**2 CORINTHIANS 5:19-21 RECONCILIATION---ITS PROCLAMATION**

How does God deal with sin? How does He reconcile sinners? How does He satisfy his just and holy condemnation of sin with a full and deserved punishment and still be able to show mercy to sinners who deserve no mercy? How does He do that? The answer comes in the section we are in today. Reconciliation was the key word we looked at last week and we continue with that theme today. Reconciliation is by the will of God, by the act of justification, by the obedience of faith and by the work of substitution.

Many pastors and many preachers seem to be struggling and groping to find or form a clear statement and direction for their ministry. Perhaps we've asked the questions that need not to be asked, such as...what is the preacher's mission?...what is the preacher's priority?...because here it is to abundantly clear what the answer to those questions really is. In spite of the clarity with which Scripture preaches its message to us about the priority for our message, we have an almost endless variety of suggestions about methods and means and strategies and styles and approaches to ministry. And sometimes we can get caught up in that to the degree that we miss the main thing. The main thing is distinctively articulated in this passage.

In fact, it's a very simple passage. It's not a complex one. It's not particularly difficult to interpret, to discern, or to apply. It is definitive in every sense. It lays down for us what the objective and goal and priority of our life and ministry has to be. 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.

It is all about the ministry of reconciliation. The text and the term itself forms the heart and soul of our responsibility, particularly those of us who are preachers. God has called us to preach the message of reconciliation. It is our duty then to tell people they can be reconciled to God. Our mission, to bring the message of reconciliation to sinners, to preach to them the gospel, the good news, the evangel, that the relationship of hostility, the relationship of hatred, the relationship of animosity, the relationship of enmity, the relationship of alienation between God and sinful man can be totally changed so that enemies can become forever friends.

**1. AMBASSADORS 5:19-20**

A. THE WORD OF RECONCILIATION

The verb *committed* *(themenos)* denotes a divine appointment (Maurer 1972:157). This was a deliberate and carefully considered action on God's part. The nature of Paul's appointment was to serve as one of *Christ's ambassadors* delivering the message of reconciliation.

LOGOS MESSAGE, TRUE, TRUSTWORTHY

MATTHEW 13:19, ACTS 13:26, ACTS 15:7, 1 COR 1:18, PHIL 2:16,

EPH 1:13, COL 1:5

B. AMBASSADOR

PRESBEUO ELDER OLDER REPRESENTATIVE,MESSENGER The verb *presbeuw* *(are ambassadors)* means to be "elder" or "first in rank" (Liddell, Scott and Jones 1978). Here we might think of the role of the statesman, where age and high rank often go together. Then as now, an ambassador was someone who represented the interests of his or her nation abroad. In the Old Testament the range of duties included offering congratulations (1 Kings 5:1; 2 Sam 8:10), soliciting favors (Num 20:14), making alliances (Josh 9:3-7) and protesting wrongful actions (Judg 11:12). The Roman counterpart to the Greek *presbeutes* was the legate *(legatus),* who was duly appointed by the emperor to administer the imperial provinces on his behalf. An ambassador, very simply, is a representative of the personal ruler of a land. . An ambassador represents his government in all of its character and all of its dignity, in all of its philosophy. To scorn then an ambassador or to mistreat him is to scorn and mistreat the government which he represents. To send him away is to break off relations with the government and the ruler whom he represents. An ambassador speaks holy for his ruler, he is his ruler's mouthpiece. He never utters his own thoughts. He never offers promises, demands his own things, but rather those things of his kingdom. And certainly an ambassador's person and character and virtue lend weight to the authenticity and dignity of his kingdom. So an ambassador is also in a foreign land. He spends his life with those who are strange to him. He has to speak a different language. He has to interface with a different culture. He has to bear a different life style. He has to endure a different tradition. He lives really in a foreign world. And in that foreign world he represents his own king, his own monarch, his own kingdom and he brings the message of his sovereign. Very graphic terms, aren't they, in which to understand our calling.

Here we are in this alien world and we are ambassadors for the kingdom of God

Our citizenship is in heaven. We are ambassadors here. We don’t belong here. We have our citizenship in heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are ambassadors here. We don’t belong here. We have our citizenship in heaven.

PHIL 3:20, 1 PETER 2:11

PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS OF RECONCILIATION TO THE KING

C. GOD MAKING AN APPEAL THROUGH US

God, the God of heaven entreating men to be reconciled to him through us. No calling could be greater than that. That’s why CH. Spurgeon said, “If God has called you to be a minister of the gospel of Christ, don’t stoop to become a king.” So we are ambassadors as though God were entreating through us. The God of heaven, begging or entreating or beseeching transgressors to receive the reconciliation he has provided. What a calling. One could never have a calling in this life that could compare with that. Christ’s men are the voice of God. And this does not pertain simply to preachers, apostles. It pertains to every one of us who is a believer in Christ and who opens our lips to give the gospel to our fellow men and women.

GOD COMING ALONGSIDE CALLING THE SINNER TO FAITH

Paul was similarly appointed by God to administer the gospel *on Christ's behalf* (*hyper Christou;* compare Eph 3:2). It is as though God himself were making a personal and direct appeal through Paul (v. 20).

D. BE RECONCILED TO GOD

And the message is very simple, be reconciled to God, appropriate by faith the reconciliation that is available through that which Jesus Christ accomplished in his death on the cross. It is then the greatest work in the world, for it deals with the greatest issue in the world. It is the greatest calling, it is the greatest privilege to be given the responsibility to preach the message of reconciliation. That's what we live for.

THE MESSAGE OF THE AMBASSADOR

This is an amazing statement. The reconciled become reconcilers

When St. Paul says that God has given him the ministry of reconciliation, he means that he is a preacher of this peace. He ministers reconciliation to the world. . . . It is not the main part of his vocation to tell men to make their peace with God, but to tell them that God has made peace with the world. At bottom, the Gospel is not good advice, but good news. All the good advice it gives is summed up in this – Receive the good news. But if the good news be taken away; if we cannot say, God has made peace, God has dealt seriously with His condemnation of sin, so that it no longer stands in the way of your return to Him; if we cannot say, Here is the reconciliation, receive it, -- then for man's actual state we have no Gospel at all. Reconciliation is both an accomplished fact (v. 18) and a continuing process (v. 19). Although it is a done deed as a result of Christ's work on the cross, it nonetheless must be personally appropriated. This is where Paul and the gospel ministry fit into the picture. He, and those like him, function as God's agents in proclaiming what has been accomplished. To use Paul's language, God has appointed them to preach the word of reconciliation (v. 19) and so they proclaim: *Be reconciled to God* (v. 20). Two things need to be noted. First, the verb is passive. It is not that we must reconcile ourselves to God--as would be the case with the Greeks or Romans vis-à-vis their gods. Rather, we are to *be reconciled,* that is, to accept what God has already achieved. Second, the gospel minister's job is not to bring about reconciliation but to announce what has already occurred. In a real sense, he or she is the town crier or herald proclaiming a news item of earth-shaking significance. In fact we take on the role of the herald each Christmas when we sing the well-known lines by Charles Wesley: "Hark! The herald angels sing, `Glory to the newborn king, / Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!'"

But what we recount in song Paul proclaimed in earnest. For all that remains for humankind to do is to receive what God has effected. Yet how can they receive it unless they have heard about it? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them (Rom 10:14-15)? "How beautiful . . . are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Is 52:7). The demand for heralds remains a pressing one today. For the need is still as desperate and the news just as vital

JOHN 1:12, ROMANS 3:26, ACTS 16:31, ROMANS 10:14-15

When Christ's work was done, the reconciliation of the world was accomplished. When men were called to receive it, they were called to a relation to God, not in which they would no more be against Him – though that is included – but in which they would no more have Him against them. There would be no condemnation thenceforth to those who were in Christ Jesus" (James Denney).

Our mission, to bring the message of reconciliation to sinners, to preach to them the gospel, the good news, the evangel, that the relationship of hostility, the relationship of hatred, the relationship of animosity, the relationship of enmity, the relationship of alienation between God and sinful man can be totally changed so that enemies can become forever friends. That is the gospel. That is the good news. It is possible for sinners to be reconciled to God. And it is our calling to preach that reconciliation

**2. THE GREAT EXCHANGE 5:21**

Paul speaks of this as a kind of exchange. There is a remarkable statement made in a 2nd century document, the Epistle of Dognetas. It was a Christian work of the 2nd century, very early, and these words are found in it. “O, blessed exchange.” Literally the Greek word used there is sweet. “O, the sweet exchange. O, the unsearchable workmanship. O, the incredible benefits that sewed the iniquity of many should be hidden in one righteous and the righteousness of one should justify many iniquities.” Well, he was on to the truth of the exchange that Paul speaks about here. When Christ is made sin for us and we are made the righteousness of God in him.

A. THE ROLE OF GOD THE FATHER IN THE DEATH OF GOD THE SON

PSALM 22:1,15, ISA 53:4,6,10, JOHN 10:17, HEB 10:7

B. THE IMPECCABILITY OF GOD THE SON

The apostle is referring to our Lord’s earthly life, his incarnate life. He’s referring to the way in which men and God approved of him.

That as God he is without sin goes without saying, "but what is of vital importance for us and our reconciliation is that as Man, that is, in His incarnate state, Christ knew no sin, for only on that ground was He qualified to effect an atonement as Man for man" (Hughes, 212).

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." Of whom Peter said, "The just for the unjust." Jesus himself posed the question in John 8; verse 46, "Which of you convicts me of sin?" So he chose the sinless one. He, God, chose the sinless one. For what? To be made sin. He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf.

the sinlessness of God the Son - [John 8:29](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%208.29),[46](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%208.46); [9:16](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%209.16); [Heb. 7:26](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.%207.26);

[1 Pt. 1:18-19](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pt.%201.18-19); [2:22](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pt%202.22); [3:18](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pt%203.18); [1 John 3:5](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%203.5); [Acts 3:14](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%203.14); [4:27-30](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%204.27-30)

The reason trespasses are not credited to our account is that God *made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God* (v. 21). The fact that Christ *had no sin* is well documented in the New Testament. He was tempted as we are "yet was without sin" (Heb 4:15); one "set apart from sinners" (Heb 7:26). The NIV *had no sin* is actually "knew no sin" *(ton me gnonta hamartian).* The verb *ginosko* (to know) denotes personal acquaintance with something. Christ did not possess the knowledge of sin that comes through personal experience. He did not sin either in thought ("in him is no sin," 1 Jn 3:5) or in action ("he committed no sin," 1 Pet 2:22).

C. HOW JESUS WAS MADE SIN FOR US

In what sense did Jesus become a sinner? What does that mean? He made him sin. Kenneth Copeland and Kenneth Hagin, false teachers, said this, on the cross Jesus became a sinner. This is what they teach. Jesus became a sinner and then he went to Hell to suffer the just punishment of his sin for three days and when he had suffered and expiated his sin God released him to be raised from the tomb.

I'd like to suggest to you that that's not ignorance. That's blasphemy. He was as pure and sinless on the cross as he ever was before in eternity or since. He was the pure and spotless lamb, without blemish Peter says. He was not a sinner on the cross. He did not become a sinner on the cross.

There's only one way in which he can be spoken of as being made sinned and this is it and nothing more. It means this; Christ did not become a sinner. He did not break a law. He did nothing in his perfection to violate that perfection. He never failed to fulfill perfectly every holy demand and expectation. He did not sin but he was made a sinner in this sense. God treated him as if he was a sinner though he wasn't. That should be clear from the study of the sacrificial system. The animal on the altar didn't do anything to deserve that either but that animal was treated as if it was the sinner to show the sinner what the sinner deserved. God treated Jesus on the cross as if he had personally committed every sin ever committed by every person who would ever believe. That's the extent of the real atonement. God treated Jesus on the cross as if he had committed every sin ever committed by every person who would ever believe.

What does that mean that God treated him that way? That means that God exploded on him the full fury of all his wrath for all the sins of all the people who would ever believe and he took the full wrath for all of it though he was not a sinner.

guilt; i.e., the liability to suffer the penal consequences of the law. He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf,” the reference is to the fact that the Lord Jesus was made sin by divine imputation of our guilt. He was officially guilty with our guilt, is the point. He voluntarily, from his standpoint wrapped himself in our guilt, and the father meted out upon him the judgment that was due sinners.

It was in this sense, then, that Jesus was "made to be sin on our behalf."

ISAIAH 53:4-6, MATTHEW 27:46

One approach is to understand *made . . . sin* as "treated as a sinner." As our substitute, Christ came to stand in that relation with God which normally is the result of sin, that is, estranged from God and the object of his wrath (Barrett 1973:180). The second approach is to identify *made . . . sin* with Christ's assuming a human nature. Through the incarnation Christ was made "in the likeness of sinful man" (Rom 8:3). The final approach is to interpret verse 21 sacrificially as "made to be a sin offering." This draws on the Old Testament notion that God made the life of his servant a guilt offering (Is 53:10).

God treated him as if he was a sinner. If you understand that you understand the first half of substitution and imputation. The second half of this is Christ giving us His righteousness.

D. THE DOCTRINE OF IMPUTATION

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. What does that mean? Well, say it simply. Are you righteous? Are you perfectly righteous? Do you have the right to go marching into the presence of God because your life is sinless? No? Then none of is. You're not righteous but God treat's you as if you were. That's the other side of substitution.

On the cross Jesus was not a sinner but God treated him as if he was. Because of the cross you're not righteous but he treats you as if you are. Your sins have all been punished. They've all been dealt with. They've all been expiated. They've all been propitiated. They've all covered. The judgment has been paid. The fury has been spent. The wrath is over and there is therefore now no condemnation. That's imputation. That's substitution. He wasn't the sinner and I'm not righteous but God covered him with my sin and treated him as if he had committed it all. Then he treats me as if I had done only Jesus' righteous deeds. That's the Gospel. That's the ministry of reconciliation. There's no works in it anywhere. It's all of grace

GALATIANS 3:10,13

E. SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT

“That he made him to be sin on our behalf. That is, he did it as a substituionary offering on our behalf. I don’t want to labor this point too much but it just needs it because people seem to have difficulty understanding it. He was a substitutionary offering.

1 PETER 2:24

F. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

Now, the same method by which we have the imputation of sin because of Adam’s sin in the Garden of Eden, that method is the same method by which we have the imputation of God’s righteousness. He was constituted sin that we might become the righteousness of God. We are not made righteous yet, but we are regarded as such by virtue of our gracious union with him, our covenantal head.

PHILIPPIANS 3:9

"Such we are in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of

God himself. Let it be counted folly or frenzy or fury or whatever. It is our

wisdom and our comfort; we care for no knowledge in the world but this:

that man hath sinned and God hath suffered; that God hath made himself

the sin of men, and that men are made the righteousness of God"

(Thomas Hooker).