world upside down. There is a great need for dedicated Christian groups committed to one another, committed to a

vision of justice, committed to Christ; groups that will pray together, think together, formulate policies together, and get to work together in the community.

Do you want to see your national life made more pleasing to God? Do you have a vision of a new godliness, a new justice, a new freedom, a new righteousness, a new compassion? Do you wish to repent of sub-Christian pessimism? Will you reaffirm your confidence in the power of God, in the power of prayer, of truth, of example, of group commitment—and of the gospel? Let's offer ourselves to God, as instruments in his hands—as salt and light in the community. The church could have an enormous influence for good, in every nation on earth, if it would commit itself totally to Christ. Let's give ourselves to him, who gave himself for us.

Our compelling career includes the task of passionate prayer, the work of standing for truth, the commitment of example, and the task of joining with others who want to make a difference.

D. Abundance in A Cherished Choice. Abundance of A Compelling Career.

(I See God's People...)

- A. Abundance with a Certain Conclusion. (Vs.21).²¹ *God made him who had no sin to be sin^[b] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
- B. The last lesson concerning the abundance of salvation has to do with motive. Why put our lives on display. Why take the chance of ridicule? Why should we be ill at ease sitting on the sidelines and letting everyone do the work in and for the church... which in reality is making the choice to sit on the sidelines for Christ Himself? It's quite simple really: What's wrong with us has been made right through and in Him. Paul put it this way: *And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*
- C. Because we are forgiven, because we have been loved, because Christ has not only saved us but claimed us, because He died for me... is to really too much to ask to live for Him. He has made alive in Him, he has giving us the promise, *You believe in God, believe also in me, For in my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a*

place for you. And if I go I will come again to receive you to myself that where I am you may be also.

- D. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:^[a] The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin^[b] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

(I See God's People... Do you)