

# A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

IN THIS WORLD, WE EXPERIENCE SUFFERINGS: BUT GLORY IS COMING

# SECOND CORINTHIANS

✠ II CORINTHIANS

An overview of the Book of Second Corinthians, by Given O. Blakely

## Lesson #25

COMMENTARY ON: 5:18-21

### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

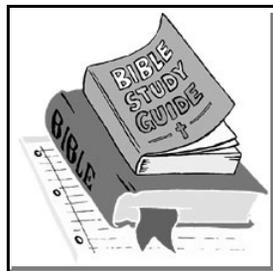
*"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."*

### THE RECONCILIATION

One of the most powerful aspects of the Gospel of Christ is the announcement of reconciliation. This is a marvelous accord that has been wrought by the Lord Jesus, who was "delivered up for our offenses, and raised again for our justification" (Rom 4:25). Sin drove a wedge between God and man, but Jesus brought them together again. This reconciliation involved two very real imputations, or transfers. They were both essential, and were both gloriously effective. Since faith "comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ," the Gospel is, by its very nature, a faith-builder and sustainer.

### 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

*"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"*



Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



## The Epistle of Second Corinthians

### Lesson Number 25



**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** **AMPLIFIED** or **AMP** = Amplified Bible, (1965), **ASV**=American Standard Version (1901), **BBE**=Bible in Basic English (1949), **DRA**=Douay-Rheims (1899), **ESV**=English Standard Version (2001), **IE** = International English, **ISV** = International Standard Version (1967), **KJV**=King James Version (1611), **LIVING** = Living Bible (1971), **MONTGOMERY** = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), **NAB**=New American Bible (2002), **NASB**=New American Standard Bible (1977), **NAU**=New American Standard Bible (1995), **NIB**=New International Bible, **NIV**=New International Version (1984), **NJB**=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), **NKJV**=New King James Version (1979), **NLT**=New Living Translation (1996), **NRSV**=New Revised Standard Version (1989), **PHILLIPS** = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), **RSV**=Revised Standard Version (1952), **TNK**=JPS Tanakh (1985), **Webster**=The Webster Bible (1833), **WEYMOUTH**=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), **WILLIAMS** = William's New Testament (1937), **TYNDALE**=Tyndale's Bible (1526), **WYCLIFFE**= Wycliffe New Testament (1382), **YLT**=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

**LEXICON LEGEND:** **FRIEBERG**=Friberg Lexicon, **UBS**=UBS Lexicon, **LOUW-NIDA**=Louw-Nida Lexicon, **LIDDELL SCOTT**=Liddell Scott Lexicon, **THAYER**=Thayer's Greek Lexicon

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

# THE RECONCILIATION

“ 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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.” (2 Cor 5:18-21)

## INTRODUCTION

Paul has affirmed that his ministry was initiated by the Lord Jesus Himself, and was in strict accord with the will of God. “*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God*” (2 Cor 1:1). That ministry was attended by the “*comfort wherewith*” he himself “*was comforted of God*” (2 Cor 1:4). While engaged in this good work “*the sufferings of Christ*” abounded in Him, together with a certain “*consolation*” which also “*aboundeth through Christ*” (2 Cor 1:5).

The purpose of his suffering was in order for “*the salvation and consolation*” of those to whom, he ministered (2 Cor 1:6). It was also “*helped*” along by the prayers of the saints (2 Cor 1:11).

Because of the very nature of the work of the Lord, it was imperative that certain things characterize Paul's ministry. The presence of these things confirmed that he was, in fact, laboring together with God (1 Cor 3:9), and was a

worker “*together with Him*” (2 Cor 6:1), as he claimed. Allow me to rehearse these things once again. It will set the stage for the great proclamations of our text, and contribute to a wholesome view of what is involved in serving the Lord.

• His conscience confirmed that he lived before the people “*in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God*” (2 Cor 1:12).

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- ☛ He neither preached nor wrote things the people could not understand, but put the truth of the Gospel within their reach (2 Cor 1:13).
- ☛ He preached a consistent message – not one that was a mixture of “Yes” and “No” (2 Cor 1:19-10).
- ☛ His message focused upon the good “promises of God,” by which we become partakers of the Divine nature (2 Cor 1:20; 2 Pet 1:4).
- ☛ God established and anointed both himself and those who received his message (2 Cor 1:21-22).
- ☛ He did not exercise dominion over the faith of the people, but was a helper of their joy (2 Cor 1:24).
- ☛ He dealt clearly and concisely with the sin that had broken out in Corinth (2 Cor 2:1-11).

- ☛ He was a sweet savor of Christ unto God in both those who were being saved, and those who were perishing (2 Cor 2:15-16).
- ☛ He did not corrupt the Word of God, but spoke in Christ in the sight of God (2 Cor 2:17).
- ☛ His sufficiency was of God (2 Cor 3:5).
- ☛ God made him an able minister of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3:6).
- ☛ He was not a minister of the letter, but of the Spirit (2 Cor 3:6).
- ☛ He preached with godly candor, forthrightness, and great boldness (2 Cor 3:12).
- ☛ He did not conceal what God had revealed (2 Cor 3:13).
- ☛ Although he faced great and sore troubles, he did not faint (2 Cor 4:1).
- ☛ He renounced “the hidden things of dishonesty” (2 Cor 4:2a).
- ☛ He did not walk “in craftiness,” or handle “the Word of God deceitfully” (2 Cor 4:2b).
- ☛ By setting forth the truth plainly, he commended himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God (2 Cor 4:2c).
- ☛ He did not preach himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and himself a servant for Jesus’ sake (2 Cor 4:5).
- ☛ Both the dying and life of Jesus was made known in his body (2 Cor 4:10-11).
- ☛ He spoke because he had believed (2 Cor 4:13).
- ☛ He did not look at temporal things, but at eternal things, which occupied his vision (2 Cor 4:18).
- ☛ He knew the established purpose of God, and shaped his ministry around it (2 Cor 5:1-5).
- ☛ He was willing to be absent from the body and present with the Lord (2

Cor 5:8).

- ☛ He labored to be accepted by God (2 Cor 5:9).

### A SUITABLE CONTEXT

These conditions provide the literary context for the affirmations of our text. Within their framework, the matters Paul now declares have great relevance. Outside of that setting, they have little or no relevancy at all.

**When religious men begin to operate by an institutional agenda, or for the praise of men and self aggrandizement, Christ, the Gospel, and the New Covenant at once are pushed into the background.** There is no alternative, for Christ, the Gospel, and the New Covenant will **not** serve the purposes of men. They are **only** relevant to people who are “laborers together with God” (1 Cor 3:9), denying themselves, taking up their cross, and following Jesus (Matt 16:24).

The closer one lives toward the world, the more prominent things that are “seen” become, taking hold of both heart and mind. As soon as a person begins focusing on things that are “temporal,” things that are “eternal” fade from view, spirituality melts away, and self is seated upon the throne. Under such a circumstance, it is not possible to work out one’s own salvation “with fear and



**The kind of life he was living, preaching, and promoting necessitated looking into the face of Jesus, and being changed from glory to glory.**

*trembling*" (Phil 2:12)? Something else is added to that scenario – **the person who is enamored of "this present evil world" has no interest in perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord** (2 Cor 7:1-2), seeking the things that are above (Colo 3:1-2), or anything else that is related to laying hold on eternal life. **If one insists on being dominated by the things pertaining to this world, it is not possible to avoid this apathetic and indifferent condition.**

Let me be clear about what I am

saying. The reason Paul speaks so differently from the preachers and teachers of our day is that **he was operating according to another agenda, and was driven by differing principles.** He had chosen a course of life, and a subject for exposition, that absolutely required Jesus, the Gospel, and the New Covenant. They were not novelties to him. **The kind of life he was living, preaching, and promoting necessitated looking into the face of Jesus, and being changed from glory to glory** (2 Cor 3:18). Let it

be clear, there is no such thing as a valid Christian life that can be lived independently of moral and spiritual change – a change that is wrought by the Holy Spirit while we look upon Jesus with an *"open,"* or unveiled, face.

**The grace of God was essential to the fulfillment of Paul's ministry – as it is with every valid ministry.** The Gospel of Christ was the theme of his exposition, and the New Covenant was the framework in which it was presented. The earth, together with its various relationships, never was the context of Paul's preaching or writing. Kingdom realities were not novelties for him. He really did *"live by every word of God"* (Lk 4:4). This is the Kingdom "norm." It is the manner in which labors are expended for Christ. There is really no other acceptable spirit or attitude that is possible to possess *"in Christ."*

**ALL THINGS ARE OF GOD**

<sup>5:18a</sup> **And all things are of God . . . "**

Ordinarily speaking, men are very hesitant to ascribe everything to God. With great caution, those who are unschooled in the text of Scripture are very careful to make plenty of room for the working of Satan, men, and "mother nature." **By this cautious approach, they think they are somehow protecting God, whom they cannot conceive is capable of doing things that inconvenience humanity, or are hurtful and even devastating.** However, there is no need for us to bend and sway with the wind of human opinion, for the Spirit has spoken quite clearly concerning the workings of the Lord, as well as His absolute sovereignty over the affairs of all created realms, and those who dwell within them.

**ALL THINGS**

*"And all things . . . "* Other versions read, *"Now all things,"* <sup>NKJK</sup> *"Now all these things,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"All this,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"But all things,"* <sup>ASV</sup> *"It is all,"* <sup>NJB</sup> *"All this newness of life,"* <sup>NLT</sup> *"and the all things,"* <sup>YLT</sup> *"All these new things,"* <sup>LIVING</sup>

*"Everything,"* <sup>IE</sup> and *"This has all."* <sup>WILLIAMS</sup>

At some point, God's people must be brought to think in terms of *"all things"* – everything!

☛ *"Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and Thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth Thee"* (Neh 9:6).

☛ *"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things"* (Acts 17:24-25).

☛ *"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had*

*by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"* (Heb 1:3).

☛ *"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created"* (Rev 4:11).

When we speak of the Lord and *"His Christ,"* we are at once in the arena of *"all things."* **There is nothing that is not under Their feet, subject to Them, and over which They do not have absolute authority and power.** There is no such thing as something or someone who is not subject to God, and over which God does not exercise absolute control.

**ARE OF GOD**

*" . . . are of God . . . "* Other versions read, *"are from God,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"is from God,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"are of the God,"* <sup>DARBY</sup> *"is all God's work,"* <sup>NJB</sup> *"comes from God,"* <sup>IE</sup> *"originated with God,"* <sup>WILLIAMS</sup> and *"is God's doing."* <sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

**Establishing Divine Sovereign**

First, it is important to establish that if God Himself, and the Lord Jesus Christ, whom He has invested with all power, are not truly over all things, salvation cannot be effected among men. **If there is any domain, good or evil, that can function independently of God, there is no hope of anyone being saved.** If there is such a thing as a will – be it of a spirit or a man – that is free to operate without regard to the Living God, then salvation is nothing more than a myth, and there is no truth to it. That is what I intend to prove.

#### A Sovereign God Is Declared

The very concept of “salvation” postulates the absolute superiority of the One who is doing the saving. Further, there really is no such thing as a rule that is not operative, or superiority that is non-functional. Such a thought is an absurdity. **If there is someone or something that can execute their will without it going through the throne of heaven, then God is not God, and Jesus cannot possibly be a Savior.**

What motivates anyone to speak of the will and freedom of men in preference to the will and freedom of God? How is it that any person would speak of man being free to choose, and not of God’s right to do so? Where is such a doctrinal approach ever taken in Scripture. Do men imagine that if we speak of Divine Sovereignty we have somehow neutralized human volition, reducing men to nothing more than robots? Does the fact that God does whatever He wills really reduce men to mere thoughtless toys, as some suggest?

The truth of the matter is that God is Sovereign – absolutely autonomous and freely operating within the confines of His own inscrutable will. His purposes are not the amalgamation of the will of His creation and His own will, and is nowhere held forth in such a manner.

#### God Is Over All

I want to press this point because it is pivotal to the development of this text. **There is a level at which everything can be traced to God Himself.**

☛ *“Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the*

*victory, and the majesty: for ALL that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; **Thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and Thou art exalted as Head above ALL.** Both riches and honor come of Thee, and Thou reignest over ALL; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to **make great, and to give strength unto ALL**” (1 Chron 29:11-12).*

☛ *“The LORD hath made **ALL things for Himself:** yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Prov 16:4).*

☛ *“Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever:*

*the glory, for ever. Amen” (Matt 6:13).*

☛ *“And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He himself gives **ALL** men life and breath and everything else. From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and **He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live**”<sup>NIV</sup> (Acts 17:25-26).*

☛ *“For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are **ALL things:** to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom*

**If there is any domain, good or evil, that can function independently of God, there is no hope of anyone being saved. If there is such a thing as a will – be it of a spirit or a man – that is free to operate without regard to the Living God, then salvation is nothing more than a myth, and there is no truth to it.**

*for wisdom and might are his: and **He changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings:** He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Dan 2:20-21).*

☛ *“How great are His signs! and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and **His dominion is from generation to generation**” (Dan 4:3).*

☛ *“And **ALL** the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and **He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth:** and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” (Dan 4:35).*

☛ *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For **Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and***

11:36).

☛ *“But to us there is but one God, the Father, **of whom are ALL things,** and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are **ALL things,** and we by him” (1 Cor 8:6).*

☛ *“One God and Father of **ALL, who is above ALL, and through ALL, and in you ALL**” (Eph 4:6).*

☛ *“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by Him were **ALL things created,** that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: **ALL things were created by Him, and for Him:** And He is before **ALL things,** and by Him **ALL things consist**” (Col 1:15-17).*

☛ *“And he said unto me, It is done. I am*

*Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely” (Rev 21:6).*

**God Causes Things to Happen**

Whether it is holy angels, the devil and his angels, or men, **God can restrain them at will.** He can also move men to do His will, fulfilling His good, pleasure.

- He can stop the devil from harming Job, and demand that he does not kill him (Job 1:12; 2:6), and Satan cannot but obey Him!

7:4; 2 Pet 2:5).

- He can cause a building project in the plain of Shinar to come to a grinding halt (Gen 11:8).
- God can cause it to rain on one city, and **not** rain on the other: to rain on one piece of ground, and **not** rain on another piece (Amos 4:7).
- He can burn up great cities at will (2 Pet 2:6).
- He “*caused*” Sennacherib to “*fall by the sword in his own land*” (2 Kgs

ejected them (Jer 30:3).

- He can “*cause*” a person to draw near to Him and approach Him (Jer 30:21).
- He can “*cause*” people to walk in a straight way (Jer 31:9).

**In The Matter of Salvation**

The dominion of the Lord is particularly made known in the matter of salvation. Divine workings are most evident in the “*salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory*” (2 Tim 2:10). A few reminders of this glorious reality will serve to prepare us for what follows.

- God draws men to Christ in order to save them (John 6:44-45).
- The Lord opens hearts in order that men may properly respond to the Gospel (Acts 16:14).
- Conviction is the result of the Spirit’s own work (John 16:8-11).
- We are the “*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied*” (1 Pet 1:2).
- It is “*given*” to men to believe (Phil 1:29).
- Repentance is “*given*” to us (Acts 5:31; 2 Tim 2:25).
- No person can “*say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit*” (1 Cor 12:3).
- God Himself has placed us in Christ (1 Cor 1:30),
- Conversion is described as God causing the light of the knowledge of the glory of God to shine in our hearts (2 Cor 4:6).
- We are God’s workmanship, “*created in Christ Jesus*” for “*good works*” (Eph 2:10).
- God has placed every member of Christ’s body precisely where He has

**The dominion of the Lord is particularly made known in the matter of salvation. Divine workings are most evident in the “salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory”**

- If He wants the king’s heart to be changed, He will turn it like the rivers of waters (Prov 21:1).
- If He wants to harden Pharaoh’s heart – or anyone else – He will (Ex 4:21; 7:3; 14:4; Rom 9:18).
- If He wants to harden the hearts of the Egyptians to follow Israel after they have pled for them to leave, He will (Ex 14:8,17).
- If He wants to harden the spirit of Sihon king of Heshbon, so that he will not let Israel pass through His land, He will, in order that He might deliver him into Israel’s hand (Deut 2:30).
- If He wants to stir up an adversary to Solomon because of his disobedience, He will (1 Kgs 11:14).
- If He wants to call for a bumper crop of corn in the midst of a famine, He will, and none can hinder Him (Ezek 36:29).
- He can cause it to rain, causing the world to be destroyed a flood (Gen

19:7).

- He can “*cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease*” (Isa 13:11).
- God can take people who “*amend*” their ways, and “*cause*” them to dwell where He wants them (Jer 7:3).
- He can disperse His own people, causing them to be removed into the kingdoms of the earth (Jer 15:4).
- He can “*cause*” the enemies of His people to plead with them in times of distress (Jer 15:11).
- He can “*cause*” people to know His hand and His might (Jer 16:21).
- He can “*cause*” people to serve their enemies, whether they want to or not (Jer 17:4).
- He can “*cause*” a disobedient people to eat the flesh of their sons and daughters (Jer 19:9).
- He can “*cause*” people to return to the land in which He once placed them, and from which He once

pleased (1 Cor 12:18).

- ☛ We are “*washed,*” “*sanctified,*” and “*justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*” (1 Cor 6:11).
- ☛ God “*makes*” a “*way of escape*” that accompanies every temptation (1 Cor 10:13).
- ☛ God “*is able to make*” His people stand (Rom 14:4).
- ☛ The Lord “*is able to keep you from falling*” (Jude 24).
- ☛ God is “*able to graft*” Israel again into the natural olive tree of Abraham (Rom 11:23).
- ☛ God “*is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work*” (2 Cor 9:8).
- ☛ Jesus is “*able to subdue all things unto Himself*” (Phil 3:21).
- ☛ Jesus is “*able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him*” (Heb 7:25).
- ☛ The Lord, who “*hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*” (Phil 1:6).
- ☛ God can direct our hearts “*into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ*” (2 Thess 3:5).
- ☛ God Himself teaches us “*to love one another*” (1 Thess 4:9).
- ☛ God “*opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles*” (Acts 14:27).

This brief textual sampling confirms the marvelous extent of “*all things*” being “*of God.*” It is ever true that “***from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. [For all things originate with Him and come from Him; all things live through Him, and all things center in and tend to consummate and to end in Him.] To Him be glory forever! Amen (so be it)***” AMPLIFIED (Romans 11:36).

**Particularly in Salvation**

Our text is generally true of everything – namely that God is somewhere in it, else it could not happen, for He is truly “*over all.*” However, the particular emphasis here regards the salvation that is in Christ, and experienced within the framework of the New Covenant. **This Divine involvement in the entirety of salvation could not possibly be true if He was not Sovereign throughout all domains, whether seen or unseen.**

The matters that have been affirmed regarding various aspects of salvation are all here traced back to God.

- ☛ Being an “*epistle of Christ,*” written “*with the Spirit of the living God*” (2 Cor 3:3).
- ☛ The experience of true “*liberty*” (2 Cor 3:17).
- ☛ Being changed “*from glory to glory,*”

**However, the particular emphasis here regards the salvation that is in Christ, and experienced within the framework of the New Covenant. This Divine involvement in the entirety of salvation could not possibly be true if He was not Sovereign throughout all domains, whether seen or unseen.**

by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor 3:18).

- ☛ Receiving “*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God*” (2 Cor 4:6).
- ☛ Having a heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel (2 Cor 4:7).
- ☛ Although troubled, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down, yet not distressed, not despairing, not forsaken, and not destroyed (2 Cor 4:8-9).
- ☛ Experiencing both the dying and the life of Jesus (2 Cor 4:10-12).
- ☛ Our outward man perishing, while our inward man is renewed “*day by*

*day*” (2 Cor 16).

- ☛ Affliction is working for us a “*far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*” (2 Cor 4:17).
- ☛ God has wrought us to inhabit our house which is from heaven - -the resurrection body (2 Cor 5:5).
- ☛ We are a “*new creation*” in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:17).

**It is necessary to have a grasp of these realities if we are to benefit from the affirmation that follows.** This is not a mere theological statement, but a rehearsal of gracious Divine accomplishments. They will only have relevance as they are associated with our own standing before the Lord. If we insist upon looking at our lives as the mere fulfillment of certain duties, these things will have no relevance to us, and we will not be able to see them. **When men**

**choose to focus on their own activities, the things that God has done are perceived as being incidental.** They are therefore easily forgotten, and have no place in the thought processes. In such a case, if they are brought up at all, men tend to speculate about them, as though they were of no consequence at all.

As this passage moves along, it will become abundantly evident that we are dealing with holy things – things that have to do with our eternal destiny. **Anything that has a lot of God and Jesus in it is, by default, of top doctrinal priority.** Also, anything that deals with men becoming righteous also rises to the top of things to be declared.

**GOD HAS RECONCILED US TO HIMSELF**

<sup>18b</sup> *... who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ ...*

What follows is the working of the God of whom are *"all things."* The clear implication is that this could not possibly have happened if *"all things"* were not *"of God."* If there is any domain over which God does not absolutely and thoroughly preside, what follows could not happen. If there is a single personality over which He does not have the ultimate control, this could not take place. If there are circumstances that

*favor, brought us into harmony with Himself,* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

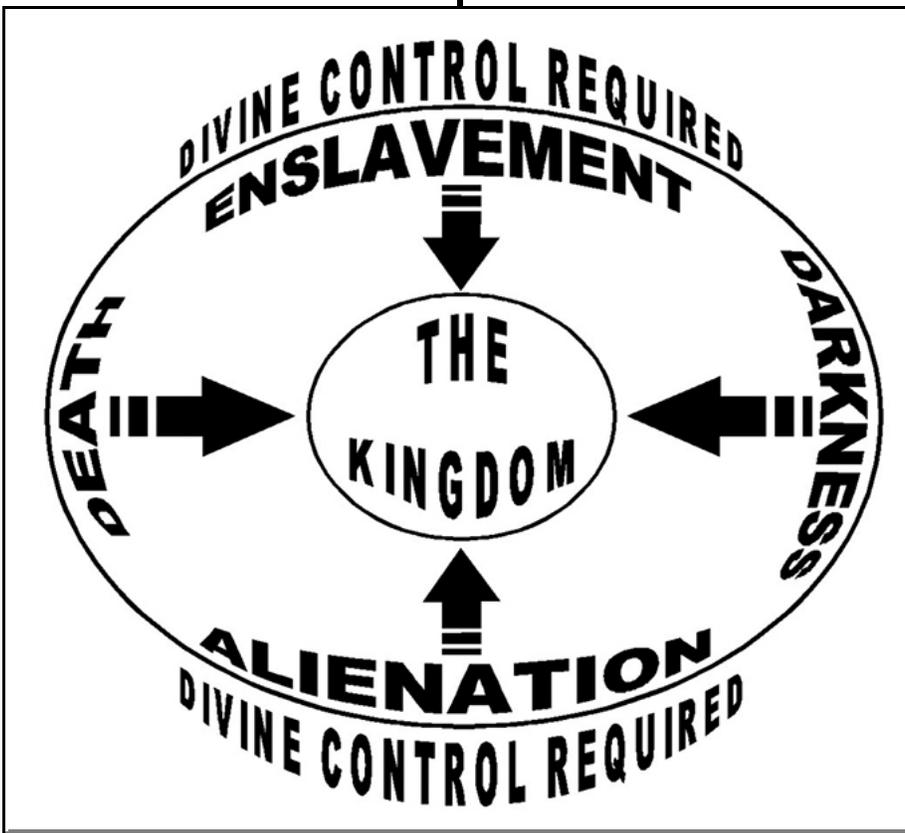
This is something that God has done, accomplished, or caused to happen. It is something that has already been achieved. It only remains for men to realize the benefits of this work.

**The Reality of Enmity**

There is a certain need for reconciliation, and it is the existence of enmity. **Sin not only introduced flaw and weakness, it brought enmity and**

*shall be saved by His life"* (Rom 5:10).

- **OUR MINDS WERE HOSTILE AGAINST GOD.** *"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be"* (Rom 8:7).
- **WE WERE DEAD TOWARD GOD.** *"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins"* (Eph 2:1).
- **WE WERE SUBJECTS OF GOD'S WRATH.** *"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others"* (Eph 2:3).
- **WE WERE ALIENATED FROM THE LIFE OF GOD.** *"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart"* (Eph 4:18).
- **WE WERE WITHOUT GOD AND WITHOUT HOPE.** *"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world"* (Eph 2:12).
- **WE WERE ALIENATED FROM, AND ENEMIES TO, GOD IN OUR MINDS.** *"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled"* (Col 1:21).



are, in fact, completely divorced from Him, and that He does not control, it is not possible for what is now stated to be true.

**WHO HATH RECONCILED US**

*"... who hath reconciled us to Himself..."* Other versions read, *"who has made us at peace with Himself,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"brought us back to Himself,"* <sup>NLT</sup> and *"reconciled us to Himself [received us into*

**hostility against God.** It pushed man away from God, and put him in war against Him as well. This is clearly proclaimed in Scripture, as well as confirmed in human reactions to God and His law.

- **WE WERE GOD'S ENEMIES.** *"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we*

In order to deliver us from these conditions – darkness, alienation, ignorance, enslavement, and death – absolute Sovereignty was required. **All of these domains had to be ultimately governed by God before we could be extricated from them.** None of these realms would yield those contained in them to anyone who did not have authority over them! It seems to me that this is obvious enough not to require extensive confirmation. **The inferior**

**MUST yield to the superior, else there is really no such things as “superior.”** If God is not “*over all*,” and the Lord Jesus, to whom He has given “*all power in heaven and earth*,” is not “*the one and only Potentate*” (1 Tim 6:15), then there can be no such thing as a Savior – particularly “*the Savior of all men*” (1 Tim 4:10).

#### “Reconciled Us To Himself”

“ . . . who hath reconciled us to Himself . . . ” Other versions read, “*who has made us at peace with Himself*,”<sup>BBE</sup> “*Who brought us back to Himself*,”<sup>NLT</sup> and “*Reconciled us to Himself [received us into favor, brought us into harmony with Himself]*.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The word “*reconciled*” comes from a word that means “to change, to reconcile (those who are at variance), to return into favor with,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “restoring relationship between God and man, reconcile, change from enmity to friendship,”<sup>FRIBERG</sup> “to put someone into friendship with God,”<sup>UBS</sup> and “to reestablish proper friendly interpersonal relations after these have been disrupted or broken.”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup>

Among other things, this confirms the magnitude of the effects of Adam’s sin. Because of his sin “*death passed upon all men*” (Rom 5:12), “*many be dead*” (Rom 5:15), “*judgment was by one unto condemnation*” (Rom 5:16), “*judgment came upon all men unto condemnation*” (Rom 5:18), and “*many were made sinners*” (Rom 5:19). **There can be no question about the reality of these effects, for they are clearly articulated in Scripture.** Sin and its effects are traced back to “*one man*” (Rom 5:12). The whole race was thrust into enmity, alienation, and hostility at the point of Adam, and **none has ever, of himself, been able to rise above Adam in his fallen state.**

All of this means that there was a very real enmity between God and humanity. It was a clash of nature – the Divine nature against the fallen nature. What was said of Israel – a race created, chosen, and cultured for God – was true of every offspring of Adam: “*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts*” (Isa 55:8-9). That was **after**

deliverance, **after** revelation, **after** guidance, **after** preference, and **after** God’s extensive involvement with them.

Whatever a person chooses to think about the love of God, it is nevertheless true that eventually the wrath of God **will** be “*revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*” (Rom 1:18). It is still true that “*God is*

*purpose*,” to be sure, but it is also something that was, in a very real way, **actually achieved.** Here, a reality is proclaimed that faith can grasp. It is something in which we can rejoice – something that is honored in heaven.

**We are speaking of a reconciliation that has already been achieved.** In order for it to be realized, it

**Working through His inscrutable wisdom, and driven by His preference for mercy, God “reconciled us to Himself.” He dealt effectively with the cause of enmity, and removed the condition that made men unacceptable.**

*angry with the wicked every day*” (Psa 7:11), and that He has “*appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness*” by the glorified Christ (Acts 17:31). **There is not the slightest chance that man in his natural state, and independent of the grace of God, will be able to survive that time.**

This is true greatness, that in a remarkable revelation of His Person, God devised a means by which alienated man could be reconciled. This was in fulfillment of a statement made by a certain “*woman of Tekoa*” to king David. Her intention was not to speak of the time declared in our text, but God was speaking through her mouth. “*For we must needs die, and are as water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him*” (2 Sam 14:14).

Working through His inscrutable wisdom, and driven by His preference for mercy, God “*reconciled us to Himself*.” He dealt effectively with the **cause** of enmity, and removed the condition that made men unacceptable.

Note, this is something that God **did**, not something that was merely planned. This was part of His “*eternal*

only needs to be received. From heaven’s point of view, nothing more needs to be done in order for men to be rightfully received by God – brought into peaceful association with Him. However, as we will see, there is more to this than that. **There is the matter of participation in the reconciliation that has already been accomplished.** There is an experiential accord that is to be realized.

#### The Newness of Reconciliation

There is something new about reconciliation itself. Prior to Christ, there was fundamental discord between God and man. While there were glimpses of Gospel truth here and there, there was a note of strangeness in them. Hear the Lord as He cries out to wayward Israel: “*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*” (Isa 1:18). There is a good sound to that call. However, it also accents the variance between God and man, **for there is no need to “reason together” where there is perfect accord.** In speaking to the only favored people on the earth – the people who had exclusive access to and benefits from Him – the Lord affirms neither their thoughts nor ways were like His (Isa 55:8-9). In another place, confirming the very real contradiction between man and God, it

was said, *“God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent”* (Num 23:19).

Prior to the Law, the concept of reconciliation was never clearly articulated. Commensurate with the giving of the Law, the Lord began to develop the notion of *“reconciliation”* or *“atonement.”* Within the Law and its various ceremonies, these words – *“atonement”* and *“reconciliation,”* together with their various derivatives – appear sixty-eight times.

- They had to do with the sanctifying, or setting apart, of the priests (Ex 29:33; Lev 16:32; Num 8:12,21), the altar (Ex 29:36-37; Lev 8:15; 16:18).
- Atonement for sin (Ex 30:10; 32:30; Lev 4:20,26,31,35; 5:6,10,13,16,18; 6:7,30; 7:7; 16:27,30,34; 19:22; 23:27-28; Num 5:8; 6:11; 15:28; 29:11).
- Atonement for the souls of people (Ex 30:15-16; Lev 17:11; Num 31:50).
- Atonement for individuals (Lev 1:4; ).
- Atonement for the congregation (Lev 8:34; 9:7; 10:17; 16:6,10,11,24; Num 8:19; 15:25; 16:46-47; 25:13; 28:22,30; 29).
- Atonement for uncleanness (Lev 12:7-8; 14:18-21, 29,31; 15:15,30)
- Atonement for an unclean house (Lev 14:53).
- Atonement for the holy place (Lev 16:16-17,20).

- Atonement for the sanctuary, the tabernacle, and the altar (Lev 16:33).
- Atonement associated with liberty (Lev 25:9)

**Sin had brought pervasive defilement, driving a wedge between God and man.** This was so extensive that those who served God had to be purified for service. The altar, sanctuary, and tabernacle in which the service was accomplished had to be purified. All sin required atonement. All uncleanness, or defilement, necessitated atonement. Defiled abodes need an atonement. Even liberty had to be initiated by an atonement.

**Reconciliation and Atonement**

The words *“atonement”* and *“reconciliation”* are derived from the same word – both in the Hebrew and in the Greek. The word *“atonement”* emphasizes the MEANS by which accord is realized. The word *“reconciliation”* accents the EFFECTIVENESS of the appointed means. In both cases, the objective was to confirm Divine acceptance.

In our text, being *“reconciled”* has to do with effectively covering the transgression that created the enmity between man and God – by the blood of Christ. It also involves a certain oneness, or accord, that is realized between God and man, which accord is itself a marvelous thing. **This reconciliation is thorough, involving men themselves, their role in the Divine economy, the work they do, and the environment in which it is accomplished.**

In effect, this reconciliation, because it is thorough and effective, becomes the basis of the New Covenant. **The Covenant could not be ratified until a acceptable reconciliation had been made – until all of the requirements for peaceful associations between God and made had been fulfilled.** The reconciliation is no more completed when it is received, than the New Covenant is completed when men come into Christ Jesus. Both the reconciliation and the Covenant based upon it, are presently complete in every sense of the word. Nothing can make them more effective or more acceptable. **The only question that remains is whether or not that reconciliation, or atonement, is received.** To put it another way, in the matter of reconciliation, God can never be more *“satisfied”* than He was with the travail of Christ’s soul (Isa 53:11). The issue now is whether that atonement, or reconciliation, is received.

**BY JESUS CHRIST**

*“ . . . by Jesus Christ . . . ”* Other versions read, *“through Christ,”* <sup>ASV</sup> *“by Jesus Christ,”* <sup>DARBY</sup> *“through what Christ did,”* <sup>NLT</sup> and *“He uses Christ.”* <sup>IE</sup>

In God’s great salvation, everything depends upon *“Jesus Christ.”* **Nothing or no one is acceptable to God that is not connected with His Son.** This condition is necessitated because of the presence and unquestionable prevalence of sin – something God cannot abide in any form. As simplistic as that may appear, it is mind boggling to consider how much is being done in the Christian community that has no professed or required association with the Son of God – particularly as it regards His death on the cross.

God accomplished the reconciliation through *“Jesus Christ.”* He, and He alone, successfully dealt with all sin and all consequent uncleanness. **By Himself He vanquished the foe, plundered his forces, and raised up a way by which to come to God. Only Jesus has prepared the heavenly places to be inhabited by men.** He alone has enabled God to be *“just and the Justifier of him”* that believes on Him (Rom 3:26).

**Sin had brought pervasive defilement, driving a wedge between God and man. This was so extensive that those who served God had to be purified for service. The altar, sanctuary, and tabernacle in which the service was accomplished had to be purified. All sin required atonement.**

**GIVEN THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION**

*“<sup>18c</sup> . . . and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”*

Here we will see how men have been brought into the purpose of the Lord – made *“laborers together with God”* (1 Cor 3:9). What God has done in Christ was *“for”* men, but did not exclude their participation. In the Old Covenant, the people themselves were involved by means of *“meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation”* (Heb 9:10). The High Priests and priests were also affianced, but that also was at a ceremonial level. However, with the exaltation of Christ, a new thing has taken place, and it is glorious.

**HATH GIVEN UNTO US**

*“. . . and hath given to us . . .”*

Other versions read, *“and gave us,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“and gave unto us,”*<sup>ASV</sup> *“and given to us,”*<sup>DARBY</sup> *“and did give us,”*<sup>YLT</sup> *“has appointed us,”*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *“He has made us.”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

**“Us”**

The *“us”* of reference is immediately the Apostles, and generally the church. The Apostles have been set *“first”* in *“the church.”* As it is written, *“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues”* (1 Cor 12:28). The Apostles are not the whole church, nor are they the recipients of the all that God has given. They are *“first”* in the *“church,”* which is Christ’s body, but they did not labor alone. Paul spoke of those who *“labored in the Gospel”* with Him (Rom 16:3,9; Phil 4:3). Even this very Epistle, which is an example of handling the *“ministry”* of reference, comes from *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy”* (2 Cor 1:1).

Here, *“us”* refers to the ones who are presently ministering – Paul and Timothy. However, it is not limited to them, but also refers to the whole of the church, who is the object of all spiritual gifts and kingdom responsibilities. The Apostles themselves were *“set in the*

*church”* (1 Cor 12:28). The church is the means by which God will receive glory *“throughout all ages, world without end”* (Eph 3:21).

Jesus once said the Kingdom of heaven *“is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods”* (Matt 25:14). This distribution is also referred to as the distribution of differing *“gifts”* (Rom 12:6-8). It is also referred to as Jesus giving *“gifts unto men . . . apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers”* (Eph 4:8,11). This is, in fact, a summary view of the stewardship that has been given to the church.

**THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION**

*“. . . the ministry of reconciliation.”* Other versions read, *“the work of making peace,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“the task of reconciling people to Him,”*<sup>NLT</sup> *“the privilege of urging everyone to come into His favor and be reconciled to Him,”*<sup>LIVING</sup>

working within us. It is why the holy angels are ministering to us. It is the reason for the Gospel, and the focus of all spiritual aptitudes.

Everything God is doing among men has to do with reconciling men to Himself – with bringing them into accord with Him, and involving them in His *“eternal purpose.”* There are no heavenly resources for any other work! Christ’s intercession is not related to any other objective. **It is at the point – and only at the point – that earthly circumstances intersect with this purpose, they they qualify for heavenly assistance.**

There is a phenomenal amount of *“church”* activity that has nothing whatsoever to do with reconciliation to God. There are human religious objectives that are an end of themselves, bring glory to men, and create honor for men. However, God has no gifts for such efforts, no strength, no support, no grace, and nowhere represents Himself in such a

**There is a phenomenal amount of “church” activity that has nothing whatsoever to do with reconciliation to God. There are human religious objectives that are an end of themselves, bring glory to men, and create honor for men.**

*“the work of bringing people back,”*<sup>IE</sup> *“the ministry of reconciliation [that by word and deed we might aim to bring others into harmony with Him,”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> *and “made us agents of reconciliation.”*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

**Here is the bottom line of all valid ministry: “reconciliation” – reconciliation to God “by Jesus Christ.”** God has no ministry, no work, no gift, that is not directly associated with this reconciliation. There are not heavenly involvements that do not have to do with this reconciliation! This is why Jesus is interceding. It is why the Holy Spirit is

way. I understand that this is somewhat startling to the institutional mind-set, but it is nevertheless true.

Reconciliation involves **more** than men being *“delivered from this present evil world”* (Gal 1:4). There is **more** to it than the *“remission of sins”* (Acts 10:43) being *“born again”* (1 Pet 1:23), and being *“added to the church”* (Acts 2:47). **Those are at the threshold of reconciliation, not at its heart.**

Right here is where the *“great commission”* mentality that dominates

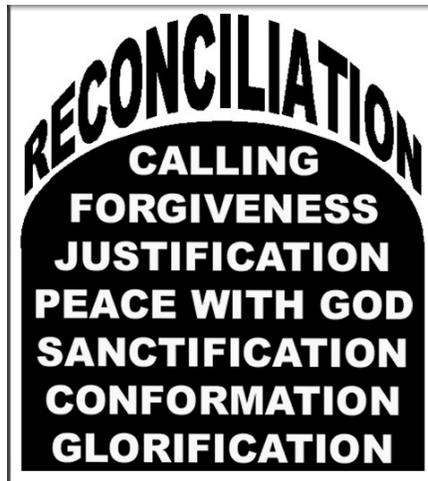
the evangelical church is exposed for the gloss that it is. This is the position that affirms the fundamental work of Jesus is bringing people to the point where they are *“baptized into Christ”* (Gal 3:27) – even though there is not a syllable of Scripture that affirms such a thing.

*“Reconciliation”* has to do with living in Christ. **It is the framework within which holy involvements with God are realized.** The life of *“reconciliation”* is described, or referenced, in a number of different ways. All have to do with life **after** we are born again – **after** we have been baptized and added to the church.

- **WALKING IN THE LIGHT.** *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7).
- **FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST.** *“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord”* (1 Cor 1:9).
- **FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON.** *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”* (1 John 1:3).
- **LABORING TOGETHER WITH GOD.** *“For we are laborers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building”* (1 Cor 3:9).
- **WALKING BY FAITH.** *“For we walk by faith, not by sight”* (2 Cor 5:7).
- **LIVING BY FAITH.** *“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him”* (Heb 10:38).
- **WALKING IN THE SPIRIT.** *“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit”* (Gal 5:25).
- **GROWING UP INTO CHRIST IN ALL THINGS.** *“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him*

*in all things, which is the head, even Christ”* (Eph 4:15).

- **KNOWING CHRIST, AND PARTICIPATING IN HIS SUFFERINGS AND RESURRECTION.** *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”* (Phil 3:10).
- **BEING CHANGED FROM GLORY TO GLORY.** *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Cor 3:18).



These are only introductory, but they all have to do with *“reconciliation”* – with being brought into peace and accord with the Living God. The *“ministry of reconciliation”* includes every gift and aptitude that has been placed within the church. It is all aimed at initiating, developing, and maintaining harmony with God and conformity to the image of Jesus Christ.

The process of *“reconciliation”* includes everything from forgiveness and justification, to being conformed to the image of God’s Son, and finally being glorified. The purpose of God, according to which we have been *“called,”* has been revealed. *“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called,*

*them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified”* (Rom 8:29-30). **In the strictest sense of the word, “reconciliation” is not complete until we are “ever with the Lord,”** for that will be the ultimate **unity of God and man.** There is no such thing as a *“reconciliation”* that does not include being conformed to Christ’s image, and finally being glorified – being *“like Him”* when we *“see Him as He is”* (1 John 3:2).

**God Himself is devoted to the realization of this purpose. Jesus is interceding to that end. The Holy Spirit is ministering and leading in order that this might be achieved. The holy angels have joined in the work, which is designed to bring the sons home to God, divested of every vestige of Adam, and fully invested with the life and characteristics of Jesus Christ.**

The absence of this emphasis is the mother of all backsliding, drawing back, lapses into immortality, indifference, and lukewarmness. **When the work of the church is turned outside of itself, everything begins to crumble, shallowness enters, and flesh is given the upper hand.** All of the Divine resources have been deposited here – in the church. **All** of the grace is here. The church **alone** is being built for *“the habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Eph 2:20). **It alone** is the means through which principalities and powers are being tutored in the manifold wisdom of God (Eph 3:10). It is the **only** body of people through whom God works for the realization of His *“eternal purpose.”* The church – and **only** the church – *“is the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Tim, 3:15). Its numbers may swell, but if it is not made suitable as a dwelling place for God, it is all to no avail.

This by no means suggests that it is right to ignore *“that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10), and none should conclude such a foolish thing. **Rather, those who remain in darkness will only be reached by those who are actually walking in the light.** Those who are ignorant of God will only be reached by those who know Him. A reconciled people will do the work of the Lord, for He, by Divine will, works in them alone.

If a people will walk with God, God will work in them. He will direct and lead them in the doing of the works in which He has appointed for them to walk (Eph 2:10). However, that will only be

done within the framework of reconciliation – of a very real accord and unanimity with God. **Let no one imagine for a moment that God employs people in His work who do**

**not think like Him.** If He delivers people from the world, only a fool will imagine that He will work for good through those who love the world and are conformed to its ways.

## GOD WAS IN CHRIST

<sup>19a</sup> *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself . . .*

Paul does not take for granted

*“how that,”* DARBY *“For,”* DOUAY *“I mean,”* NJB *“When,”* IE *“We are to tell how,”* WEYMOUTH *“For it was,”* WILLIAMS and *“It was.”* AMPLIFIED

*Christ that God was,”* WILLIAMS *“It was God [personally present] in Christ,”* AMPLIFIED and *“God was in Christ personally.”* PHILLIPS

**Paul does not take for granted that what God has done in Christ is understood. He now instructs the church more fully on the matter. He is not speaking to lost people who were visiting the church in Corinth, but to “the church of God . . . with all the saints.” This is a message for the church!**

Here is a most marvelous thing: *“God was in Christ!”* This is a technical distinction that confirms the extensive nature of God’s *“great salvation.”* Jesus was more than a Representative of God. He was, in a very real sense, *“God with us”* (Matt 1:23). He was God *“manifest in the flesh”* (1 Tim 3:16). **While it is true that Jesus is “the express Image” of God’s Person (Heb 1:3), that is not the point being made in this text.** The *“fulness of the Godhead”* does, indeed, dwell in Christ bodily (Col 2:9), but that is not what is being chronicled in this verse. Paul is **not** establishing the Deity of Jesus, although He is, as God the Father Himself said, *“God”* (Heb 1:8).

that what God has done in Christ is understood. He now instructs the church more fully on the matter. **He is not speaking to lost people who were visiting the church in Corinth, but to “the church of God . . . with all the saints”** (2 Cor 1:1). **This is a message for the church!** In Corinth, this message had been muffled by the carnality, division, and tolerance of worldly ways. **In the church of our day it has been muted by institutionalism and all of the evils that it brings. In short, what God has done is not the current point of religious emphasis.** Rather, the modern church is speaking of what men have done and ought to do. In view of what God has revealed on this matter, this circumstance cannot be ignored, and woe be to the man who attempts to do so.

The words *“to wit”* are translated from Greek conjunction  $\omega\varsigma$  (ohs). It means *“even so, thus, and for instance.”* THAYER Other lexical meanings include, *“in such a way, in the same way was, like,”* FRIBERG *“introducing a discourse on how”* a thing was accomplished. UBS

In other words, what follows explains **HOW** God *“hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.”* He did not do it by commanding that we be reconciled – as He did when He created *“the worlds”* with His word (Heb 11:3). He did not do it through a moral code, or system of Law, like the Old Covenant. Neither, indeed, is it being accomplished by means of Divine automation – a calculated process in which man himself is not involved.

### GOD WAS IN CHRIST

*“. . . that God was in Christ . . .”*

Other versions read, *“God indeed was in Christ,”* DOUAY *“in Christ God was,”* ESV *“in Christ God was,”* ISV *“it was through*

**This is a proclamation of unity – of two Persons perfectly joined together in the execution of a work.** Jesus acquainted us with this fact in several of His sayings.

- ☛ *“But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that **the Father is in me, and I in Him**”* (John 10:38). GOD WAS “IN CHRIST.”
- ☛ *“I and my Father **are one**”* (John 10:30). GOD WAS “IN CHRIST.”
- ☛ *“Believest thou not that **I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?** the words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but **the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works**”* (John 14:10). GOD WAS “IN CHRIST.”
- ☛ *“That they all may be one; as **Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in thee,** that they also may be one in Us: that*

### “TO WIT”

*“To wit . . .”* Other versions read, *“that is,”* NKJV *“namely,”* NASB *“that,”* NIV

the world may believe that thou hast sent Me” (John 17:21). GOD WAS “IN CHRIST.”

### RECONCILING THE WORLD UNTO HIMSELF

“ . . . reconciling the world unto Himself . . . ” Other versions read, “making peace between the world and Himself,”<sup>BBE</sup> “And reconciled the world to Himself,”<sup>GENEVA</sup> “a world reconciling to Himself,”<sup>YLT</sup> “restoring the world to Himself,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “bringing the people of the world back to Himself,”<sup>IE</sup> and “reconciling and restoring the world to favor with Himself.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

And what was God doing “in Christ?” Jesus said the Father, who was dwelling in Him, was doing “the works.” What was the objective of those works? What ever it was, it involved “the world” – the entirety of Adam’s race. “The world” is appropriately described in a statement Paul made to certain “philosophers of the Epicurians, and the Stoics” from Athens: “And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). That is “the world” of reference – all who came from Adam. The work of Satan, who dominates the entire world (1 John 5:19)

**Rather, it was to “reconcile the world unto Himself.” That was His aim, and that is what is accomplished when men come into Christ – reconciliation.**

– all of mankind – is successfully addressed in what God was doing “in Christ.” He was not merely “doing good,” or bringing a better “way of life” to humanity. His objective was not to assist men in resolving their difficulties, or to bring them the blessing of health and wealth – as desirable as that may be.

**Rather, it was to “reconcile the world unto Himself.” That was His aim, and that is what is accomplished when men come into Christ – reconciliation.** That is the objective behind it all: to bring accord between God and men – men who were once “enemies” and “alienated” from God. Now the Spirit will deal more specifically with this reconciliation.

#### “Reconciling”

This word is in the present active mode, meaning that it is presently being

done. While I do not wish to make more of this than is intended by the text, it seems clear to me that this has particular reference to the intercession of Christ. This is part of the reconciliation, as prophesied by Isaiah: “Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out his soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isa 53:12). It is also confirmed in the apostolic writings: “Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).

The meaning here is that Christ’s vicarious death was accepted by God, for He was at work in it. That acceptance is also what validates His intercession.

## NOT IMPUTING THEIR TRESPASSES UNTO THEM

“<sup>19b</sup> . . . not imputing their trespasses unto them . . . ”

What did God Himself have to do in order for men to be reconciled to Him? That is what will now be considered. Ordinarily men think of what is required of them, but here the Spirit proclaims something that had to be done by the One doing the reconciling.

### NOT IMPUTING

“ . . . not imputing . . . ” Other versions read, “not counting,”<sup>NASB</sup> “not reckoning,”<sup>ASV</sup> “not putting,”<sup>BBE</sup> “not holding,”<sup>NJB</sup> “no longer counting,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “not charging,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “instead of debiting,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> and “not counting up and holding against.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Here are the facts in the case: “all

have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). And again, “and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12). There can be no question about this. Therefore, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:8,10).

**This sin is confirmed by the Law, which stood as a moral sentinel over the human race.** After sounding forth its requirements, the Divine objective was realized: “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Rom 3:19).

Right here, there is a complicating factor. God, according to His very nature, cannot overlook sin. That is, He cannot treat it as though it did not exist, merely overlooking it. Thus He said of Himself that He “will by no means clear the guilty” (Ex 34:7; Num 14:18). And again, “The LORD . . . will not at all acquit the wicked” (Nahum 1:3). And again, “I will not justify the wicked” (Ex 23:7). Joshua said of the Lord, “He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins” (Josh 24:19).

**How, then, will God deal with the matter of human sin – of transgression against Himself? If His nature does now permit Him to overlook the sin of men, how is there any hope of them being reconciled to Him?**

Here is the glorious declaration: *“not imputing”* – **not** accounting, calculating, computing, or reckoning. **Here, it is not what God does with the sinner, but He will do with the sin committed by the sinner.** Whatever is involved in men being reconciled to God, if their sin is not brought into the equation of God’s dealings with men themselves, nothing effective will be accomplished. In the ultimate evaluation of them, something is omitted in the calculation – *i.e.* **“not imputing.”**

**THEIR TRESPASSES UNTO THEM**

*“ . . . their trespasses unto them . . . ”* Other versions read, *“their trespasses to them,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“their trespasses against them,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“men’s sins against them,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“putting their sins to their account,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“to them their offenses,”* <sup>DARBY</sup> *“to them their sins,”* <sup>DOUAY</sup> *“any ones faults against them,”* <sup>NLT</sup> *“men’s transgressions to their account,”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *“men’s offenses against them,”* <sup>WILLIAMS</sup> and *“and holding against [men] their trespasses [but cancelling them].”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Sin will, indeed, be considered, but

subject of refreshing elaboration in the words that follow. It will suffice to say here that the Gospel announces something that God will **NOT** do.

**Demonstrations of the Truth**

The thought of *“not imputing”* trespasses to the person committing them should not be strange to us. During His earthly ministry, when He *“went about doing good”* (Acts 10:38), Jesus demonstrated this facet of the Divine nature. On one occasion, seeking to snare Jesus with their theological precision, the *“scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery.”* Placing the poor woman *“in the midst”* of those to *Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest Thou?”* (John 8:4-5). John tells us that they did this *“tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him”* (John 8:6).

Moses had given instruction on this, declaring that a betrothed woman who was found to be unfaithful was to be stoned (Deut 22:13,21-24). He also wrote that a man who committed adultery with

according to Moses’ law, which specified that *“the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death”* (Deut 17:7). Jesus then stooped down again, and wrote on the ground (8:8). It is written that the men, being *“convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even to the last,”* leaving Jesus alone, with the woman standing in the midst of those remaining (8:9).

Again Jesus raised Himself up, this time addressing the woman herself. *“Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?”* She responded, *“No man, Lord.”* Then the great Savior, will all of the authority of heaven, and in tender compassion, said, *“Neither do I condemn thee: and sin no more”* (8:11). **HE DID NOT IMPUTE HER TRANSGRESSIONS TO HER!**

On another occasion, when Jesus was in the house of a certain Pharisee, *“a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment”* (Luke 7:38). The Pharisee who had invited Jesus into his house reasoned within himself that if Jesus was really a prophet, He would have known the moral depravity of the woman who had lavished such humble attention upon Him. After instructing the man more perfectly, the Lord looked squarely at this woman and said, *“Thy sins are forgiven”* (7:49). **HE DID NOT IMPUTE HER TRANSGRESSIONS TO HER!**

**The very transgressions they have willingly, and even eagerly, committed, will not be posted to their account. They are still “their trespasses,” but they are not reckoned against them. In His infinite wisdom, God has found a way to deal with sin without it being charged against the ones committing it!**

not in regards to men! The very transgressions they have willingly, and even eagerly, committed, will **not** be posted to their account. They are still *“their trespasses,”* but they are **not** reckoned against them. **In His infinite wisdom, God has found a way to deal with sin without it being charged against the ones committing it!**

This is at the heart and core of the Gospel message, and contributes to it being *“good news,”* or *“glad tidings of good things”* (Rom 10:15). This will be the

another man’s wife was to be put to death with the woman with the sin was committed (Lev 20:10). The woman was guilty, although the scribes and Pharisees had failed to bring the man with her, as Moses had specified.

Jesus ignored their words, stooped down, and *“wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not”* (8:6). When they *“continued asking Him,”* He lifted up Himself and said to them, *“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her”* (8:7). This also was

When Jesus was dying, He was crucified between two thieves, *“the one on the right hand, and the other on the left”* (Mk 15:27). As the time of His death drew near, one of the thieves saw Jesus in a fresh light, and pleaded with Him, *“Lord, remember me when thou comest into Thy kingdom”* (Lk 23:42). Immediately Jesus said to him, *“Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise”* (Luke 23:43). **That man had really been a thief.** Previously he had said to his colleague, who had chosen to reproach Jesus, *“Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And*

*we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss*" (Luke 23:41). Yet, in spite of the man's guilt, Jesus grants him the privilege of accompanying Him into paradise. **HE DID NOT IMPUTE HIS TRANSGRESSIONS TO**

**HIM!**

These incidents were nothing less than introductions to the marvelous salvation that God Himself would achieve through Christ Jesus. He would devise a means by which He would be righteous in

**not** crediting the transgression of sinners to their account, even though their guilt was beyond all question, causing a very real alienation. If sin was charged against them, they could not be saved! Thus He has found a way in which He does not charge them with their sin! Praise God!

**A COMMITTED WORD**

<sup>19c</sup> . . . and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

Those who are themselves reconciled to God are now brought into the grand purpose of God. He will use them to bring the work to full fruition. This is involved in being "laborers together with God" (1 Cor 3:9), and "workers together with Him" (2 Cor 6:1).

**Remember that what follows is set within the context of things that are most marvelous.**

- "All things" being "of God" (5:18a).
- God reconciled the world "to Himself" (5:18b).
- God giving to His people "the ministry of reconciliation" (5:18c).
- God being "in Christ" (5:19a).
- God is reconciling the world to Himself (5:19b).
- God is **not** imputing men's trespasses unto them (5:19c).

It is difficult to conceive of anything being more important. **These are things associated with God's "eternal purpose," His "great salvation," and what He has done, is doing, and will do.**

**COMMITTED UNTO US**

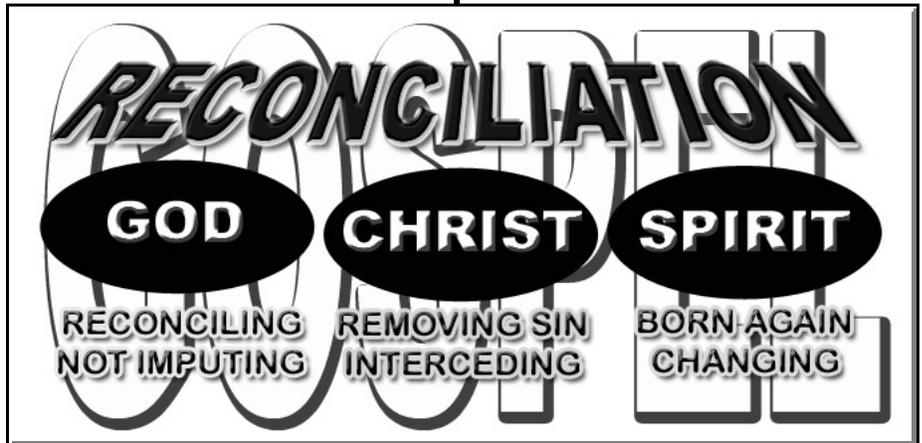
*" . . . and hath committed unto . . ."* Other versions read, "and entrusting," <sup>NRSV</sup> "having committed unto us," <sup>ASV</sup> "and putting in us," <sup>DARBY</sup> "And He hath placed in us," <sup>DOUAY</sup> "He has given to us," <sup>NLT</sup> "God gave us," <sup>IE</sup> and "has commissioned us." <sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

What is "committed," is something that is "set in place, or "put" into one's care, or deposited with us. <sup>THAYER</sup> **By its very nature, this is something that is done deliberately, and with purposeful intent.** This is not something men take upon themselves, but is a stewardship that they receive from God.

**Men will be held in account for what God has "committed" to**

*preaching of this news of peace,"* <sup>BBE</sup> "the message about how He brings back men to Himself," <sup>IE</sup> "the message of reconciliation (of restoration to favor)." <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Previously, the text referred to "the ministry of reconciliation" – that is, to the work of it. **Now he refers to the appointed means by which the work of reconciliation is accomplished.** It is through "THE WORD of reconciliation."



**them.** In the past, God "committed" to Israel "the oracles of God," or His Word (Rom 3:2). Elsewhere Paul affirms that "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" was "committed," or entrusted to him (1 Tim, 1:11). Paul reminded Timothy to "keep" what God had "committed" to his trust (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14). We are, therefore, speaking of something of the utmost seriousness and sobriety.

**THE WORD OF RECONCILIATION**

*" . . . us the word of reconciliation."* Other versions read, "the message of reconciliation," <sup>NIV</sup> "the

This is nothing less than "the Gospel of Christ," which is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom 1:16). This is a message – **a substantive announcement of accomplished realities that declare men are reconciled to God.** It is a message of "the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11), the "word" of "this salvation" that is "sent" to those for whom the reconciliation was accomplished (Acts 13:26).

**The "word of reconciliation"**

announces the accomplishments of the Lord that were required for men to be reconciled to God. Truly, it is “glad tidings of good things!” Although these ought to be common to us, it is good to briefly rehearse some of these achievements. They represent various aspects of the Gospel message.

- ☛ Sin has been “put away” (Heb 9:26).
- ☛ The “Law” has been ended as a means to righteousness (Rom 10:4).
- ☛ Jesus “made peace” through the “blood of His cross” (Col 1:20).
- ☛ Through His death, Jesus “destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14).
- ☛ We are “justified freely” through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom 3:24).
- ☛ In Christ, God “condemned sin in the flesh,” something the Law “could not do” (Rom 8:3).
- ☛ Jesus “delivered us from this present

from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Tit 2:14).

- ☛ Christ’s blood is able to “purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb 9:14).
- ☛ Through Christ’s blood we can enter into the very presence of God – the “holiest” place (Heb 10:19).
- ☛ We are reconciled to God by Christ’s death, and saved by His resurrection life (Rom 5:10).

The “word of reconciliation” is the Gospel itself. **It is the announcement that what God has promised is being fulfilled now, in this “day of salvation,” through the Lord Jesus Christ.**

This is the message to which Paul referred when he said the church was “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15) – “the truth of the Gospel” (Col 1:5). This is the word through which God effects His great salvation. This “word,” or message, is referred to in a number of

1:13a).

- ☛ “The Gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13b).
- ☛ “The word of life” (Phil 2:16).
- ☛ “The word of Christ” (Col 3:16).
- ☛ “The word of righteousness” (Heb 5:13).
- ☛ “The revelation of the mystery” (Rom 16:25).
- ☛ “The mystery of His will” (Eph 1:9).
- ☛ “The mystery of Christ” (Eph 3:4; Col 4:3).
- ☛ “The mystery of the Gospel” (Eph 6:19).
- ☛ “The mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ” (Col 2:2).
- ☛ “The mystery of godliness” (1 Tim 3:16).
- ☛ “The dispensation of the grace of God” (Eph 3:2).
- ☛ “The gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15).

The church is to be noted for its message – a word of what God has done in Christ Jesus. God will not work in a church or among a people who neglects this “glorious Gospel” in preference for a message that tickles itching ears.

The living God reconciles people unto Himself through as message. That is the appointed means of bringing accord between God and man. **If this message is not declared and expounded, there is no way for men to be reconciled unto God.**

This is not a simplistic message designed for children and the unlearned. It surely addresses such souls, but it is a message that is intended to be discerned, and in which men are to become “skillful” (Heb 5:13).

Throughout the centuries, church leaders have cluttered the minds of men with religious traditions. The result of

**The “word of reconciliation” is the Gospel itself. It is the announcement that what God has promised is being fulfilled now, in this “day of salvation,” through the Lord Jesus Christ.**

evil world” (Gal 1:4).

- ☛ We have been “made nigh” to God “by the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13).
- ☛ Jesus has “abolished the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances” (Eph 2:15).
- ☛ Jesus “spoiled principalities and powers,” triumphing over them in His cross (Col 2:15).
- ☛ In His death Jesus “delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess 1:10).
- ☛ Jesus “gave Himself to redeem us

different ways.

- ☛ “The word of the Lord” (Acts 8:25).
- ☛ “The word of this salvation” (Acts 13:26).
- ☛ “The word of the Gospel” (Acts 15:7).
- ☛ “Glad tidings” (Acts 13:32; Rom 10:15).
- ☛ “The word of His grace” (Acts 14:3; 20:32).
- ☛ “The word of faith” (Rom 10:8).
- ☛ “The word of truth” (2 Cor 6:7; Eph

been the obscurity of *“the word of reconciliation.”* It is no wonder, therefore, that carnality is so prominent among professed believers, and that men are

seeking to correct human behavior through various rules, procedures, and disciplines. **When the means through which God works is withheld from**

**the people, there is no alternative but for them to adopt human methodologies – all of which are impotent.**

## AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

**“<sup>20a</sup> Now then we are ambassadors for Christ . . . ”**

If God has, in fact, given us *“the ministry of reconciliation,”* how do we, in regard to this ministry, refer to ourselves? What is the appropriate view of someone who has been given such a *“ministry?”*

### NOW THEN

*“Now then . . . ”* Other versions read, *“Therefore,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> and *“So.”*<sup>NRSV</sup>

The expression *“now then,”* does not accent time, although it does refer to something taking place at the present. Rather, this is a statement of reasoning. It is as though the apostle said, *“Considering that we have been given ‘the ministry of reconciliation,’ here is how we have come to view ourselves – in strict accord with what God has given to us. What we “are” is not determined by what we have done, but what we have been “given” – in accord with what has been “committed” to us. If Christ is dwelling with us, we are “partakers of Christ” (Heb 3:14). If we have been “begotten of God,” we are “the sons of God” (1 John 3:1). This is how God regards us, and it is how we are to regard ourselves. Now we will be exposed to another term – one that applies to all to whom God has “committed the word of reconciliation.”*

### WE ARE AMBASSADORS

*“. . . we are ambassadors for Christ . . . ”* Other versions read, *“We are . . . Christ’s ambassadors,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“ambassadors . . . on behalf of Christ,”*<sup>ASV</sup> *“representatives of Christ,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“we are representing Christ,”*<sup>IE</sup> and *“envoy to represent Christ,”*<sup>WILLIAMS</sup>

An *“ambassador”* is an *“envoy, or a representative sent by Christ.”*<sup>FRIEBERG</sup> It is someone who *“functions as a representative of a ruling authority . . . those who have been delegated*

Christ, with a work specifically assigned by Christ.”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> **This is a person who is conversant with the King and realm that he represents, as well as the people and domain to which he is sent.** In this case he is a person with a message from Jesus, that is authorized to represent Jesus.

### Ambassadors of Old Time

Students of the Scripture are familiar with ambassadors – men with a message, who were sent as representatives of the king. A few examples will suffice, for this use of the

*ambassador”* with a *“wicked messenger,”* affirming the priority of his message (Prov 13:17).

- When Shabaka, ruler of Ethiopia, knew he was going to be invaded by Assyria, he sent *“ambassadors”* to neighboring countries, seeking their support (Isa 18:1-2).
- Isaiah spoke of *“the ambassadors of peace,”* who came to promote peace in the name of the king (Isa 33:7).
- When the Lord prepared to chasten

**What we “are” is not determined by what we have done, but what we have been “given” – in accord with what has been “committed” to us. If Christ is dwelling with us, we are “partakers of Christ” (Heb 3:14). If we have been “begotten of God,” we are “the sons of God”**

word *“ambassador”* must be assigned to our text.

- The Gibeonites deceived Joshua and Israel by presenting themselves as *“ambassadors”* from a far country (Josh 9:4).
- The princes of Babylon had *“ambassadors”* who were sent to inquire concerning the accomplishments of Hezekiah (1 Chron 32:31).
- Necho, the king of Egypt, sent *“ambassadors”* to Josiah to tell him he has no quarrel with him (2 Chron 35:21).
- Solomon compares a *“faithful*

Israel, He is said to have sent *“ambassadors”* to gather the nations against them (Jer 49:14).

- Obadiah also spoke of God sending *“ambassadors”* to gather the heathen armies against unfaithful Israel (Obad 1:1).
- Ezekiel upbraided the leaders of Israel for sending *“ambassadors”* into Egypt to solicit *“horses and much people”* (Ezek 17:15).

It is clear, therefore, that an *“ambassador”* is like the extended arm of the king – one who represents authority, and speaks authoritatively on his behalf. He is not like a Western Union messenger, who has no authority or

insight into the message he brings. Rather, an **“ambassador”** has been invested with both authority and insight. Jesus once said of His ambassadors, *“He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me”* (Mat 10:40).

#### In This Text

In this text, Paul and Timothy are

**men may think about the matter, miracle workers and administrators (“governments”) to not have the highest ranking in the body of Christ.** Churches that are managed like a business, with an administrator at the top, are not organized properly. Those who truly *“have the rule”* are those *“who have spoken to you the Word of God,”* whose faith can be followed. As it is

*appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word”* (Acts 6:2-4).

**Were this kingdom priority imposed upon the modern church, it would so violently disrupt what it was doing that it would not be able to continue.** Much of the “church staff” would have to be dismissed, and, in many cases, an entirely new staff assigned.

Like it or not, those who serve tables, needful though they are, are **not “ambassadors.”** God has surely made a necessary place for them, but it is not at the top.

#### One More word

Now that sin has been put away (Heb 9:26), the devil destroyed (Heb 2:14), and the world *“reconciled”* unto God (2 Cor 5:18), **new issues are set before humanity. Strictly speaking, sin is not the issue now, but the Son. The acceptance and eternal destiny of men now depend upon their acceptance of the Son, and consequent conformity to His image.** This is precisely why Jesus spoke as He did about the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. *“And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged”* (John 16:9-11).

**In all three areas of conviction, Jesus is the point!** He is the One on whom we must believe. He is the **only** Righteous One, as confirmed by Him going to, and being received by, the Father. He is the One who threw Satan to the ground, displaying him and his hosts as being soundly defeated by means of His death.

**The ministry that has been ordained by God is NOT primarily one of correction or guidance.** Even though that is often required, and is an inherent quality of *“all Scripture”* (2 Tim 3:16), **the real issue is what one thinks of Christ. It is one’s reception of the Gospel that determines God’s view of him.**

**Whatever men may think about the matter, miracle workers and administrators (“governments”) to not have the highest ranking in the body of Christ. Churches that are managed like a business, with an administrator at the top, are not organized properly.**

the focus, but they are not the only *“ambassadors.”* First Paul, and then Timothy, had been *“set in the body”* as it pleased God – Paul as an *“Apostle,”* and Timothy as an *“evangelist”* (2 Tim 4:5). Because he was an *“Apostle,”* Paul had the preeminence, for Apostles are first in rank within the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:28). Evangelists rank high within the body of Christ, being listed third in Ephesians 4:11: *“And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers”* (Eph 4:11).

**Both the Apostles and evangelists were noted for their message – what they said.** It was their message that made their ministry what it was. It is what made them *“ambassadors.”*

#### Leading Roles in the Church

Leaders within Christ’s church are those with insight into Christ and His Gospel, and the God-given ability to communicate it. In listing some of the gifts to the Corinthians, Paul said it this way: *“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues”* (1 Cor 12:28). Note how the teaching gifts rank **first**, and a point is made of it by saying, *“and after that . . .”* **Whatever**

written, *“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation”* (Heb 13:7).

Those who are to be counted worthy of *“double honor,”* or support, are those who devote themselves to teaching and the Word of God. As it is written, *“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine”* (1 Tim 5:17). Another version reads, *“Let the elders who perform the duties of their office well be considered doubly worthy of honor [and of adequate financial support], especially those who labor faithfully in preaching and teaching.”* AMPLIFIED Waiting on tables, or meeting the needs of people, is a subordinate role within the body of Christ, even though the contemporary church has vaulted it to a place of prominence and authority. When the need for such a ministry arose within the early church, the Apostles told the people to select special men for this office, who were filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom. This is how they reasoned, *“Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may*

## A BESEECHMENT TO THE CHURCH

“<sup>20b</sup> . . . as though God did beseech you by us . . .”

Now we will hear what an “ambassador” has to say to the church – particular to “the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in Achai” (2 Cor 1:1). You can rest assured this is not a private message to these brethren, intended for none but themselves. What the Spirit says, He says to “all the churches” (2 Cor 11:28; Rev 2:23), calling upon everyone with an “ear to hear” to “hear what the Spirit saith to the churches” (Rev 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). If men fail to read the Scriptures with this in mind, they will derive no lasting benefit from them.

### AS THOUGH

“ . . . as though . . . ” Other versions read, “since,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “as if,”<sup>BBE</sup> and “as it were.”<sup>DARBY</sup>

What follows is the manner in which what Paul says is to be **received**. This is the way things really are, even though what Paul writes may seem to be coming only from him. This is not a mere cursory observation. **There remain many within the professed church who view Paul’s writings as primarily his own.** They are fond of speaking of “the author’s intended meaning,” cultural considerations, Paul’s private opinions, and the likes. **Paul, however, takes the message that he speaks, and tells them how to consider it.**

### GOD DID BESEECH YOU BY US

“ . . . God did beseech you by us . . . ” Other versions read, “God were pleading through us,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “God were entreating,”<sup>NASB</sup> “God were making His appeal,”<sup>NIV</sup> “God is making His appeal,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “God was making a request to you,”<sup>BBE</sup> “God as it were exhorting,” “God were urging you,”<sup>NJB</sup> “God is using us to speak,”<sup>NLT</sup> “God were calling,”<sup>YLT</sup> “God is encouraging you,”<sup>IE</sup> and “God through our lips is making entreaty.”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup>

A person has made a giant stride in spiritual life when this word is perceived and embraced. **God Himself**

was entreating, appealing to, urging, and exhorting the people through what Paul said. Paul referred to this unique ministry of the word in his epistle to the Thessalonians: “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it

Paul said of the manner in which the Galatians received him, even though he was sick, “Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus” (Gal 4:13-14).

**There remain many within the professed church who view Paul’s writings as primarily his own. They are fond of speaking of “the author’s intended meaning,” cultural considerations, Paul’s private opinions, and the likes. Paul, however, takes the message that he speaks, and tells them how to consider it.**

*not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe”* (1 Thess 2:13).

When Jesus sent His disciples out, he spoke harshly concerning those who refused to hear their words – words that He had given them to say. “And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. **And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city”** (Matt 10:13-15).

By way of contrast, when Peter stood before Cornelius to declare the word of the Lord, Cornelius said to him, “Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33).

If it can be established that an individual has a word from God, or that he is speaking insightfully concerning what God has revealed, a solemn obligation is laid upon the hearers. That person is to be regarded just as though God Himself was speaking to us.

Sensing this was true, the Bereans “received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). They knew that if what they had heard Paul preach was, in fact, confirmed by Scripture, they had no alternative but to receive that word and conform their thoughts and lives to it. In my judgment, the Western church is lagging far behind the rest of the world in this attitude. When we have a religious culture that has more regard for entertainment, programs, social activism, and careers, than they do for hearing the Word of God from a man of God, we have fallen on hard times, indeed! Let us now hear what this ambassador will say **to the church.**

**BE YE RECONCILED TO GOD**

“<sup>20c</sup> . . . we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

There are those who believe the primary pleading is to be made with sinners – that the most urgent word is delivered to “the lost.” Let us see if this word of God conforms to that way of thinking. Let us consider if we might not correctly call this word a “great commission.”

**WE PRAY YOU**

“ . . . we pray you . . . ” Other versions read, “we implore you,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “we beg you,”<sup>NASB</sup> “we entreat you,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “we beseech you,”<sup>RSV</sup> “we make our request to you,”<sup>BBE</sup> “we appeal to you,”<sup>NJB</sup> “we urge you,”<sup>NLT</sup> and “we plead.”<sup>ISV</sup>

The word “pray” comes from the Greek word δεόμεθα (deh-om-etha), which means “to want, to desire or long for, to ask, or beg,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “to ask urgently, beg someone in relation to something,”<sup>FRIEBERG</sup> “to implore, as in ‘please!’,”<sup>UBS</sup> and “to ask with urgency, with the implication of presumed need.”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup>

The strength of this expression confirms the seriousness of the message. Paul does not deal with suggestions and opinions. He does not engage in some form of religious poll to ascertain what the people want to hear. This is an “ambassador of Christ!” He has no need for surveys or the study of statistics. You cannot plead with people on the basis of an opinion. It is not possible to implore people on the basis of a survey. **Entreating people is driven by the perception of a weighty message, and the persuasion that you have been sent to declare it.**

Several things combine to produce an effective beseechment, or pleading. Paul has a keen insight into the Gospel of Christ itself.

- He knows what has been wrought by God, and of the effect it has upon those who believe.
- He has a keen interest in the perception and growth of the church.
- He ministers with a penetrating

awareness of the stewardship that has been given to him by the Lord.

- He fulfills that stewardship while in fellowship with the Lord, walking in the light as He is in the light.

**These, and more, are brought together in productive harmony by “the spirit of faith” – an enlivening persuasion of God, His Christ, and the truth of the Gospel (2 Cor 4:13).** Where these qualities are lacking, there can be no effective ministry, for Jesus does not work together with such souls. A person must truly care for the sheep before he can really feed them. There must be a sense of the gravity of living in this world before spiritual sustenance can be ministered.

Much of the religion of our time excludes any need for spiritual entreaty. Men have been taught to market the Gospel much like men sell worldly commodities – employing various forms of worldly wisdom that places little value upon the sheep of God’s pasture. Some may consider financial needs, or some similar crisis, as requiring an urgent appeal. However, that is not what we see in this text. It is my observation that there is too little passion and zeal in the American church. Yet, there is nothing about salvation or the Gospel of Christ that encourages such a lack.

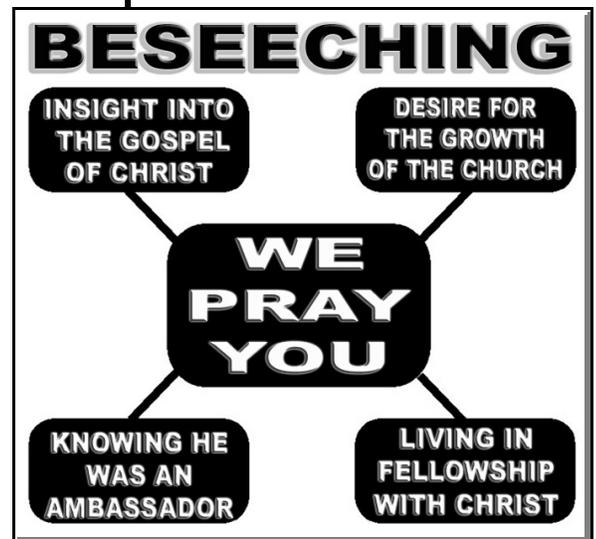
**IN CHRIST’S STEAD**

“ . . . in Christ’s stead . . . ” Other versions read, “on Christ’s behalf,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “on behalf of Christ,”<sup>NASB</sup> “in the name of Christ,”<sup>BBE</sup> “for Christ,”<sup>DARBY</sup> “as though Christ Himself were here,”<sup>NLT</sup> “for Christ’s sake,”<sup>IE</sup> “As one representing Christ,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> and “as Christ’s personal representatives.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The very thought of “in Christ’s stead,” or “in Christ’s behalf,” is a most sobering consideration. **The words that**

**follow do come from Paul, but they are to be viewed as coming from Christ Himself.** This is His message to the church at Corinth! This is what He wants them to do. It is what His grace will enable them to do. It is what will give honor to His atoning death, thereby bringing glory to God. If what follows does not actually take place, nothing else is of any consequence.

I will tell you that the words that follow will not fit into a sectarian mold.



They will not reflect the perceptions of the modern church. They will not blend with what men say is “the most important work of the church.” **But after all is said and done, this is the word of the King to those who have believed the Gospel** – words addressed “the church of God” and “all the saints.” Let no person assume that what is exhorted is already realized.

**BE YE RECONCILED**

“ . . . be ye reconciled to God.” Other versions read, “be at peace with God,”<sup>BBE</sup> “come back to God,”<sup>IE</sup> and “lay hold on Divine favor [now offered you] and be reconciled to God.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

What a word is this! It flies right in the face of much of the theology of our day! The carnal religious mind will not be

able to process this information, for it sounds like gibberish and intellectual drivel to such a person. “These are words,” shouts the sophist, “that apply to the lost – to sinners – to those who have not accepted the Savior!” But their objections are only the display of their ignorance. Paul is saying this to the church: “*We pray You . . . BE ye reconciled to God!*”

Ah, but the novice steps forward

Does the need for the Gospel message terminate at the baptism? Is there no need to continually proclaim this Gospel to the church? If such postulates are true, then the text before us is nothing more than an imagination. Paul has affirmed He has been given “*the ministry of reconciliation*” and “*the word of reconciliation.*” Now he brings both of them to bear upon the church – those who are themselves “*the epistle of Christ*” (2 Cor 3:3), and into whose hearts God has

*us the word of reconciliation*” (2 Cor 5:19).

- “*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*” (2 Cor 5:20).
- “*And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby*” (Eph 2:16).
- “*And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven*” (Col 1:20).
- “*And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled*” (Col 1:21).
- “*Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people*” (Heb 2:17).
- “*And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement*” (“reconciliation” <sup>NKJV</sup>) (Rom 5:11).

**This word is speaking of the appropriation of the reconciliation – of the experience of it throughout the whole of life. Those who imagine that all of life has been brought into accord with the reconciling God must think again.**

and reminds us that Paul has already said that God “*WAS*” in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself – that He HAS reconciled us to Himself “*by Jesus Christ*” (vs 18-19). “We are therefore already reconciled,” they reason, “and have no need for such an admonition.” Some have even affirmed that this word is addressed to the unsaved that were attending the Corinthian assembly – which thought betrays a level of ignorance that is deplorable.

**This word is speaking of the appropriation of the reconciliation – of the experience of it throughout the whole of life.** Those who imagine that all of life has been brought into accord with the reconciling God must think again. We are admonished “*present your bodies a living sacrifice to God, holy, acceptable, which is our reasonable service*” (Rom 12:1). **That is the same as “Be ye reconciled to God!”** We are also admonished, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom*” (Col 3:16), and “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*” (Phil 2:5). **That is the same as “Be ye reconciled to God!”**

Is there any person of sound mind who thinks that Jesus died to merely take away our sins and give us a fresh start?

“*shined the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor 4:6). It is to these people that Paul says with pleading tones, “*Be ye reconciled to God!*”

**This phrase confirms that the Gospel of Christ is required for the maintenance of spiritual life as well as its initiation.** Those who are “*in Christ Jesus*” are not done with this matter of “*reconciliation.*” They have only begun their participation in it!

The “*reconciliation*” accomplished by God in Christ Jesus is mentioned eight times in Scripture.

- “*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life*” (Rom 5:10).
- “*And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation*” (2 Cor 5:18).
- “*To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto*

Precisely what is there in any of these passages that suggest a once-for-all transaction on **our** part? Is it not apparent that reconciliation is the spiritual framework in which we are “*being saved*” <sup>NKJV</sup> (1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 2:15). That is, Christ “*has received us to the glory of God*” (Rom 15:7), and we are “*accepted in the Beloved*” (Eph 1:6). The hostility between us and God has been removed by Christ. **However, the reconciliation accomplished by God in Christ Jesus has not yet reached its apex in us!** There are still imaginations to be “*cast down,*” and thoughts to be captured and made obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10:4-5). There are still “*deeds of the body*” that are to be “*mortified*” through the leading of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:13-14), and “*members*

upon the earth” that are to be put to death (Col 3:5). There remain in us the vestiges of “the flesh” – the “old man” – that are to be “put off,” and holy qualities – the “new man” – that are to be “put on” (Eph 4:22-24). There are things to be “cast” away from us like defiled garments (Rom 13:12; Heb 12:1; 1 Pet 2:1).

Who can forget the admonition to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord” (2 Cor 7:1). And what of the exhortations to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18), or to “set your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth” (Col 3:2). And what of this word: “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:14). Or, “Go on to perfection” (Heb 6:1), or “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11), or “love not the world” (1 John 2:15). **Is it not incumbent upon us that these words be taken seriously?**

These are differing ways of saying, “Be ye reconciled to God!” Be in accord with Him! Let there be no other way of thinking found in you! Do not be content to hold to a view of anything that conflicts with God’s view of matter. “Be ye reconciled to God!” **Do not think that God is tolerant of men who think differently than Himself – regardless of how minuscule that thought may appear to men.** When men say of any word from God, “That is not the way we see it,” or “That is not the way I would do it,” or “This does not make sense to me,” they are only confessing they are not “reconciled to God” in that area.

#### THE POWER OF GOD UNTO

#### SALVATION

It is “the WORD of reconciliation” that enables men to be “reconciled to God.” Men cannot, in any sense, be “reconciled to God” by means of a Law, whether from God or from men. **Alienation cannot be resolved through human works of any kind.** The message that proclaims what God has done “in Christ” is the message – the only message – that is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16). That is “salvation”

unto salvation.” If men can, in the sense of our text, be “reconciled to God” independently of the continual proclamation and exposition of the Gospel, then we just as well take Jehudi’s penknife and cut this passage out of the Bible, for it cannot be true.

I intend to make this point as strongly as my heart and mind will permit, for here we are dealing with the cause of a weak church. That weakness is

**Here we will see how serious is the error that affirms the Gospel is only preached to sinners – those who are alienated from God. This is no small point, and should not be approached as though it was, thus allowing for all manner of human opinion.**

in its full scope, including “the redemption of the body” (Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14). It is “reconciliation” in all of its glorious implications, including the subordination of the flesh and the obtainment of “the mind of Christ.”

Here we will see how serious is the error that affirms the Gospel is only preached to sinners – those who are alienated from God. This is no small point, and should not be approached as though it was, thus allowing for all manner of human opinion.

**If men choose to teach men as though they were not reconciled to God, providing all manners of procedures and human resolutions, they have only reduced the possibility of them being saved, for “the Gospel of Christ is the power of God**

the direct result of an anemic and unacceptable message. **When the means of reconciliation, or accord with God, are removed, then men will gravitate to variance with and hostility against God.** If this is not true, then the Gospel of Christ cannot be “the power of God unto salvation!” **If the Gospel of Christ can be removed from the church, and the people still grow, then it is nothing more than a lie perpetrated by the devil.** It there ever comes a point in time when it can be placed to the side, then it is not true!

But let me say no more on the matter. **Let the text speak for itself, for it will demolish all human imaginations on this matter.** It will show the utter absurdity of depriving the church of the Living God of the Gospel of Christ.

### HE MADE HIM TO BE SIN

<sup>21a</sup> *For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin . . .*”

**You will note that Paul is, in fact, affirming the Gospel of Christ.**

He states something that some may think shallow and obvious to all men, but that is not the case. **This is the Gospel of Christ in its purest form.** Second, you will note that this is an affirmation. There

may be some question about whether or not men are “in Christ.” That is why all professed believers are admonished, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye

not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor 13:5). **However, there is not the slightest chance that what follows is not true** – totally true in every sense of the word.

**There are no "ifs" attached to this word: it is Gospel!** There are "ifs" concerning men. "Now **if** any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom 8:9). And again, "Therefore **if** any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor 5:17). And again, "Now the just shall live by faith: but **if** any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb 10:38). All of those, and similar statements, contain certain conditions. If those conditions are not met, the affirmations following the "if" are not true.

But there is not a single "if" in the Gospel – not a solitary one! The word is not "if Jesus died," or "if God was in Christ," or "if He took away the sins of the world." This is not the suggestion of what might have happened between God and Christ. There is not the slightest suggestion that this is anything but a precise and unalterable circumstance!

See, faith needs a word like

**See, faith needs a word like this! Faith cannot take hold of an "if." It cannot stabilize the soul with a possibility or a suggestion. There is no routine that can initiate or sustain faith – for "the just shall live by faith"**

**this! Faith cannot take hold of an "if." It cannot stabilize the soul with a possibility or a suggestion.** There is no routine that can initiate or sustain faith – for "the just shall live by faith" (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38). Here is the kind of word that is needed if we are to "be reconciled to God." You cannot give us a law that will accomplish this – for want of a better term – realizing or experiencing reconciliation. **You cannot deliver to us a stirring oration of what we ought to be, or where we ought to go, or how we ought to live,**

**that will accomplish what this word accomplishes!** Hear it, and hear it well, for it is "the Gospel of Christ" – the Gospel that IS God's power to effect salvation, from beginning to end.

**HE HATH MADE HIM TO BE SIN**

"For He hath made Him to be sin for us . . ." Other versions read, "God made Him,"<sup>NIV</sup> "For our sakes He made Him to be sin,"<sup>NRSV</sup> "made to be sin on our behalf,"<sup>ASV</sup> "He has made sin for us,"<sup>DARBY</sup> "For our sake He made . . . a victim for sin,"<sup>NJB</sup> "For God made Christ . . . the offering for sin,"<sup>NLT</sup> "in our behalf He did make sin,"<sup>YLT</sup> "For God . . . poured into Him our sins,"<sup>LIVING</sup> "God caused Him to become sin for us,"<sup>IE</sup> "For our sake He made Christ [virtually] to be sin,"<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and "God caused Christ . . . actually to be sin for our sakes."<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

I was in Christ for some time before I recall hearing anyone other than my good father make this affirmation concerning God making Jesus "to be sin for us." And even then, there have been precious few that I have heard who made an actual point of this, as Paul does in our text. **This is an aspect of the Gospel that, so far as the Scriptural record is concerned, was never proclaimed to someone outside of Christ.** It is Paul's incentive for entreating believers

being "reconciled to God." It is an inside view of the death of Christ, and is most precise in its affirmation.

Whether in the Greek or in the English, the statement is unquestionable and beyond all controversy. God "made Him to be sin,"<sup>KJV/NKJV/ASV/NASB/NIV/NRSV/RSV/BBEDARBY/DOUAY/ESV/GENEVA/NABNAU/RWB/YLT/IE/WEYMOUTH/ISV/MONTGOMERY/AMPLIFIED/PHILLIPS</sup>

There are some liberal paraphrases that completely miss the point of this text. Those who did the translating of these versions took upon themselves the role of

a commentator rather than that of a translator. Thus they wrote, "Or <to be a sin offering>,"<sup>Footnote, NIV</sup> "a victim for sin,"<sup>NJB</sup> "the offering for our sin,"<sup>NLT</sup> "poured into Him our sins,"<sup>LIVING</sup> and "to be a sin offering."<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> **I want to emphasize that these are gross misrepresentations of the text, and therefore rob it of its power.** The truth cannot be distorted and still retain its power. The Gospel cannot be twisted, and remain "the power of God unto salvation."

**"Made Him to be Sin for Us"**

This is something God Himself did. **He made Jesus to be something that He was not by nature.** Something happened on the cross that, for a moment, actually changed the identity of Christ. When Jesus came into the world, He was "God manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim 3:16). On The cross, God "condemned sin" in His flesh. That is, in a sense He became sin incarnate – "sin in the flesh" (Rom 8:3).

**In order for sin to be "condemned" it all had to be localized in one place.** That one place was the Lord Jesus, who "bare our sins in His body on the tree" (1 Pet 2:24). His "body" became the place where "the iniquity of us all" was gathered (Isa 53:6). In this sense, sin was considered in the singular – the entire mass of sin was laid upon Christ and dealt with in one decisive blow. Thus we read,

- ☛ "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away **the sin** of the world" (John 1:29).
- ☛ "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him **the iniquity of us all**" (Isa 53:6).
- ☛ "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make **reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy**" (Dan 9:24).
- ☛ "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the

world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to **put away sin** by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb 9:26).

☛ "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, **condemned sin in the flesh**" (Rom 8:3).

**Sin – all of it – was imputed to Christ like the sin of Israel was imputed to the scapegoat (Lev 16:21).** Once it was all upon Christ, or "in His body," God judged sin, imposing the Divine penalty upon it. From the standpoint of the sin itself, God "condemned sin" in the flesh of Christ. From the standpoint of Jesus, God cursed Him, making Him a curse. As it is written, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being **made a curse for us**: for it is written, **Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree**" (Gal 3:13). From the standpoint of God's enemies, God "delivered Him up for us all" (Rom 8:32), or was "delivered for our offenses" (Rom 4:25). While He was under the curse of the Almighty, men also cursed and mocked Him.

#### WHO KNEW NO SIN

"... who knew no sin..." Other versions read, "who had no sin,"<sup>NIV</sup> "who had no knowledge of sin,"<sup>BBE</sup> "who knew not sin,"<sup>DARBY</sup> "the sinless Christ,"<sup>LIVING</sup> "Christ never sinned,"<sup>IE</sup> "who knew nothing of sin,"<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and "who personally knew nothing of sin."<sup>WILLIAMS</sup>

Here we are exposed to the great doctrine of substitution. Jesus was "made sin," yet "knew no sin," or personally did not commit a single transgression. **There was not a strand of His moral or spiritual fiber that was weak.** He never had to recover from a fall, never had to repent, and never had to return to the Lord. He never said a wrong word, and "no guile," or devilish craftiness was "found in His mouth" (1 Pet 2:22). He is the only man in history that could shout out to His enemies, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46), thereby stopping their mouths. He is the only Man who could ever say, "for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John 14:30).

Jesus never entertained an unlawful thought, said a thoughtless word, or did a sinful deed. Sin never found any form of expression in Him, whether in thought, word, or deed. The only sin He had was that of humanity – the whole of it, the "sin of the world." One Man – the one who "came down from heaven" (John 6:38) – took the responsibility for every sin committed within Adam's race – all of it. **That sin was of such magnitude that, when laid upon Him, caused Him to "become sin," so that God could judge it totally and finally.**

This magnanimous deed was "for us." That is, if it had not been for us,

Romans did in nailing Him to the tree. **It is what God did to Jesus when He was upon the cross that took away the sins of the world.** That is when He made Him to be sin for us, and cursed Him in order that we might be delivered "from the curse of the Law."

Lest any doubt that the text means precisely what it says – that He was "made to be sin for us" – the next phrase removes all doubt concerning the matter. **The Spirit will now affirm that we have been "made" something upon the basis of receiving the reconciliation God achieved in Christ Jesus.** This is the revealed incentive for being personally "reconciled

**Sin – all of it – was imputed to Christ like the sin of Israel was imputed to the scapegoat (Lev 16:21). Once it was all upon Christ, or "in His body," God judged sin, imposing the Divine penalty upon it. From the standpoint of the sin itself, God "condemned sin" in the flesh of Christ.**

there would have been no need for the incarnate Word. In such a case, He would not have been "made to be sin for us." This goes beyond Jesus being made a man. That required humility and obedience on His part (Phil 2:8). **However, being made "to be sin for us" required an act of God: laying the sin of the world upon Jesus, then cursing Jesus because He was "made to be sin."**

Too often men speak loosely about Jesus dying for them. It is true that every perceptive person in Christ can say of Him, "the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20). This, text, however, goes beyond that, showing WHY Christ's death was effective. Although I have stated this elsewhere, I want to affirm it once again. **It is not what men did to Jesus that saves us, but what God did to Him.** We are not "healed" by the stripes delivered upon the orders of Caiaphas and Pilate. Nor, indeed, are we saved because of what the

to God." The person who perceives this will immediately make war against all ungodliness.

**If we ever wonder concerning the seriousness of sin, let us behold what God did to Jesus when He was "made to be sin for us."** He was "smitten of God and afflicted" (Isa 53:4). God Himself awakened His own sword, and issued the command to "smite the Shepherd" (Zech 13:7). He is the One who "delivered" Jesus "up." He is the One who forsook Him. He is the One who "made Him to be sin," and "cursed" Him. Here was sin in a sinless body, imputed by God to a pure and holy Person. Yet, sin is of such an awful nature that when it was imputed to Jesus, God cursed Him, abandoned Him, and allowed His enemies to ravage Him. Do not, therefore, blithely explain sin away as though it was of no consequence. Make no effort to explain it, and provide an excuse for it. God will pay no attention to such foolishness, and neither will we.

**MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD**

“<sup>21a</sup> . . . that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

This is the second of two Divine transactions that find their focus in Christ Jesus. First, He was “made to be sin for us.” **In order for the following transaction to be absolutely true, there can be no doubt about the former.** Whatever is declared here obtains its power from the effectiveness of the first action.

**THAT**

“ . . . that . . . ” Other versions read, “so that,”<sup>NIV</sup> and “in order that.”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup>

This is WHY God “made” Jesus

God’s righteousness,”<sup>DARBY</sup> “that we might be made the justice of God,”<sup>DOUAY</sup> “we could be made right with God,”<sup>NLT</sup> “He poured God’s goodness into us,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “we might come into right standing with God,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “we might become [endued with, viewed as being in, and examples of] the righteousness of God [what we ought to be , approved and acceptable and in right relationship with Him, by His goodness,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “we might be made good with the goodness of God.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

**In both cases – what occurred to Christ and what occurs to us – the Doer is God.** He is the One who made Jesus “to be sin,” and He is the one who makes men “the righteousness of God.”

Innocent One is made guilty, and the guilty ones are made righteous.

**“The Righteousness of God”**

The “righteousness of God” is mentioned five times in the book of Romans. In every case, it is a pivotal deliberation (1:17; 3:5,21,22;10:3). This is not an academic consideration – like learning a mathematical table – because it is “revealed.” The Spirit affirms that “the righteousness of God” is “manifested,” or “made known” (3:20). This is, then, something to be perceived, comprehended, or understood, for what is revealed is intended to be comprehended.

**Not Referring to God Being Righteous**

This is NOT referring to an understanding that God is righteous. It is certainly the truth that “God is righteous” (Isa 41:26). Unquestionably, “the LORD our God is righteous in all the works which He does”<sup>NKJV</sup> (Dan 9:14). He is “righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works” (Psa 145:17). Whatever He has done is right, and is not to be questioned by mortals. His judgment, whether condemning or justifying, is always “righteous” (Rom 2:5; 2 Thess 1:5). In delivering up His Son He was righteous (Rom 8:3). He is also righteous in justifying the ungodly (Rom 3:25).

However, this is **not** the sense in which “the righteousness of God” is used in this text or in any other texts using that expression.

**A Conferred Righteousness**

**The Gospel reveals a righteousness that God confers upon men, thereby MAKING them “the righteousness of God” – and it is His very own righteousness.** The glorious Gospel does not make known that God is righteous, although that can certainly be seen in it. That revelation, however, has been affirmed from the beginning of God’s dealings with men (Gen 18:25; Judges 5:11; Ezra 9:15; Job 36:3).

Righteousness – “the righteousness of God” – is a premier consideration in the Kingdom of God.

**In summary, being “made the righteousness of God” means we are righteous in His sight, for His own righteousness is the only one He will accept. All of our true righteousness – every whit of it – is traced back to God. He is the one who made us righteous with His own righteousness.**

“to be sin for us.” It is why He was “made a curse for us,” was “forsaken” by God (Matt 27:46), made to “taste death for every man” (Heb 2:9), and was “delivered for our offenses” (Rom 4:25). **This effect can be no less real that its cause.** It certainly cannot be less required than the judgment from which it proceeded. Christ’s death did not merely deal with the past. There were very real results that proceeded from it. **In order for the participation in that death to be recognized, its intended effects must be present.**

**WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD**

“ . . . we might be made the righteousness of God . . . ” Other versions read, “we might become the righteousness of God,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “that we might become

There is no possibility that any other righteousness is valid, or that it will in any sense be honored by God. No other righteousness will survive the day of judgment. On the ground, or basis, of Jesus being “made sin,” God now makes those in Him to be “the righteousness of God.”

In summary, being “made the righteousness of God” means we are righteous in His sight, **for His own righteousness is the only one He will accept.** All of our true righteousness – every whit of it – is traced back to God. He is the one who made us righteous with His own righteousness. Among other things, this means **there can be no salvation without substitution.** On the basis of what God has done in Christ, “reconciling the world unto Himself,” the

Jesus said, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness . . . ”* (Matt 6:33). This is a righteousness to be appropriated. Seeing this, Paul affirmed his life was lived in order to be *“be found in Him (Jesus), not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Phil 3:9). He knew that righteousness was imperative to be accepted by God, and that he could not develop it himself.

I am persuaded that masses of professed believers have not yet been convinced of the **necessity** of righteousness. They have heard a Gospel so thoroughly diluted with the wisdom of this world that they can scarcely arrive at a valid conclusion concerning righteousness or Divine acceptance.

**We must exercise ourselves to break free from shallow and distorted views of salvation.** It is still true, *“the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Cor 6:9), and without holiness, *“no man shall see the Lord”* (Heb 12:14). Make no mistake about this, the unrighteous man has a mandate from heaven, and there is no way to avoid it with impunity. *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isa 55:7-9). **Unrighteousness, then, has to do with more than our deeds. It has to do with our way, or manners, and our thoughts as well.** Unless we are righteous in both of those areas, our future is hopeless!

#### Two Ways to be Righteous

There are two types of righteousness mentioned in Scripture. One depends upon men, and the other comes from God.

#### “Of the Law”

The first is called a righteousness which is *“from the Law.”* This is NOT a

righteousness from God, but one proceeding from self-effort alone: i.e. *“my own righteousness”* (Phil 3:9). When Jesus comes, He will *“find”* all men. At that time, there will be no hope whatsoever for any person having only his *“own righteousness, which is from the Law.”*

In this righteousness – the righteousness which is from the Law – the

*in the Law) shall live by them, [not by faith].”* **This is too strong for those with a propensity for Law. But it is the truth!**

Here DOING is compared with BELIEVING. Under Law, becoming righteous is traced back to DOING as its cause. **Mind you, this is not the doing of God.** Remember, the Law is *“not based upon faith.”* This is not speaking

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individual fulfills the *“righteous requirements of the Law,”* carefully and without flaw, doing everything that God requires. This *“righteousness”* is particularly described for us. Appropriately, the description is provided by Moses, through whom the law was *“given”* (John 1:17). *“For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them”* (Rom 10:5). The Levitical law declared, *“Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD”* (Lev 18:5). Nehemiah also said of God’s laws, *“which if a man do, he shall live in them”* (Neh 9:29). Ezekiel made the same statement: *“which if a man do, he shall even live in them”* (Ezek 20:11,13,21). Jesus said the same thing in answer to a man asking about obtaining eternal life: *“Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live”* (Lk 10:28).

The Spirit declares that this approach has nothing whatsoever to do with faith. *“Yet the law is not of faith, but the man who does them shall live by them”* (Gal 3:12). The Amplified New Testament reads, *“But the Law does not rest on faith—does not require faith, has nothing to do with faith—for it itself says, He who does them (the things prescribed*

about God working in us *“to will and to do of His own good pleasure”* (Phil 2:13). The life of the individual is thus placed in his own hands. **There will be NO Divine intervention, no new birth, and no provision for reconciliation.** Being alive to God will depend solely upon the impeccable and flawless performance of the individual. That is the *“righteousness of the Law.”* A single offence voids all other seemingly works of goodness, making the individual guilty of breaking every jot and tittle of the Law (James 2:10).

Let us imagine for a moment that we did, in fact, find someone who did everything they were commanded to do. **Even though that is only an imagination, Jesus did tell us what would occur were such a person found.** *“So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do’”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Lk 17:10). Ponder what good word is **ever** said to an *“unprofitable servant!”* Tell me if there is so much as a spark of hope held out to such a servant.

But let us take the matter even further. Hear the Spirit as He reasons

concerning our father Abraham, “*the friend of God.*” “*What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God*” (Rom 4:1-2).

If you have ever thought yourself equal to the challenges of the Law, quickly abandon such foolishness! **The righteousness that comes from the Law is a vaporous one.** It simply is not possible, for the Law “*was not made for a righteous man*” (1 Tim 1:9). It can neither produce nor sustain a righteous man. The Law itself is “*righteous,*” but it cannot produce a single righteous deed, or right a solitary wrong. Its ministry is that of condemnation, not justification. As a covenant, the law was “*the ministration of death,*” and “*the ministration of condemnation*” (2 Cor 3:7,9). **It did not remove sin, but defined it and confirmed men were guilty of it** (Rom 3:19-20).

Throughout history, men have had

*faith.*<sup>NIV</sup> **This righteousness must be revealed before it can be appropriated, confirming it does not proceed from man.** Rather, it is brought to man – quite differently from the righteousness of the Law. This is the righteousness of which our text speaks: “*that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*”

#### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

There is only one righteousness that is acceptable to God, and that is His own. Here is a spiritually technical point that will yield much benefit. Some have viewed this righteousness as the “*righteousness of Christ,*” even though no such reference is ever found in Scripture. This view sees Jesus as fully keeping the Law in our behalf. Because of His flawless obedience, His righteousness is then thought to be imputed to us. **Although Jesus was flawlessly righteous, it is not His righteousness that is imputed to us.** That is, it is not the righteousness developed in the arena of spiritual warfare that is given to us. It is God’s own righteousness that is granted

righteousness to which men submit themselves – not one that is developed by them. We are therefore “*made the righteousness of God*” – a work that belongs to God alone.

Thus the Gospel – which is “*the word of reconciliation*” – not only reveals that God Himself is righteous in reconciling the world to Himself, but that He graciously and willingly confers that **very righteousness** upon all who believe in Christ. **This is a required righteousness, without which there is no hope of heaven.** That is, a righteousness that will stand uncontested before the tribunal of heaven, both now and in the last day. It is revealed in the Gospel of Christ, and appropriated by faith.

The realization of this righteousness is stated in several different ways. **All of them accent God as its origin,** and faith Christ the righteous basis for its conferment.

- ☛ **A gift, by God’s grace.** “*The gift or righteousness*” (Rom 5:17).
- ☛ **The result of God’s own work.** “*Made righteous*” (Rom 5:19).
- ☛ **The Result of Divine conferment.** Righteousness “*imputed*” (Rom 4:11).
- ☛ **The result of God’s consideration of our faith.** Faith imputed for righteousness (Rom 4:22-24).
- ☛ **A righteousness from God.** “*A righteousness from God by faith*” (Phil 3:9).
- ☛ **A creation of God.** “*Made the righteousness of God in Him*” [Christ] (2 Cor 5:21).

#### IN HIM

“*... in Him.*” Other versions read, “*through Christ,*”<sup>NLT</sup> “*in Christ,*”<sup>IE</sup> “*through union with Him,*”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “*in and through Him,*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “*by His means.*”<sup>TYNDALE</sup>

We are “*made the righteousness of God*” commensurate with us being “*joined to the Lord*” (1 Cor 6:17), “*baptized into*

**The purpose of Christ's righteousness life was not the development of a righteousness to be imputed to us. Rather, it was in order to qualify Him to make the required sacrifice that would atone for the sins of the world. It was in order that He might fulfill the righteous demands of God for reconciliation.**

a propensity to imagine they could become righteous by keeping the very Law they had broken. Once broken, however, the Law cannot be mended together in such a manner as to produce righteousness. That should be apparent to every thoughtful soul. It will also produce a strong longing in the tenderhearted for a righteousness that is accepted by God. **The Gospel announces just such a righteousness.**

#### “Of Faith”

The Gospel reveals a righteousness that comes from faith. It is called “*the righteousness of faith*” (Rom 4:13), or “*the righteousness that comes by*

to us because of our “*faith in His blood*” (Rom 3:25)-i.e. our persuasion of its effect.

**The purpose of Christ’s righteousness life was not the development of a righteousness to be imputed to us.** Rather, it was in order to qualify Him to make the required sacrifice that would atone for the sins of the world. It was in order that He might fulfill the righteous demands of God for reconciliation.

**While the righteousness of our text does, indeed, come from God, it also belongs to Him.** It is a

Christ" (Gal 3:27), and being made "partakers of Christ" (Heb 3:14). This righteousness cannot possibly be more than our identity with Christ. Furthermore, it is a righteousness that advances through the work of the Holy Spirit. That situation is depicted in the words, "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created **in righteousness and true holiness**" (Eph 4:24). The "new man" is totally righteous and "cannot sin" (1 John 3:9). Yet, God works within us "both to will and do of His own goodpleasure," working through our faith to make the "new man" more prominent in the entirety of life.

If we maintain an empty profession, living in contradiction of God instead of in harmony with Him, we have not been "made the righteousness of God in Him." If Christ is not dwelling in our heart by faith (Eph 3:17), then it is not possible that we have been "made the righteousness of God in Him."

This is what it means to be "justified" – being "made the righteousness of God in Him." It is what it means to be "saved," to be "cleansed," and to be "accepted in the Beloved." This is the cause behind being "added to the church" (Acts 2:47), becoming "the sons of God" (1 John 3:1), and being "born again." If we are not made to "become the righteousness of God in Him," then there is no point to any of the other descriptions of the saints of God. **If fundamental change has not taken place in us, then nothing of any real consequence has happened.** This is a hard saying, but we must find it in our hearts to heartily accept it.

#### A Final Word

We ought to note that "the righteousness of God" is not a theoretical

righteousness. **When we speak of righteousness being imputed to us, or faith being counted to us for righteousness, or being "made righteous," this is not mere rhetoric or magniloquence.** It is not an overstatement of what we really are in Christ Jesus. The "new man" is, in truth, in the likeness of God Himself, being "created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:23). That righteousness, to some degree, must be found in the observable lives of the people of God.

John makes a special point of emphasizing the reality of the righteousness possessed in Christ Jesus. This day of sickly theology requires the

might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:7-8). **It simply is not possible for Jesus to dwell within a person without the purpose for which He was manifested becoming evident.**

☛ "Little children, let no man deceive you: **he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous**" (1 John 3:7). Under the Law, righteousness, if it was to be realized at all, came **after** doing. In Christ, it comes **before** doing. No one "**is working righteousness,**" MONTGOMERY who has not first been "**made the righteousness of God in**" Christ. If righteousness is altogether

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affirmation of what he says.

☛ "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that **every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him**" (1 John 2:29). Being "born of" God is, in fact, being "made the righteousness of God" in Christ Jesus. However men may choose to theorize concerning the new birth, here is the test to be applied. The person who "**practices righteousness IS righteous.**"<sup>NASB</sup> The one who does not "**is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.**" We know this is true because "**For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He**

missing, therefore, it is only because the person has not been "made righteous."

There is no way to avoid these solemn conclusions. People do unrighteously because **they are unrighteous.** They do righteously because **they are righteous.** If this is not the case, then we have a condition described as a "new creation" in which nothing substantially has changed. God has, in such a case, "made" us something that has had no real effect. It is not possible for God to be glorified by such a condition. That is so evident that only a hardened heart can deny it.

## CONCLUSION

The passage with which we have dealt is unusually strong. **That is because it deals with Divine accomplishments, which are the pillars of the Gospel.** We do not come to men bearing a message of self-

improvement, or a word laden with moral requirements. Moses was chosen by God to bring such a message. As it is written, "**For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ**" (John 1:17). **That law worked no**

**essential change in men, but only confirmed their moral and spiritual impotence.** It stopped the mouth of the whole world, Jew and Gentile alike, confirming that **what God required was more than men could do in their**

**natural state.** As it is written, “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:19-20)

**A new creation was necessary, and for that to take places, there must first be a reconciliation.** Man could not reconcile himself, as both

history and the Law confirmed. Therefore God undertook the work Himself. As the prophet declared, “For the day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: **therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto Me; and My fury, it upheld Me**” (Isa 63:4-5). In the same work, God had to vent His fury upon sin while retrieving the sinner who had committed the sin. How could such a thing be?

**In Christ Jesus – in particular, in His death – God cursed sin and reconciled the world!** He vented His fury and brought salvation. He made Jesus “to become sin,” that we “might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” As only God can do, He credited the sins of all humanity to Jesus, then cursed Him, in order that He might credit His own righteousness to sinners, and then bless them. This is the message that is now in the care of the church! That is the message that frees, and is “*the power of God unto salvation.*”

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 4/29/2005. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The twenty-sixth lesson will cover verses one through three of the sixth chapter: **“A PROPER FRAME OF MIND”** There is a certain mind-set that must accompany the peaching of the Gospel – “the word of reconciliation.” The one delivering the message is seen in the proper light, the time during which the message if being delivered is perceived, and the character of the proclaimer must be above question. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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