

# Jesus With Skin On

Long Beach Alliance Church • May 25, 2014 • Pastor Chris Lankford

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

~2 Corinthians 5:20-21 (ESV)

## 1) From Hostility To Peace...

- A) Jesus Christ Himself provides peace with God through the means of His blood sacrifice on the cross (Ephesians 2:13-16). The sacrifice of Christ also provides peace between people, the removal of hostilities based on ethnic or national differences.
- B) God's plans for all mankind (Genesis 12:1-3) come together in the sacrifice of God in Jesus Christ. "Through the cross," Jesus Christ makes "one body," a "new creation" which brings reconciliation (2:16).
- C) A casual reading of these verses bring a certain kind of satisfaction because they speak of our own salvation, the reconciliation of our own "hostile" souls by faith in Jesus Christ caused by God's grace (2:1-16).
- D) But a more careful reading, taking care to consider the flow of thought, leads us to a purpose statement to 'preach peace... to those far off and those near' (2:17).
- E) The 'proclamation of good news' which is 'peace to those far away' from God and 'peace to those who are nearer' to God is not simply a report of God's grace-activity among men in the past, but also His Spirit driven (Trinitarian) action among mankind in the present (2:17-18). The reconciliatory activity of God is still in the making (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)!

## **2) Ministry Of Reconciliation**

- A) The message of peace with God through Jesus Christ is the great message of “anyone in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17), all those who have been made into a “new creation.”
- B) Simply put, the message of reconciliation is not for those already reconciled, the saved (Ephesians 1:13). The message of reconciliation is for those who are living in current hostility to God, those who have not yet yielded their lives to Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10-11).
- C) This is the “service” (ministry) of every single ‘already reconciled’ follower of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-19). There is no separation between who I am in Christ, and my life and purpose in Christ.
- D) God’s people (both past and present) are commissioned with blessing the world through reconciliation. This culminates in Christ and is reproduced by all Christ-followers, resulting in unity and expansive reflection of the glory of God (Romans 15:1-7, cf. Ephesians 1:9-10).
- E) A “ministry of reconciliation” does not focus on “trespasses” (sins, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19), but rather on the cross of Jesus Christ (power of God, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5). The message is this: Jesus Christ provides peace with God through the cross of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).

## **3) You Are The Jesus They’ve Never Met**

- A) God chooses YOU! You are His “Ambassador of Reconciliation,” the “Emissary of Gospel Goodness,” His “Envoy of Peace,” His “Chosen Representative of the Cross” (2 Corinthians 5:20). God is calling others to Himself through YOU, His voice through your life!
- B) You are the Jesus most people will get to know! As His designated representative, you carry the responsibility of an ambassador (5:20). An ambassador represents the leader of their country, communicating the values and message of their citizenry to those in foreign lands.
- C) By definition, ambassadors live in foreign territory, oftentimes in hostile and unfamiliar settings. The responsibility of an ambassador is to clearly translate the message of their sovereign leader in a manner which is as understandable and acceptable as possible (cf. Ephesians 4:15).
- D) Ambassadorship is overwhelming and reveals weakness, but results in exposing the “surpassing power of God” (2 Corinthians 6:1-10, cf. 4:1-11)!

# growth group guide

“Jesus With Skin On”

(ephesians 2:13-18) may 25-30, 2014

## warm up

Have you ever “filled in” for someone? Has someone else ever represented you at a certain event? How did it go?

Any comments, observations, or questions from Sunday’s Sermon?

## chop it up

Read Ephesians 2:16. What does being “reconciled to God,” mean? How is this different from other aspects of salvation in Christ?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. How do these verses shed more light on the deas in Ephesians 2:16? What is the "message of reconciliation?" What has God "entrusted" us with, and for what purpose?



live it up

What does it look like to be an "Ambassador of Reconciliation" for Christ? Apply this responsibility to your family? In your workplace? Your neighborhood? Share with your group.



extra

It is easy to observe Jesus Christ's "sold out" Gospel life and file it under "yeah, but that was Jesus -- I can't do that kind of stuff..." What part of Jesus' life is impossible to imitate, and what part should you imitate?