

"The Ministry of Reconciliation"

Part 2

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Introduction: Tonight as we return to our study of 2 Corinthians we need to do a short review since it has been several weeks since we have looked at this study.

Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians to defend his ministry and his apostleship. The church at Corinth had become divided through the false teaching and the false accusations from a group of Judaizers who had penetrated the church. These people had come in and had tried their best to mix the Law with Christianity and while they did this they also attacked the character of the Apostle Paul. Now as we have talked about before, the attack upon his character was really an attack against the Word of God. If Satan could get people to question Paul's integrity then it would cast doubt upon his letters which were the inspired Word of God. Therefore, Paul wrote this letter so as to defend his ministry and his calling.

Paul devotion and dedication to Jesus Christ caused many to question his mental health.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:13

There were those who said that Paul was "beside himself" which is another way of saying he was "mad" or "out of his mind". Paul then went on to explain that it was Christ's love for him which controlled him.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15

Paul's life was changed because he had been crucified with Christ.

Galatians 2:20

²⁰ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

The change in Paul affected the way in which he viewed others and it changed everything about his life.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:16-18

This now brings us to where we are in our study tonight.

I. **Motivations for Ministry**
Part 3

We have been looking at Paul's words in these verses and in his words we have been able to see his motivations for preaching the Gospel. So far we have looked at 2 motivations.

1. Spiritual Transformation

This is clearly seen in verse 17.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:17, 18a again.

2. God's great love for mankind and the commission.

This is what we looked at the last time we were together.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19

God became a Man and He came to this sin filled earth in order to seek and to save the lost.

Luke 19:10

¹⁰ *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

God then committed unto Paul as well as to us the ministry of reconciliation. It was Paul's responsibility to go into the world and to tell everyone that God had provided a way for all to be saved. It is also our responsibility to go into the world around us with the message of reconciliation. We are to be Christ to the world around us.

3. The office entrusted to the believer.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:20

Here Paul points to the office which had been entrusted to him and that office was an ambassador. Now an ambassador is someone who represents their home land while they are living in a foreign land. From the time when Paul was saved his citizenship changed. He was no longer a citizen of this earth but he was now a citizen of heaven and as a citizen of heaven he was to represent to King of heaven.

Philippians 3:17-20

¹⁷ Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

¹⁸ (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

¹⁹ Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

²⁰ For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

As believers we are also citizens of heaven. I need to remind myself and you that as citizens of heaven we are to live like heaven is our home. We are not to invest into this world but we are to invest in that which pertains to our eternal home.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:20 again.

Now it is very important to notice that we are not just ambassadors of heaven but here in this verse Paul tells us that we are ambassadors for Christ. This means that we are HIS representatives on this foreign soil. We are to be Christ to the people around us. In this verse Paul tells us that he was in CHRIST'S STEAD. The idea is that now that Jesus was serving as our Great High Priest in heaven Paul was now His representative to the Corinthians and also to everyone he encountered. The word "YOU" in this verse has been added by the translators. Paul had pleaded with the Corinthians when he first came to Corinth for them to be reconciled to God and as Christ's ambassador he was now pleading with every person he met to be reconciled to God. The word "beseech" in this verse means "to plead".

We need to notice that Paul did not command people to be saved nor did he condemn people with his words. But instead he pleaded with people to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

As we look at this verse I need to remind you that Paul did explain to people that they were sinners and that there was a payment that was required for their sin. He understood that no person could be saved if they did not see themselves as a sinner who was facing the judgment of God. When they realized that they were sinners and that they were lost and hopeless then Paul was able to explain to them how the love of God had made a way of reconciliation through the death, burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul pleaded with sinners to be reconciled to God.

Now let me get back to our thought again. We are talking about Paul's motivations for ministry. Paul's office of ambassador was something which really motivated him. Let me show you why this was so important to him.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:20 again.

Paul saw himself as walking this earth in Christ's stead. He understood that there were people he met that would never hear the Gospel if he did not speak it into their lives. Sure there was the chance another believer would come by and share the Gospel but Paul could not take the chance because there was far too much at stake. Therefore, he did all he could in every situation he was in to manifest the love of God to those he met. Let me show you how Paul handled the unexpected turns in his life.

Paul's desire in his ministry was to go to Rome as a preacher. Rome was the hub of the empire and he envisioned the people he could reach there. But God did not take him to Rome as a preacher but instead he went as a prisoner. Notice how he handled the turn of events.

Philippians 1:12-21

¹² But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

¹³ So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

¹⁴ And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

¹⁶ The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

¹⁷ But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

¹⁸ What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

¹⁹ For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

²⁰ *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.*

²¹ *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

4. Christ's suffering on the cross.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:21

Here in this verse Paul gives to us the details as to how God made man's reconciliation possible. God made His Son to be sin for us. Jesus Christ was NOT a sinner but when He was hanging on the cross God the Father treated Him as though He was a sinner.

Notice the words of Charles Spurgeon:

"Christ was not guilty, and could not be made guilty; but he was treated as if he were guilty, because he willed to stand in the place of the guilty. Yea, he was not only treated as a sinner, but he was treated as if he had been sin itself in the abstract. This is an amazing utterance. The sinless one was made to be sin."

Paul understood some of what Jesus Christ went through on the cross and he knew that what happened to Jesus on the cross should have happened to him. Jesus took his place and Jesus paid the sin debt for Paul. It was the most horrible death which any man had ever died. Isaiah gives us the most detailed description.

Isaiah 53:4-6

⁴ *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*

⁵ *But he was **wounded** [pierced through with a fatal blow] for our transgressions, he was **bruised** [utterly crushed] for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

⁶ *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath **laid** [smashed down upon Him] on him the iniquity of us all.*

Jesus died a very violent death upon the cross but the most painful part of His death was the separation from the Father.

Matthew 27:45, 46

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, **My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**

Jesus endured the judgment of God as He hung upon the cross. He endured what we would have endured if we would have died unsaved. It is important to notice that Paul says, "HE HATH MADE HIM TO BE SIN FOR US". This was the **work of God** as He sentenced His only begotten Son to death upon the cross. Let me show you something which Abraham said to his son Isaac as they made their way up Mount Moriah where Abraham was to sacrifice his son.

Genesis 22:6-8

⁶ And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

⁷ And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

⁸ And Abraham said, My son, **God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering:** so they went both of them together.

Abraham told Isaac that God would provide HIMSELF a lamb for a burnt offering. Abraham understood that God was the One who was offended by sin and therefore only He could determine the payment. He was the ONE who had to be satisfied and so He would provide Himself a Lamb and that He did. It was His Son who was the Lamb of God. Remember John the Baptist's words?

John 1:29

²⁹ The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, **Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:21 again.

There was a trade made at the cross. It was the life of Jesus which was given so that we could receive the righteousness of God.

1 Peter 2:21-24

²¹ *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*

²² *Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:*

²³ *Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:*

²⁴ *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*

Conclusion:

These were the motives for Paul giving his life to spread the Gospel.

- ✓ **Lives are changed.**
- ✓ **We have been commissioned.**
- ✓ **We are here in Christ's stead.**
- ✓ **Jesus gave His life so that we could be covered in His righteousness.**