

## 2 Corinthians

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Date: 01 January 1900

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- [ 0 : 00 ] And to the last three verses in the chapter, 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, verses 19 to 21.
- God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.
- Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ. As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.
- For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.
- I've been encouraged that this is God's word for you today. If you have read your daily light, you'll find that verse 21 was in it.
- [ 1 : 24 ] And I felt that the hymn we've just been singing, and particularly the last verse, most appropriate. And also thinking of the little story I told of the person who made reconciliation.
- A dazed man, Job says, is one who could put his hand upon God, and at the same time put his hand upon me, and make friendship.
- Well now, that is the message that we have. God has committed to us the word of reconciliation. And we who preach the gospel are ambassadors.
- The Lord Jesus told a parable about an ambassador, or ambassadors. You'll find it in Luke chapter 14, it's only just a couple of verses.
- And it's about a king who heard that there was a king coming against him. And the king heard that he had only 10,000 men, for the army that was coming was 20,000.
- [ 2 : 33 ] And so he would send an ambassador, a message, and sue for peace, plead for mercy. That's one sort of ambassador.
- But a simple lesson from history. When Jerusalem was being surrounded by the Roman army, and Titus was in charge, because Titus knew the terrible suffering that would ensue, and because the Jews had always had a special place in the Roman Empire, and were given many favours, they'd rebelled.
- And Titus came and surrounded the city, and he literally pleaded with the rulers of Jerusalem, that they would lay down their arms, cease their rebellion, and he offered them very, very generous terms.
- And they didn't listen. Now, there was an ambassador, who was not a weak one, pleading for mercy, but the strong one, pleading for the others to lay down their arms, and sue for peace.
- Well now, how much more, if we have that thought in our mind, of the ambassador not being one pleading for mercy, but being the strong one, beseeching us to be reconciled to him, who is the great and the holy God.
- [ 4 : 06 ] And so, our text tells us that we who preach the gospel, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we are to pray you in Christ's stead to be reconciled with God.

And we come on the authority of the king of kings. An ambassador has no authority of his own. His authority lies in the person who sends him.

And the ambassador speaks for the king who he represents. And he must speak the message that the king gives him. He's not to say his own things.

What he says is what he's told to say. And he says it with the authority of the power behind him. What a privilege to be an ambassador for Christ.

And what a responsibility to listen to what God has to say. And what a responsibility for the ambassador that he says only those things that God would have him say.

[ 5 : 36 ] And that we should beseech you as God beseeches. And that we should pray you in Christ's stead in the way that Christ himself spoke to people and presented the gospel.

Now we have read in Romans chapter 3 that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And I've tried there to show to you in a simple way how that the Lord Jesus Christ has made propitiation by his blood for our sin.

By his death he has made a way of reconciliation. And we read in verse 19 that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

And I want first of all to link that with our reading in chapter 22 of Genesis. And to make us to realize that God the Father is involved in the sacrifice of the Son.

His own Son the Lord Jesus. In the same way, in much the same way, as Abraham was involved in the sacrifice of Isaac.

[ 7 : 13 ] What it must have cost Abraham to actually take that knife and be prepared to slay his son is something which not one of us who are fathers could really comprehend.

But he was prepared to do it. He did not have to. Because God provided a substitute. But our God, God the Father, did indeed smite the Son.

All we like sheep have gone astray, every one of us. But the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. And we read in that wonderful 53rd chapter of Isaiah that God made his soul an offering for sin.

Those words, they went on, both of them, together. speak to me that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.

Reconciling the world to himself. The world that he made. Not the world that is sinful.

[ 8 : 44 ] For example, God has not reconciled all mankind. Don't understand that. But God has reconciled the world to himself.

And in a sense, the Lord Jesus Christ is the mediator. It is through him, and because of him alone, and because of what he came to do to bring about this reconciliation, to make propitiation, that the world has continued.

He is the saviour of the world. For had it not been that in the purposes of God his Son would come to make propitiation and to restore the law and to pay for sin, then God in his holiness, in his justice, how could he have spared the world?

But we've noticed he did spare the world because of that which Christ is coming to do. Remember too that when John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

God has reconciled the world unto himself. He is bidding us to be individually reconciled to him. Now the Jews neglected and dismissed and despised the message they had from Titus.

[ 10 : 27 ] And they perished. And God has said, He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life, eternal life.

This then is the message. No one will die for Adam's sin. But Adam's sin has affected every one of us.

All suffer from it. We must all suffer death because of it. We suffer from it because we have a sinful nature. We inherited that from Adam.

But God has reconciled the world to himself and given us the ministry of reconciliation that we should pray you in Christ's stead that ye be reconciled to God.

I might just pause for a moment to define the difference between iniquity and transgression.

[ 11 : 45 ] When I spoke about breaking God's law, that's transgression. God has given a law. And when we disobey that law, we transgress.

We overstep the mark that God has put. Iniquity literally means an inherent crookedness. And I've illustrated this before and I will again today.

That when I and my father went once to a sale on a farm, we saw a plough. And it looked much better than our plough. It was almost new. It was going quite cheap and so we bought it.

And I got it home. I was very pleased with it. I took it out in the field and I went to plough with it and I had a job to hold it in the ground. And when I looked closely, I found that there was a twist in the beam of the plough which made it that it would not stay in, go in a straight line unless I had to hold it very firmly.

And we had to get rid of that plough. It had an inherent crookedness that would not run straight. And that is what we are by nature.

[ 13 : 01 ] We have an inherent crookedness that we inherited from Adam and we cannot do the things that please God. Those that are in the flesh cannot please God.

We read that very clearly. But God has made a way. He has made reconciliation. How can that reconciliation be made?

Well, verse 21 tells us. Now, many years ago, my old Uncle William, which some of the older ones will remember, Uncle William, he said to me, if ever you get alongside a Jew that's been converted, you'll see the New Testament in new eyes.

You'll see the Gospel. You'll see the Bible. It's wonderful, he said. Some of these, the men that he'd met, he knew a converted Jew and he taught my uncle in his old age so much.

Well now, I've been given a book called God's Covenant and it's written by a Jew. A man by the name of H.W.

[ 14 : 18 ] Cassero. He was a doctor of philosophy and he taught in Glasgow and in Oxford and at 49 years old, in the course of his studies, he read the Greek New Testament and the Holy Spirit opened his eyes.

The first time he'd ever read it, being a Jew, and he saw the truth and he devoted his next 21 years in the study of the New Testament.

He died at 79, in, he died at 76 in the year 1879 and in 1889, a book was written in which he had, oh I would say, interpreted the New Testament from Jewish eyes.

And I want to read you what he says about this passage. This is how he interprets our passage. We are ambassadors then on Christ's behalf.

While it is God who is sending out his appeal through us, we implore you in Christ's name, be reconciled to God.

[ 15 : 39 ] For our sake, he made him who was a stranger to sin become one with human sinfulness so that united to him the very righteousness of God might become ours.

Now I believe that is a very simple interpretation of the text. I felt that I could explain it myself.

And that we, this is the God, this is the good news. This is our task as those who proclaim the good news to implore you in Christ's name.

Now really that surely must mean that we must do so in the way that Christ did. As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be reconciled to God.

Now the Lord Jesus Christ put very plain in his warning how many of his parables ended on these notes and they were cast into outer darkness.

[ 17 : 01 ] How he said to the people, do not fear man who when he has destroyed the body can do no more. Fear him who after he hath killed hath the power to cast into hell.

This is the warning that Jesus gave. And we would include warnings in the message. of course, the good news is not your sinfulness.

The good news is not that God is angry against sin. The good news is not that you're a sinner and deserve that wrath. The good news is that there is reconciliation.

reconciliation. And Jesus taught that too. He told the people what I've told you. In a very simple way he said out of the heart of man comes evil.

It's not what a man does, goes into a man. It's not the food he eats. It's not the ceremonial uncleanness that God is so concerned about.

[ 18 : 09 ] It's that inward cleanness. It's what comes out. It's out of the heart comes adultery and all wickedness and evil thoughts and lies and every sin it comes out of our heart.

We are tempted when we are drawn aside by our own lust and enticed. May I put that very simply? If someone were to place here a glass of beer I'd have no desire at all to drink it at any time.

I dislike the stuff. If you had got a man who was an alcoholic and presented him with one it would be a temptation. Because there's something in that man that he can't resist it.

There's something in us that can't resist sin. That's not the good news. As I've said the good news is that Christ came into the world to save sinners.

and he himself said he was the way I am the way the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me because he is the days man the man that Job longed for the man that Job longed for the one that could stand between.

[ 19 : 29 ] He said God is not a man that I should speak to him. I am a sinner and he is holy. Oh that there was one could stand between. In the person of Jesus Christ we see Job's days man.

He has made reconciliation. He has made propitiation that we might be reconciled to God through him. And he presented the gospel so simply did he not to Nicodemus in reminding him he must be born again.

He said as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should have eternal life.

The simple message. How to be born again? How did those Israelites get new life when they were bitten by the serpent and were metaphorically at least dead?

by looking simply to the way that God had provided. How could Nicodemus have new life? Jesus said by looking to me who will be hung upon the cross look and have life.

[ 20 : 51 ] He is the way, the truth and the life. He is the saviour of sinners. He taught us justification by faith. every doctrine in the epistles is in its embryo in the teaching of Jesus.

Whosoever believeth hath everlasting life. And as we read it more clearly in the passage in Romans, spelled out so simply that Christ's precious blood atones for sin and faith in him brings to our hearts the blessings of that forgiveness, that reconciliation.

So we are to plead, we are to pray you in Christ's stead. We are ambassadors for Christ. As though God did beseech you by us.

Now, let us think again of Titus outside Jerusalem. The fact that he took the initiative the strong one and went to the weak ones and pleaded with them, besought them that they would lay down their arms, cease their rebellion, accept his terms, didn't alter the fact that he was in power, he was in control, he knew he was.

And the fact that we have here that God beseeches you by us is in no ways inconsistent with his sovereign power. He is a sovereign God.

[ 22 : 30 ] There is a genuine beseeching in his words. We have only to think of his words in Ezekiel. He said, as I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he should turn from his ways and live.

Why will he die? Why will he die? Now, these are God's words. This is how God besought his people of all. And this is how he would have his ambassadors beseech you.

Why will you die? God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, as committed to us as his ambassadors, this ministry of reconciliation.

Why will you die? why will you be like those foolish people in Jerusalem who refuse to listen to the ambassadors of Titus?

God has said in Isaiah chapter one, in the midst of a passage of terrible indictment against his people, so much so that he said, away with your sacrifices.

[ 23 : 50 ] they're an abomination to me. And right in the middle of that indictment God said, come now, come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord.

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, and though they be red as crimson, they shall become as wool. Now that is God beseeching his ancient people.

on the ground, not only of course of the sacrifices that were offered on their altars, because they become an abomination to him, but on the ground of the sacrifice of his own son at Calvary.

How much more then should we beseech you in the same way? Come now, says God. Let us reason together.

Put me in remembrance, he says elsewhere. Put me in remembrance. I, even I, am he that flotteth out thy transgression, and will not remember thy sin.

[ 25 : 05 ] Oh, what a wonderful God that could so send his ambassadors out to beseech sinners, that they might turn to him and live.

Look to the Saviour and have life. And again in that wonderful passage in Isaiah 55, Oh, everyone that thirsteth, would you have a ticket to come?

Oh, everyone that thirsteth, is there a thirst in your soul for Christ? Is there a longing for forgiveness? Is there a desire to know him?

Oh, may the Holy Spirit bring to your heart the truth. May you realize that God is saying even in that, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.

Therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee. For the natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them. They are spiritually discerned.

[ 26 : 09 ] Have you discerned your sinnership? Have you discerned the way of reconciliation? Then be reconciled to God.

We pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God. What does it mean to be reconciled? For us to be reconciled with him and to him.

He has reconciled the world to himself. What does it mean to be reconciled to him? Think again of the illustration of Titus outside Jerusalem.

He bade them lay down their arms and cease their rebellion. Surely we must say that. Lay down your arms.

Cease your rebellion. No longer look indeed either to your own ability. That was the problem with the Jews in Jerusalem.

[ 27 : 12 ] They thought their city was impregnable. They thought that God was on their side when he wasn't. Like Saul of Tarsus, he thought God was on his side.

He thought he was. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He was circumcised on the eighth day. He was a Pharisee.

He kept the law. He'd done everything right. He thought God was on his side. The Jews thought God was on their side because of what they were.

They were Abraham's children because of what they were doing. But you see, whatever the cause of the rebellion, in our hearts against God, it's got to be left.

lay down your rebellion. And also, I said that Titus offered them very, very lenient terms.

[ 28 : 14 ] There could be no freer terms than Christ offers, if I might use that word, presents to us in the gospel. some of us have heard those words.

Lo, glad I come, and thou, blessed lamb, shall take me to thee as I am. Nothing but sin I thee can give, and nothing but love shall I receive.

If God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, shall not those who come and plead that son's death and resurrection be accepted.

His words, the words of Jesus, he says, come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls. there is a term, is there not, of unconditional surrender.

[ 29 : 27 ] That wasn't what, that wasn't what Titus presented to the Jews. It's what has been presented more recently to the German nation, and they had to have unconditional surrender, that they yielded up all rights.

You know, friends, I would say in a sense that they are the terms. We come, and we must cast ourselves, as it were, in unconditional surrender on the love and faithfulness of God through Christ.

And he is a loving God, as well as a just God. If God spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, shall he not also with him freely give us all things?

shall he not? It's stronger language, friends, than saying he will. Shall he not do it? Is there any way that God could not do this?

To one who pleads the precious blood of Calvary, who acknowledges their sin, and confesses their need of such a saviour? And so we see Jesus says, come unto me.

[ 30 : 43 ] think of how he wept over Jerusalem. The same Jerusalem that Titus wept over. He wept over Jerusalem, not because the stones were going to be destroyed, but because he said, how oft I would have gathered you, as a chicken gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not.

Oh, if thou didst but know, died the day, this day. But they did not know. Oh, friends, what can I say?

He sends a message from heaven, the last message of the gospel, from the throne of God itself, from the Son of God in heaven. He says, the spirit and the bride say, come.

And let him that heareth say, come. And whosoever will let him come and take of the water of life freely.

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.

[ 31 : 56 ] 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.

well might Paul say, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

Sympathy of simply, Paul puts it, doesn't say if you despise it, doesn't say if you rebel against it, doesn't say if you take up arms against it, if we neglect it.

well, I'm so thankful, I've said this so often, that God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation, not of damnation, but of reconciliation, and I've sought as simply as I can to present that reconciliation, the gospel of reconciliation, to you this morning.

do not despise it. Amen. Amen. Our closing hymn this morning from Hymns of Worship, number 125.

[ 33 : 22 ] Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come.

Amen. Amen. Theologian under Come on.

Glat step I see, dear Lord. Revelation, I use many fruit.

O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God,

O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God,

[ 37 : 34 ] O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, O God, OK.

Déconal ■ AK imperfections O Lord, thou hast read every heart that has spoken these words.

And thou knowest, Lord, there is a sincerity in many of our hearts, and we come desiring that we might be made thine and thine alone, surrendered to the crucified.

Granted, it might be so. May the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Amen.