

TITLE: THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

INTRO: In this chapter Paul continues his teaching regarding the minister & his ministry. He talks about the motivation to teach others, as well as the ministry itself – a ministry of reconciliation.

I. THE MINISTER'S MOTIVATION (v. 11-16): v. 1-10-motivation in suffering (Heaven); here it's the motivation to preach

A. (v. 11-13) Fear Motivation

(v. 11) *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also....*

1. Having just spoken about the judgment (where **all** will appear & be judged according to our works - v.10), no wonder Paul now says that we know the terror (fear) of the Lord! This is obviously a reference to the judgment (for those whose works are disobedient). This *ought* to motivate Paul (& every other Christian) to teach others and try to persuade them of the truth! Do we care that the people around us are lost?? **Heb 10:31**– “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!*”
2. Paul has already anticipated the attacks on him from the disobedient brethren (1:14) who “commended themselves” (**3:1**). Now he again explains his motivation in this ministry. “God knows us, and I trust you do too (you who acknowledge us).”

(v. 12) *For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.*

1. Paul says that he's **not** commending himself. He already did this when he taught the truth, as well as by the signs (**12:12**).
2. Rather, this is in response to the false teachers. They gloried in appearance (letters of commendation), not in heart (not genuine). They made false accusations about Paul (his teaching & his motive). So he answers this, properly explaining his motives (Heaven, fear of the Lord, love of Christ). The Corinthians then could rejoice in this and have an appropriate answer for the false teachers (they could defend Paul against false accusations). (**Ch. 10-13** addresses these false teachers directly.)

(v. 13) *For whether we be beside ourselves (insane), it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.* This is most likely the accusation being made. But Paul says, God knows (& you do too – v. 11), that whatever we do is *from* God and *for* you!

B. (v. 14-16) Love Motivation

(v. 14) *For the love of Christ constraineth (compels) us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:*

1. We're also motivated by Christ's *love* (not the love of money, materialism, etc.). He didn't just die for me, but for **all**!
2. We judge (logically conclude) that if 1 died for all (correct premise-**1 Tim 2:6**), then all were dead (the conclusion).

(v. 15) *And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

1. The conclusion continues: the purpose for His death was that they which live should change – put *Him* on the throne!
2. *He* rose again, so that *we* could be raised again – to walk in newness of life (**Rom 6:4**). If we accept His *death* for us, then we accept that we died. Therefore, having been raised, we ought to recognize that we can't live the same way we did prior to our “death.” “*You are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body*” (**1 Cor 6:20; Gal 2:20**)!

(v. 16) *Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.* When we do this (die to self & live for Him-v. 15), we're alive spiritually (regardless of how vile, sinful, & fleshly we were before). We want to be seen as new creatures (v. 17), & we must also see others with these “spiritual” glasses (don't just see the flesh; see the soul – see a Christian forgiven by God, or a *potential* Christian)!

II. THE MINISTER'S MESSAGE (v. 17-21): Reconciliation

(v. 17) *Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

This is Christianity! Everyone “*in Christ*” (baptized into Christ – **Rom 6:3**– the **only** way in) is a new creation. The old manner of living (sinful behavior, lack of concern for others) is forgiven & gone! And all things are new – a new outlook on life (recognition of what's really important – your sins are forgiven & you're now a servant of righteousness – **Rom 6:18**).

(v. 18) *And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Christ, & hath given us the ministry of reconciliation;*

1. The source of everything is God – *He* created us; *He* sent His Son to die for us; *He* reconciled us to Himself by Jesus.
2. Reconciliation – “an adjustment; restoration; atonement” (Strong); “restoration to favor” (Thayer). We are made right w/God. - We are reconciled to God; God is not reconciled to us (as if *He* were to blame for the separation – **Isa 59:2; Col 2:13**).

3. This ministry (service) has been given to us (Christians; new creatures; those who have been reconciled). This is a huge honor!
(v. 19) *To wit (ως - as, while, when; namely), that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses (deviations from His law) unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

1. Reconciliation defined (i.e., this is *how* the world can be reconciled to God) – by forgiveness of sins. When we are baptized *into Christ*, God then forgives our sins, not imputing them to us (not accounting or charging us for them, even though we're guilty).

2. Again he says God has committed to us (or “put/placed in us”) the **word** of reconciliation. This word was spoken, then written.

(v. 20) *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray (beg) you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* We are ambassadors for Christ. Is Paul speaking of himself, or all Christians?

1. In Greek, “ambassador” can have a more generic meaning (representative; messenger). This meaning applies to **all** Christians!
2. Or it can be as our English word – Ambassador (a rank; someone authorized to speak on another's behalf). This meaning only applied to Christ's HS-inspired apostles (i.e., those who had the gift of prophecy).
3. The message: *be ye reconciled to God!* The way has been provided. But it's each person's responsibility to make this decision!

(v. 21) *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.*

1. God made Jesus, who knew no sin (**Heb 4:15**), to be sin for us. He accepted *our* punishment! This is the essence of Christianity!
2. This is how our sins can be forgiven, thereby allowing us to be reconciled to God.

CONCLUSION: This passage identifies the problem (separation from God), the cause of the problem (*our* sin), and the solution for reconciliation (Christ's sacrifice, and our need to be “in Christ”). This message hasn't changed. What motivates us to teach others? The fear of the Lord (judgment) as well as Christ's love (His sacrifice) should motivate us to always obey His word, AND to teach others the same thing.