

2 Cor 5:18-21 The Ministry of Reconciliation

As a Pastor I get bombarded every month with letters emails and flyers promoting some cause that we need to get behind as a Church.

Or some injustice that we need to stand behind as a Church –

Or Some event or need they would like us to promote

I do believe that there is a place for political activism for us as Christians – we need believers in Govt –

We as Christians definitely need to stand for righteousness and for the truth

But I think some Christians and Churches lose sight of the bigger picture – THE MAIN THING we are really called to do –

A)The main thing is distinctively articulated in this passage.

B)It's a very simple passage. It's not a complex one!

It is definitive in every sense.

C)It lays down for us what the objective and goal and priority of our life and ministry has to be.

1)It delineates for us our responsibility in the world before us, as we represent the Lord Jesus Christ and it does so in no uncertain terms. RD V.18-21

So this is the bottom line! What we are to be about is the ministry of reconciliation.

A)We get to tell sinners that they can be reconciled to God. That's what we do.

B)That's the only reason we're really here on Earth.

C)Everything else we could do better in Heaven.

- 1) purer fellowship there,**
- 2) purer worship there,**
- 3) purer lives there,**
- 4) purer everything there.**

D)The only reason we're here is because we have this ministry of reconciliation.

The word 'reconciliation' is used 5 times in that brief text.

A) Reconciliation is a very important word. It simply means that man and God can get together.

B) Man was separated from God because of Sin. Enemies of God rebellious.

1) But the message of the gospel is that man can be reconciled to God.

2) Brought to God his relationship with God changed and restored

D) God has called us to preach this message. To train our people so they can preach this message.

1) This is the mission of the church.

This is what we go into all the world to do.

A) This is what we preach to every creature.

This is the content of the great commission.

B) This is the very thing that Satan wants to distract us from doing.

1) Satan doesn't want Christians to understand this message or it's Power

Now in verse 19 at the end of the verse, it says, "He has committed to us the word of reconciliation." A) Literally, "he has committed to us" means he has placed in us.

B) God has placed – entrusted into us this word of reconciliation

C) Word here is Logos = message but more than that – It came to refer to that which was true and trustworthy,

1) as opposed to what was, **muthos, meaning myth**

D) So We have then been given in a world of religious myths the truth, the truth about how men can be reconciled to God.

E) And that, of course, is the most needed of all messages because apart from that reconciliation men will spend eternity in burning hell.

Acts 13:26 The logos or word of Salvation

1 Corinthians 1:18 The logos of the Cross

Philippians 2:16 the logos of life, the word of life which is what we hold forth.

Our message as opposed to all the myths that exist in the world, it is the truth about salvation,

A) It is the truth about the cross.

B) It is the truth about life with God.

And it is the truth about reconciliation.

That is what God has placed in us! – That is what we represent –

V.20 Calls us AMBASSADORS for Christ.

It's a very noble word.

A) An ambassador represents his government in all of its character, all of its dignity, & in all of its philosophy.

B) To reject an ambassador or to mistreat him is to reject & mistreat the govt which he represents.

C) An ambassador speaks holy for his ruler, he is his ruler's mouthpiece. **He never utters his own thoughts.**

D) He never offers promises, demands his own things, but rather those things of his kingdom.

An ambassador does not speak to please his audience, but the King who sent him.

A) So, an ambassador is a messenger. An ambassador is a representative.

B) And in Paul's day such a duty was as highly respected as it is today, if not more so.

**C) Generally speaking when the Roman govt would conquer a particular country,
1) they would put into that country as many as ten ambassadors in that country to represent their interest.**

So an ambassador is also in a foreign land.

A) He spends his life with those who are strange to him.

B) He has to speak a different language. He has to interface with a different culture.

1) He has to bear a different life style.

2) He has to endure a different tradition.

C) He lives really in a foreign world. And in that foreign world he represents his own king,

1) his own kingdom and he brings the message of his sovereign.

D) Church that is a Very graphic picture of our calling in this world.

But this is the question that we need to answer today from this text.

A)What then is the ministry of reconciliation? What is this word of reconciliation?

B)How did this reconciliation happen? How is it possible and how is it attainable?

C)How is it that God can reconcile sinners and how is it that sinners can be reconciled to God?

1)That is what we will do for the rest of our time this morning – celebrate Communion.

In my judgment this is the most theological part of this letter shares TWO KEY DOCTRINES of the Bible – The Doctrine of Reconciliation & the Doctrine of Imputation

4 points we want to consider:

Pt #1 Reconciliation begins with God.

A)Starting in verse 18 we read this, "Now all these things are from God who reconciled us."

B)Then verse 19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world."

1)Then verse 20, "God is pleading through us."

C) All of those indicate to us that the plan of Reconciliation comes from God.

That is where this starts: God by nature is a reconciling God.

A)When I was a youth Pastor one thing that we did almost every summer is we would make our way down to the beach – we would do this survey –

B)Very effective means of evangelism – I made it up – started with basic questions – Hero

1)Who is someone who influenced you – special to you and why

C)Move to asking question about God. Do you believe in God – Yes How describe Him

1)No if you did what would God be like

D)Two answers – God was mean – angry with them – Or God was old grandpa – loves them there when they need him –

I think that those are two prevalent pictures that Pp have of God today.

A)The Corinthians to whom Paul was writing - lived in a poly-theistic kind of world; a world of a MANY of deities.

B)Typically in the study of ethnology or the science of religions of the world we find that

the dominant theme built around the deities of man's making is that they are not by nature friendly toward people.

C)They are on the one hand indifferent, {Baal Yell louder maybe he is on vacation}
1)on the other hand hostile and they run sort of a continuum along that span.

D)The People in those ancient cultures lived with this incredible fear of upsetting the gods
1)Or they were always seeking to do these crazy things to try and appease the gods

E)Molech – Sacrifice your Child on the burning arms – in order to have a good crop that year

But the God of the Bible is not Hostile or indifferent A)From the very beginning of the Story of man – God is seen Pursuing man

B)Coming to walk in the Garden with Adam – Pursuing relationship – before the fall.
1) wanting to be close

C)After the fall – God comes into the Garden seeking Adam where are you? -

D) From that time " God has been seeking sinners. God seeks to be reconciled.
1)It is his nature to be a saving God.

In Ezekiel 34:16 God said, "I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick."

That's God's nature, to save.

A)Luke19 "For the son of man has come to," what? "To seek and to save that which was lost."

**B)There is the character of God made manifest.
THE GOD WHO SEEKS THE LOST**

C)In Luke chapter 15 Jesus tells 3 Parables that illustrate God's heart for seeking those who are lost – Lost coin / Sheep / Son –

D)There is great rejoicing and celebration when that which was lost is found

**So God is a pursuer of Men – He is after hearts
Reconciliation begins with Him!**

A)This is the point that Paul is making for us here in V 18 "Now all these things are from

God,"

B) Reconciliation is a work of God

- 1) Sinners have no power to satisfy God's anger, no power to satisfy God's holy justice,
- 2) no power to satisfy God's standard of righteousness.

C) No power to somehow mitigate God's anger toward sin. They have no power to do that.

D) Sinners are simply offenders who have broken the law of God, are therefore banished eternally from God's presence.

Actually from the human viewpoint if you look at the depravity of man compare it to the infinite and perfect holiness of God.

A) It would seem that there would ever be a possibility of reconciliation.

B) Nor would there be any reason for it – Why would a perfect holy – majestic all powerful – God want anything to do with us.

C) So any change that was going to come out of our standing with God – would have to come from Him!

1) **That is Paul's pt. Reconciliation is from God**

D) That is the gospel, that God so loved sinners that He sought a way of reconciliation.

1) He sought a way to reconcile Himself with sinners, to make sinners His friends.

The Problem with all the religions of the world apart from Christianity is based on the premise that somehow man can find a means by which to somehow mitigate the hostility of God.

But Man never makes reconciliation. It is not what he does, it is what he receives.

A) It is not what he accomplishes, it is what he embraces..

B) You don't have to accomplish it, you just need to receive it. God is the author. God is the source.

So Pt #1 reconciliation is by the will of God!

Pt #2 It is by the forgiveness of sins.

A) It is by the forgiveness of sins.

B) There is no reconciliation without the forgiveness of sins. Look at verse 19, "**God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.**"

C)How could he do that? Only one way, by not counting what? **Their trespasses against them.**

The only way that we could ever be reconciled to God is if the barrier, which is sin, is out of the way. A)God is reconciling sinners to himself and he can only do that one way and that is by not counting their trespasses against them.

B)Here in lied the Dilemma! God is loving God who pursues sinners. But he is also a Just God

1)He is a Just Judge – He cannot simply wink and sin

C)His love and Justice – His grace and truth His mercy and righteousness go hand in hand.

D)So what could God do to forgive sins but still maintain – His Righteousness and Justice?

1)How can God...to put it in the language of Romans 3:26 "**how can God be just and the justifier of sinners?"**

How can...how can He do that?

A)Because as soon as He just passes over everybody's sin, forgives it, He stops being just.

B)Justice punishes sin.

C)If I am a Judge – Mass murderer – confession begs for mercy – compassionate – not just

Victims families – say – that is not right!

So How would God do that?

V.21 – Tells us what He did.

Verse 21, "He made Him, Christ, who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

There's the key to everything.

A)Christ had to be made sin. He had to die our death. He had to suffer our punishment.

B)Jesus knew no sin became sin {Think about this}

The one of whom the Father said, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased."

The one of whom the writer or Hebrew says, "**He is holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.**" He became sin

C)The Doctrine of Imputation

B) *Imputation*. is a word borrowed from banking; it simply means “to put to one’s account.”

D) When you deposit money in the bank, the computer (or the clerk) puts that amount to your account, or to your credit.

C) When Jesus died on the cross, all of our sins were imputed to Him—put to His account.

1) He was treated by God as though He had actually committed those sins.

He did not become a sinner – But He was treated as one!

A) All the wrath of God was imputed to Him

B) God treated Jesus on the cross as if he had committed every sin ever committed by every person who would ever believe.

C) That means that God exploded on him the full fury of all his wrath for all the sins of all of humanity

C) The Father lay upon the Son all the guilt and wrath our sin deserved.

D) At that Moment the Father became estranged & Alienated from His Son whom He had always been together w/ { *My God* *Me* }Sons perspective

E) Ever lose your Child – Sick feeling inside – Fathers perspective – Broke his heart

God was in Christ – They were together in this!

If you understand that you understand the first half of substitution and imputation.

A) But there's another side wonderfully.

He made him who knew no sin to be sin for us on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

B) What does that mean? Jesus took your sin and you were given his righteousness!

C) Your Position in Christ – God treats you Holy and righteous

Invited to come into his presence – part of his family – hold head high – no tension – no shame

Family Squabbles

D) That my friends is the Glory of God's work of reconciliation

Pt.#3 Who is Reconciliation available to?

A) Notice how Paul puts this in v.19a *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself:*

B) This work was done for the World.

C) Now those who believe in Universalism like to say: Everyone is going to be saved in the end.

1) They like to quote from 1 Timothy 2:3 “**God is our Savior who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**”

That is true – but that doesn't mean that all men will come to the knowledge of the truth.

A) The Bible says – two roads – actually more pp on the broad road leading to destruction than the narrow road that leads to life.

B) Narrow for one reason – **ONE WAY TO GOD**

C) Again 1 Timothy 4:10 - God is the Savior of all men.

D) One side of the dilemma – the Universalist – say Jesus died – so that everyone could be saved –

Then on the other side of the coin – Calvinist – Reform theology – The world means – elect. Some elected to be saved – some to be damned

So we have to address that issue. And I want to do that just very briefly.

A) There are a number of Scripture passages that indicate that Christ died for the whole world.

B) There's no question about that. John 1:29 "**Behold the Lamb of God who takes the sin of the world.**"

In John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son."

C) World is understood as mankind in general

1) Sphere of Humanity – every tribe & tongue

Christ died to reconcile humanity to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them.
John 6:51, "The bread which I give for the life of the world is My flesh."

1 John 2:2, "He is the propitiation for our sins and not ours only but the sins of the whole world."

1 Timothy 2:6, "He gave Himself a ransom for all." Hebrews 2:9, "So that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone."

Now listen carefully to what I say. Christ's death in itself does have infinite and unlimited value because He is the infinite Son of God.

A) So His sacrifice is sufficient to pay the penalty for the sins of as many or as few as God saves?

B) The question is not about the intrinsic merit of Christ's death, **that is unlimited**. You have a Savior of infinite value who provides a sacrifice of infinite worth

C) So the offer of salvation then is legitimately unlimited as well.

1) We can plead with everyone to be reconciled to God

D) But the actual atonement, was made only for those who would believe.

PT#4 Reconciliation is entered into through faith

A) Which is why we are pleading w/ me be God!

What a Beautiful picture that Paul paints here of the almighty God pleading w/ Men – to turn from sin / turn to Him

A) The Creator & Sustainer of the Universe pleading with guilty men and women to turn from their sins and be forgiven.

B) Reminds me of the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:37 looking over the city of Jerusalem: "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her Chicks under her wings, But you were not willing !!!*

C) Listen is that the Story of your life today: Not saved –

D) Has the God of Love & Grace been calling out to you { pleading w/ you – *Come to me*

Be reconciled to me by surrendering your heart to the work of my son

E) But you are not willing – [Sad day] – God's heart Breaks