

Sermon 5: The Ministry of Reconciliation: 2 Corinthians 5:17-6:2

Text: 2 Corinthians 5:17-6:2 "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation..."

Introduction:

- Paul had a tumultuous relationship with the Corinthian church.
- The story of its birth was a powerful testimony to God's providence.
- Unlike the churches at Rome and Colossae, he personally led many in the church to Christ, invested in their discipleship and endeavored to maintain an active relationship:
 - **He spent 18 months in its founding: Acts 18:11** "He continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them..."
 - **He visited them during times of internal crisis: 2 Corinthians 2:1** "I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness..."
 - **He received letters with theological and practical questions: 1 Corinthians 7:1** "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman..."
 - **He wrote non-canonical letters that were practical and sometimes painfully personal:**
 - **1 Corinthians 5:9** "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators..."
 - **2 Corinthians 2:3-4** "I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice...that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you..."
 - **He wrote two additional letters which are scripture: 1 and 2 Corinthians**
- Despite deep personal investment, he had enemies within the church who actively sought to undermine his credibility.

- This text is an important part of Paul's ministry defense, because it articulates the heart of his work.

Summary: Christians have been reconciled to God and called to embrace a ministry of representing Him to those who need reconciliation.

Proposition: We must faithfully represent Him to the lost.

Interrogative: How can we do this?

Part 1: Our position: 5:17 "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new..."

- **The miracle of regeneration in the OT: Ezekiel 11:19** "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh..."
- **Three facts about every believer:**
 - We are all united to Christ.
 - We are all new creatures in Christ.
 - All our lives have been reoriented in Him.
- **Highlights from the context: 5:9-15**
 - **We are now motivated by the Judgment Seat: 5:9-10** "We labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad..."
 - We will stand before the Judgment Seat.
 - The quality of our service will be evaluated on that day.
 - **We are motivated by God's justice: 5:11** "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..."
 - We should not the fear facing God's wrath.
 - We should be deeply sobered by the future of the lost.
 - We should labor diligently to call people to faith in Christ.
 - **We are motivated by God's love: 5:13-15** "The love of Christ constraineth us...if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again..."
 - Christian motivation is multifaceted and has built in tensions.
 - Ministry motivation should have a sense of weight, soberness, and warmth.
 - The more fully we understand God's love, the more deeply it will grip our hearts.

Part 2: Our calling: 5:18-20 "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God

- **We are ambassadors: 5:20** "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ..."
 - We have received a formal commission.
 - We are entrusted with a message with inherent power.
 - We represent Him to the lost.
- **We have been given the word of reconciliation: 5:20** "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God..."
 - All people are born into the world at enmity with God.
 - Reconciliation comes through God's action for and toward us.
 - We are called to be peacemakers based on that action.
- **We should feel the weight of this role:**
 - **We should feel the weight of stewardship: 5:19** "Hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation..."
 - **We should be willing to walk alongside the lost: 5:20** "God did beseech you by us..."
 - **We should compel people to be reconciled to God: 5:20** "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God..."

Part 3: Our message: 5:21 "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him..."

- **We must preach the gospel: Isaiah 53**
 - **We preach the Father's work in our redemption:** "He hath made him..."
 - **53:6** "The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all..."
 - **53:10** "It pleased the LORD to bruise him..."
 - **53:10** "He hath put him to grief..."
 - **53:10** "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin..."
 - **53:10** "The pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand..."
 - **53:11** "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied..."
 - **We preach the Son's work in our redemption:** "Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin..."
 - **53:4** "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows..."
 - **53:5** "He was wounded for our transgressions..."
 - **53:5** "He was bruised for our iniquities..."
 - **53:5** "The chastisement of our peace was upon him..."

- **53:8** "For the transgression of my people was he stricken..."
- **53:11** "My righteous servant shall justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities..."
- **53:12** "He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors..."
- **We preach justification by faith alone:** "That we might be made the righteousness of God in him..."
 - **Romans 3:21-22** "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets...the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe..."
 - **Romans 3:24** "Justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..."
 - **Philippians 3:9** "Being found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith..."
- **Expanding this point: 4:6-7** "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us..."
 - **God was never passive about our terrible predicament:**
 - **He took action to secure our redemption: 1 Peter 1:18-21** "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things...But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you..."
 - **He issued a command: 6:6** "Commanded the light to shine out of darkness..."
 - **Romans 10:14-15, 17-18** "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God...verily, their sound went into all

the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world..."

- **He worked personally in our hearts through the gospel: 6:6** "Hath shined in our hearts..."
- **He saved us to take the light to others: 6:6** "To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ..."
- **He allows us to participate in His work: 6:7** "That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us..."

Part 4: Our enabling: 6:1-2 "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation..."

- **His work is pressing:**
 - **6:1** "We beseech you..."
 - **6:2** "Now is the accepted time..."
 - **6:2** "Now is the day of salvation..."
- **His calling always comes with empowerment:**
 - **We are co-laborers with God in this work:** "Workers together with him..."
 - **1 Corinthians 3:9** "We are labourers together with God..."
 - **We have been given a special measure of grace to fulfill this ministry:** "Receive not the grace of God in vain..."
 - **1 Corinthians 3:10** "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon..."
 - **He aids us in the work:** "I have succoured thee..."
- **The time is short: This passage quotes from Isaiah 49:6-12** "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth...Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee...That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them...Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west..."
 - Like OT Israel, we are given a critical function in the world.
 - Like OT Israel, that window of ministry is limited.

- We must embrace this time, utilize these tools, and be faithful in this moment.
- Each generation till Christ returns will face this task and must choose to be faithful.

Applying this passage:

- **Non-Christian:**
 - **We all need to be reconciled to God.**
 - **He is calling you to repent and believe on Christ.**
 - **Turn to Him today and embrace His offer of salvation.**
- **Christian:**
 - **We are new creatures in Christ.**
 - **We have been called to represent Him in our sphere of influence.**
 - **We have been entrusted with the gospel.**
 - **We have been fully equipped us to function in that calling.**
 - **We are uniquely fitted to touch others' lives:**
 - Our personality
 - Our strengths and weaknesses
 - Our background
 - The things we have overcome
 - The lessons we have learned
 - **We are uniquely placed to reach into others' lives:**
 - Our children.
 - Our workplace
 - Our season of life
 - Our friends
 - Our neighbors
 - **We must open our eyes to opportunity:**
 - Set aside time to pray for our missionaries.
 - Purpose to support missionaries in our local church.
 - Take time to write them a specific note of encouragement.
 - Invest in the next generation
 - Invest in peers.
 - Invest in personal growth
 - **Be willing to get involved in specific areas of ministry:**
 - **FTL Studies:** Tuesday
 - **Ladies' Study:** Friday
 - **Rescue Mission:** Monthly
 - **College Ministry:** If we have interest
 - **Let's faithfully represent Him to the lost!**