

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

How to be an ambassador for Christ

II Corinthians 5:10-11, 14-21

Keep in mind...I can teach you and equip you in how to share the Gospel. What I can't do is give you a heart for the lost and a passion for sharing the Gospel. I can teach you...but I can't change your heart.

I. A DEEP MOTIVE: (vs. 10-11)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (vs. 10)...

Everyone will stand before God one day...either as a *believer* before the *judgment seat of Christ* (the *Bema seat judgment*) or as an *unbeliever* at the *great white throne judgment*. The question is ...are you prepared for the day that you will stand before God?

Appear...Gk. *phaneroo*, it means more than to just *show up*...it means *to reveal, to be laid bare, stripped of every façade of respectability, to be openly revealed in the full and true reality of one's character or being*.

Judgment seat of Christ...the *Bema seat judgment*.

"...For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.' So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God."

~Romans 14:10b-12

Recompensed...means *to received back what is due*...whether *punishment* for a criminal or a *reward* for one to be honored.

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men... (vs. 11)...

Persuade...means *to seek the favor of someone...convincing proof of truth*. It doesn't mean to try and talk someone into something.

II. A RIGHTEOUS BURDEN: (vs. 14-17)

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; And He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf (vs. 14-15)...

Controls...describes *pressure that produces action*. It's a picture of a bit in a horse's mouth.

One died for all...describes *the substitutionary death of Christ*. Under the old covenant the death of thousands of sacrificial animals couldn't provide full and complete pardon for sin (**Hebrews 10:4**) ...but in sharp contrast, Jesus Christ completed that pardon for sin.

Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come (vs. 16-17)...

We are no longer to evaluate people on the basis of externals...that is...**according to the flesh**...but on the *transformation* that comes when one is **"in Christ"**. (This is a phrase **Paul** used repeatedly in his writings to speak of a believer's spiritual relationship to Christ).

To be **in Christ** is to be a **new creator...a new creation**. This describes the profound change that takes place in one's life who puts their faith in Christ. His *substitutionary death* becomes *their death*...and His *resurrection life, their life*.

"For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."

~Romans 5:10-11

III. A DIVINE RESPONSIBILITY AND PRIVILEGE: (vs. 18-20)

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation (vs. 18)...

All these things...refers back to the preceding verses that *describe the total transformation taking place at conversion*.

God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ...this is the *essence* (the *heart* and *soul*) of the *good news of the gospel*.

Gave us the ministry of reconciliation...This is equal to the **Great Commission**...the message that proclaims *to the lost world* that *forgiveness of sin* is available.

“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

~Romans 5:8

Namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation (vs. 19)...

Christ’s death on the cross makes possible man’s **reconciliation** to God. **Reconciliation** involves removing rebellious and sinful man’s *enmity* (his *hostility, hatred, antagonism*) towards God. Because Christ bore man’s sin on the cross...He made peace possible.

“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

~I Peter 2:24

“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit”

~I Peter 3:18

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (vs. 20)...

Few verses more precisely summarize the *ministry* and *message* of the *believer*.

Ambassadors...both a *messenger* and *representative of one’s citizenship*. In this case, *a believer’s citizenship* is *heaven*. And just as an *ambassador* lives in a foreign land, so also do *believers*.

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”

~Philippians 3:20

As though God were making an appeal through us...There is *no higher calling...no greater privilege...no more urgent task*...than the *ministry of reconciliation* God has *entrusted to all believers*.

The question is...are we going to be obedient and faithful?

IV. **BENEVOLENT BENEFICIARIES:** (vs. 21)

- *How can an absolutely and infinitely holy God be reconciled to sinners?*
- *How can His just and holy law, which demands the condemnation and punishment of all who violate it, be satisfied?*
- *How can those who deserve no mercy receive it?*
- *How can God uphold true righteousness and give grace?*
- *How can the demands of both justice and love be met?*
- *How can God be both just and the justifier of sinners?*

As hard as these questions seem, this *one brief verse answers all of them*...and resolves the seeming *paradox of redemption*! This one sentence...

- *Reveals the essence of atonement.*
- *Expresses the heart of the gospel message.*
- *Articulates the most gracious truth in Scripture.*
- *It explains how fallen man’s relationship with God can be restored.*

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (vs. 21)...

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

(The napkin)