

The Love of Christ Commands Us > Are You Trustworthy?

II Corinthians 5:18-21

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Introduction: Just imagine that tomorrow morning at 8:00, the President calls your house & says, "Congratulations! You have been appointed ambassador to Great Britain..." Such a call from the President will not likely ever be received by any of us. But, if you are a new creature in Christ, born again into God's family, you have already received such a call. You are an ambassador of Jesus Christ, representing the King of Kings & Lord of Lords, to a foreign nation - this world in which you & I live. What kind of ambassador are you? What is required of you? How are you to conduct your life & the business of heaven that you represent? Consider with me this evening the commanding love of Christ found in our text of II Corinthians 5:18-21. This text previously states our emotional motivation - the love of Christ that **compels** us. We can also see our spiritual transformation - the love of Christ that **changes** us (from a simple head knowledge of Christ to a sincere heart belief in Christ). Notice here in our text our practical exhortation - the love of Christ that commands us as ambassadors of Christ with the ministry, the message, & the means of reconciliation.

I. The love of Christ commands us with the **ministry** of reconciliation (:18)

A. A ministry experienced by us >

1. Its **initiation** by God:

a. *"All things are of God."*

(1) His work of creation.

(2) His work of "re-creation" (conversion).

b. *"Who hath reconciled us to Himself"* ("reconcile" - restoration of a relationship).

(1) God removed the offense as the offended party.

(2) God reconciled the offender by the offering of His Son.

"In Christ God's holy & loving work of reconciliation has been accomplished once & for all... the way of reconciliation now stands wide open..." (Hughes).

2. Its **reception** by us:

a. We are saved by grace - Ephesians 2:8-9.

b. We are justified by faith - Romans 5:1, 9-11 (& cf. Colossians 1:20).

B. A ministry entrusted to us

1. As a **steward** - *"hath given"*

a. It is committed to us.

b. It is critical for others.

2. As a **servant** - *"ministry"*

a. The picture: from verb meaning 'to serve, wait upon, attend to' (cf. Acts 6:2).

b. The principle: to serve unbelievers by sharing the Gospel with them.

"There is no service to mankind more crucial & urgent than the exercise of this ministry... (it is) the one thing needful for our world in all circumstances & in every generation" (Hughes).

II. The love of Christ commands us with the **message** of reconciliation (:19-20)

A. The determination of the message > by God

1. Man's **alienation** demanded God's wrath:

a. Man's *rebellious* condition - see Romans 8:6-8 & 5:10.

b. God's *righteous* condemnation - see Romans 1:18.

2. Christ's **substitution** demonstrated God's love:

a. Christ took upon Himself man's *sin* - see I Peter 2:24 (note *"imputing"* - reckoning).

b. Christ took upon Himself God's *wrath* - see Isaiah 53:4-6, & 10-11.

- B. The deposition of the message > to us ("*committed*" - deposited, placed)
 - 1. The grace of reconciliation received by us - see Romans 5:10-11.
 - 2. The gospel of reconciliation reported by us -
 - a. "*Word*" - "*logos*" - indicates that which is true & trustworthy, implies genuineness; "the Word of truth" - Ephesians 1:13.
 - b. It is the "*Gospel*" - good news - Colossians 1:5, "word of the truth of the gospel."
- C. The declaration of the message > for Christ
 - 1. The marks of an ambassador (his role):
 - a. A messenger & representative - "He does not act on his own authority. He does not speak in his own name. What he communicates is not his own opinions or demands, but simply what he has been told or commanded to say" (Hodge).
 - b. "An ambassador acts & speaks not only on behalf of but also in the place of the sovereign from whom he has received his commission. It is his duty to proclaim faithfully & precisely the message entrusted to him by his sovereign" (Hughes).
 - 2. The message of an ambassador (his report):
 - a. One of urgency - "*beseech*" - God is pleading through the ambassador (see Redpath).
 - b. One of utmost importance - "*be ye reconciled to God*" - God is calling mankind to repentance & faith in order to be saved ["The passive voice makes it clear that no one is able to reconcile himself to God, but that he can embrace God's gracious offer & be reconciled" (Hughes).]

III. The love of Christ commands us with the means of reconciliation (:21)

"There is no sentence more profound in the whole of Scripture; for this verse embraces the whole ground of the sinner's reconciliation to God..." (Hughes).

A. God made Christ **sin** > Imputation - see Isaiah 53:6.

1. Our sinfulness - Romans 3:23, 6:23a.

2. Christ's sinlessness - John 8:46, Luke 23:4, 14-15, 22, 40-41.

"...God the Father made His innocent incarnate Son the object of His wrath & judgment, for our sakes, with the result that in Christ on the cross the sin of the world is judged & taken away" (Hughes). See Isaiah 53:10-11.

B. God made sinners **righteous** > Justification - see Romans 8:1.

1. The sinner is cleansed (speaks of forgiveness) - Romans 3:24-25 & Ephesians 1:7.

2. The sinner is clothed (speaks of righteousness) - Romans 3:22.

O.T. illustration - Isaiah 61:10.

"Here is the heart of the Gospel: the sinless Savior has taken our sins that we might have God's righteousness" (Ryrie).

Conclusion: Again I ask, "What kind of ambassador are you?" Assuming that you are saved, you have been called to represent the King of Kings as a citizen from the kingdom of heaven. The ministry, the message, & the means of reconciliation are given to you here. How well are you representing King Jesus? Are you delivering the Word of Truth with His authority, this Gospel of salvation? When was the last time you pleaded with someone on behalf of God that they be reconciled to Him? Ask yourself the question posed by the song writer: "Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb? And shall I fear to own His cause, or blush to speak His name?" If you are not saved here this evening, I ask you the question posed by another song writer, "Have you any room for Jesus, He who bore your load of sin? As He knocks & asks admission, sinner, will you let Him in?"

Don't wait for your phone to ring tomorrow at 8:00 a.m. & expect the President to ask you to be his ambassador to England. But if you are saved, you have already been appointed. Thank God this evening for the opportunity to serve Him & cry out for Him, "*We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*" Will you be trustworthy as one of God's ambassadors?