

2 Corinthians Ch5v11-21 - Reconciled To God

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everybody. If you could open to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and we're going to read from verse 11.

! It's up on the screen there as well, from verse 11 to 21. 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

So that's on page 1161 if you're using the church Bible. Just before we read, let's ask God for his help as we open up his word today.

Lord, this is your word, and we are your people, and we desperately need to hear from you today. Because your truth is the only solid foundation that we have to stand on.

So we ask for your Holy Spirit to take your word now, and to change us from the inside out. Help me as I try to explain it, that this will be helpful and edifying for us all.

[1 : 29] And I just ask that your voice will be heard so clearly this morning. Amen. I just want you to look out for something as we read the text.

What changes when someone puts their faith in Jesus? What difference is there between their life before Christ and after him?

Watch out for that as we read. Thank you, Chris. So 2 Corinthians chapter 5, beginning at verse 11. Since then, we know what it is to fear the Lord we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.

We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us. So that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than what is in the heart.

[2 : 43] If we are out of our mind, as some say, it is for God. If we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them, and was raised again.

So from now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come.

The old is gone, the new is here. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

[3 : 53] We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Amen. I wonder, do you ever have those moments as a believer where you wonder what's really changed?

I mean, when you first repent of your sin and trust in Christ, everything is exciting and new. But as time goes on, be it a year, 10 years, 50 years even, well, we start to wonder, have I really changed?

We still struggle with sin. We look around us at our friends and family who aren't Christians, who oftentimes live more virtuous lives than we do.

It seems from the outside, at least. And we ask, what's the real difference between us and them? Do you ever ask those questions?

[5 : 22] Because I certainly do. But read verse 17. If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come.

The old has gone. The new is here. That's true. If you are in Christ, your life is spectacularly transformed. You might still look the same, still live in the same house, still work the same job, go to the same school, struggle with the same sin.

But your life has been radically transformed. How exactly, you ask? Well, Paul tells us in the very next verse. Look at verse 18. All this is from God.

All this is from God. Who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

In that verse, we see two things. We see that we have a new identity. Reconciled to God. And a new purpose.

[6 : 30] Sharing the message of reconciliation. So we're going to unpack those two things of how we are a new creation in Christ.

The first part. Our new identity. We are reconciled to God. Now what does that word mean?

Reconciled. Well, it speaks of two estranged people coming back into a restored relationship.

I don't know if you follow the royal family. I certainly don't. But I looked this thing up online. I actually Googled the word reconciled and put the Google News tab on it.

And this is what came up. Prince Harry wants reconciliation with the royal family. He and his wife, Meghan, left the royal family in 2020 to move to America for a more private life.

But their leaving caused all sorts of hurt. And now family members don't even speak to each other.

And it's really sad. Harry went on TV in May saying that he longs to be reconciled to his father, King Charles, the King of England.

[7 : 39] But the king doesn't want to mend the relationship at the moment. And it's over some dispute about security and all this anyway. But when we speak about being reconciled to the King of Kings, the Bible tells us that all of us have walked out on a perfectly loving father.

We've all rebelled against his rule. And our biggest problem is that we face his just judgment on our sin.

Eternity outside of this father's love and care. We are the guilty party. We did the damage in the relationship. We're the ones who walked out.

Now you know what, Harry? King Charles is taking a hard line. He's not currently reaching out to his son for reconciliation. Because of all that Harry has done.

And this dispute over security. But God, the true king, is so, so different. Read verse 19 with me to see how he's different. God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ.

[8 : 57] Not counting people's sins against them. Do you hear that? God is taking the first move to reconcile, even though we're the guilty party.

And even more astonishing, he's not counting our sins against us. But how, you ask, how can God just simply ignore our sins that would not be just of him?

There is no justice in that. If our sins are simply ignored. Well, verse 21 tells us God's glorious solution. Verse 21.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Here's what happens to anybody who believes in Christ. Jesus takes our record of sin. It's not that he became sinful.

[10 : 06] We've got to be careful about that. No, it's that he was counted as a sinner. He who had no sin became sin for us.

Our record of sin was counted as his on the cross. So, no sin is overlooked or ignored. No. Every single sin is paid for.

Justice is done at the cross. That is incredible. So, number one, Jesus takes our record of sin if we trust in him. Secondly, we learn that we get Jesus' record of obedience.

Okay, so his flawless record of obedience is credited to us even though we never lived it. Another way of saying it, Jesus takes our dirty rags of sin and we are clothed in his perfect robes of righteousness.

They cover us so that when God sees us, he sees us as righteous. Legally, it's as if we never sinned.

[11 : 26] We are perfectly right in his sight. Now, even though we will continue to struggle with sin for the rest of our days on this earth, we are legally declared to be right before God through Christ.

And therefore, we are entitled to everything that Jesus deserved. Adopted as sons and daughters of the Father, receiving his Holy Spirit, heirs of heaven for eternity, that is our new identity.

We are reconciled to God, brought back into relationship with him at greatest cost to him, at no cost to ourselves.

That is astonishing grace. Can you see how different that is to King Charles? King Charles is like, Harry, you've got to pay for the wrong you've done, boy.

Then we'll see about reconciliation. God the King says, I've paid for the wrong you've done. At greatest cost to me, at the cost of my son.

[12:49] So you could come into a relationship with me forever. This is our new identity. It's our greatest identity. identity. You could be a mother, student, a husband, a wife, a workplace manager, a sports person, a musician.

So many ways that we can find identity in this world. Here's the one that stands above all others. You are reconciled to God, a son or daughter of the King of the universe.

Forgiven, restored, not condemned, safe with him forever. What can beat that? If you are in Christ today, do you realize your identity?

Is it your number one identity over all other things that you are reconciled to God? Now, just to say, if you're sitting here and you haven't yet put your trust in Christ, you haven't repented of your sin and believe that he died and rose again for you, the King is reaching out to you today to reconcile. You've read it in his word. Even though you're the one who did the damage in the relationship, he's reaching out to you and he's graciously made it possible for you to be forgiven, adopted as his son or daughter forever.

[14:23] how could you walk away from him? How could you turn down that invitation to reconcile? Well, for all who are in Christ, once we realize this new identity, we can't just stay the same.

We can't. Have a look at verse 14. Paul talks about that. for Christ's love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died.

What does that mean? Well, I think it means this, that if you are united to Christ, your old life of slavery to sin died with him. And you have new life in him now.

Verse 15, and he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again.

It makes sense, doesn't it? If he has totally transformed our future, paying the price to reconcile us with God, how could we not look at Jesus and say, my life is yours?

[15:42] You redeemed it. You're the only reason why I will not be condemned for my sin. I want to live for you, King Jesus, because you gave your life for me.

We long to live for him when we truly realize our identity as those who are reconciled to God. God. But what does it look like to live for Jesus, to give our lives for him?

Well, I think that's the second thing that this text shows us. We have a new purpose in life. And it's to share the message of reconciliation with others.

Do you notice how this new purpose flows out of your new identity? Now that we're reconciled to God, we long for others to be reconciled also. We can't bear the thought of our family or friends remaining far off from God, separated from him forever, because if Jesus took our sin, he can take theirs also.

If Jesus can give us his righteousness, he can give it to them too. Let's read how Paul frames this in verse 18.

[17:05] He says all this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

So first, he's given us a ministry of reconciliation. You know, we often attach our purpose in life to what we do in our lives.

So if you're working, your purpose might be to do well, to provide for your family, to climb the career ladder. If you're retired, your purpose is to enjoy your retirement, care for your family, look after your health.

If you're a parent, your purpose is to raise your kids well. If you're a student, get good grades, and launch your career the best you can.

[18:12] And it's not wrong to have any of those purposes. Those are good things. But I think the point Paul's making here is if you're united to Christ, you've got a purpose that overarches everything else, a new purpose in life.

And this is it. it's your ministry of sharing the message of Jesus. It's helping other people to get to Jesus. And once they're there, to stay on the journey with Jesus.

And that gives us more purpose than all the other things in our lives added together when you think about it. A hundred years from now, what's going to matter?

going to matter? What's going to matter? Will it matter the grades I got? How far I progressed in my career?

Will it matter whether my kids had all the latest gear? Or what house I lived in? No, it won't. But here's what will matter 100 years from now, people.

[19 : 23] People matter. It matters whether people hear about Jesus. It matters whether they are given the chance to be reconciled to God and spend eternity with him.

What an amazing purpose to spend your life helping as many people as possible get to Jesus.

When you get to heaven, will you ever regret even a minute spent doing that?

Look around you in the room. you see people walking through life with you, encouraging you towards Jesus, helping you to trust him through highs, through lows, challenging you whenever you veer off the track.

in heaven. In heaven, we're going to look each other in the eye and know in an instant that every single moment was worth it.

every single text message, every word of encouragement, every arm around the shoulder, whatever we did to help each other on the journey to Jesus will be eternally worth it.

[20 : 40] There is nothing better we could have spent our time doing. And that's supporting others to share Jesus as well.

That's part of our ministry too, like turning up to wash dishes at the carol service. Or giving your money to support the various ministries that are happening in the life of the church, like Rock and Rooted or supporting Amy in Sheffield, who's sharing Jesus with people who've never heard about him.

You know what? We'll never regret using our time and resources in these ways because we're supporting the gospel, the good news of Jesus, going forward to more and more people.

So that's the first thing. God gives us a purpose to do something that lasts forever, sharing the message of reconciliation. And that message is, in verse 19, that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.

That's the message. And what a beautiful message it is that we share. And Paul says next in verse 20, have a look at that. He says this, we are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

[22 : 04] We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. I want you to think about our Taoiseach for a second, Michal Martin.

He's got around 90 different ambassadors around the world. I didn't know that, I looked it up. They work all over the world, and they represent him.

They convey messages for him. So for instance, this week, Michal Martin was in South Africa for the G20 summit. What does he do if he wants to speak to Trump, who didn't come to the conference, about Trump's peace plan for Ukraine?

Well, he rings up his ambassador in Washington, and he sends his ambassador to the White House to speak for him.

Martin makes his appeal through the ambassador. So whatever that ambassador speaks, it's really Michal Martin's words, right?

[23 : 09] And you better believe it's an honor to be asked to be an ambassador. Not just anyone gets that job. You represent the leader of this country.

Now just think about this for a second. The king of all kings has chosen us to be his ambassadors. sent out to communicate the most important message that this world needs to hear.

That God is reconciling people to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. He has his ambassadors in every corner of the globe. The message is going forward every day into places where the king is not known.

And right here in Cargilline, we are among that number. He's given us the job. What about that for a life purpose?

Here's three quick things to think about if you are God's ambassador. First, you've got authority to speak for the king.

[24 : 22] As Paul says, God is literally making his appeal to the people around you through your mouth. through all the words that you say, whether you write them down or you put them on social

media, we have authority from the king of kings to speak this message.

We have authority to implore people to be reconciled to God, whether they want to hear that message or not. What a wonder it is that as we speak the king's words, Christ himself speaks to us. Wow. That is sobering. It matters how we live as ambassadors.

It matters what we say. So it's so important when we are representing the king that we speak the king's words. No good ambassador waffles on about what they think their king would say.

We don't have any remit to speak what we imagine God is like or how we imagine people can be made right with him. No, no, our king has written down the message for us.

[25 : 46] He's put it in black and white. And as faithful ambassadors, we speak the king's words. And we want to speak it clearly. right?

So whatever we share from the Bible, whatever story we might turn to, may it always point to the main story that scripture is telling. How God is reconciling the world to himself and Christ, not counting people's sins against them.

So I might say, as an ambassador, studying God's word is a really good thing for you to be doing with your time. Make home group a priority. You're going to learn more about the word there too. Be better equipped to share clearly. Get good books to help you to understand scripture. If you want some recommendations, you can chat to the elders after.

Even try out a course in Munster Bible College. Make it your aim to share the gospel well. Now, at this point, you might be saying, Sam, I just can't do that.

[26 : 55] I'm not cut out for this ambassador role. It's not my thing. I'm not a great speaker. I've not been a Christian long enough or I don't know as much about the Bible as other people do in this room.

I find it hard to put it into words. Absolutely. All those reservations are real. We can feel all those things.

We can feel like we're absolutely not qualified to be God's ambassadors. But here's what Jesus told his disciples whenever he was sending them out as his ambassadors in Luke chapter 13.

He said this, when you're brought before synagogues, rulers, and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.

the truth is that unlike Michal Martin, your king actually goes with you by his spirit on the mission to share his message. He actually lives within us to empower us so that when we ask of him, he will direct us to something from his word so we can speak his message in a way that person needs to hear it.

[28 : 13] the point is this, the king will help you to speak. He's not just giving us authority to speak, he's going to help us to speak, and that's a wonderful comfort.

That means if like me you don't feel like a very qualified ambassador, that's okay. The king's got you on the job anyway, and he delights to channel his power through weak people like you and me. Last question, where is the king sending you to speak? There are people that God has made you his ambassador to.

Are you praying for opportunities to share with them? Are you praying that people are really hard and have never wanted to hear anything about Jesus before, that God would just soften their hearts to be open to him?

There are people in your life that I'm not able to get near, and vice versa. See how God places his ambassadors in all different places, and we believe that there are no coincidences.

[29 : 36] things. So God's placed the people in your life and in mine for a reason. It's not by accident. He places his ambassadors on purpose with a new purpose to share him.

So live out that purpose that God has given you in helping others get to Jesus. I want to finish with a story. It's from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S.

Lewis. I don't know how many of you have read the book. If you haven't, I really recommend you do. Four children stumble into this mystical world of Narnia, and they discover that they are the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy that when two sons of Adam and two daughters of Eve sit on the thrones of Narnia, the reign of the evil white witch will end.

And winter will come to an end. But Edmund scandalously betrays his three siblings and Aslan, the rightful ruler of the land, and he defects to the wicked white witch.

And he does this only because he's mad at his brother and he's greedy for Turkish delight. And the witch has loads of it. But before long, he realizes that he's enslaved to a cruel and wicked witch. [31 : 05] And then he actually finds out that this witch is about to kill him. Because she's understood that if she kills Edmund, the prophecy will come to an end and she will remain the ruler of Narnia forever.

Now, meanwhile, far off, Lucy, Edmund's sister, pleads with Aslan. She says, can anything be done to save Edmund? Aslan replies, all shall be done, but it may be harder than you think. Aslan sends out his soldiers to rescue Edmund and he's reconciled to his siblings, to Aslan. But not long after, the white witch approaches their camp.

She points to Edmund and she says to Aslan, you know that every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey and that I have a right to kill.

Aslan can do nothing. Aslan knows she's right. According to the laws of Narnia, Edmund deserves to die for what he has done.

[32 : 21] But he takes the witch aside and he sends everyone else away and after a long discussion he turns around and he says, I have settled the matter.

The witch has renounced the claim on your brother's blood. She skips away with a smile on her face. No one realizing that Aslan had agreed to climb the hill later that night and allow himself to be bound onto the stone table and killed in Edmund's place.

Edmund's reconciliation came at the greatest cost to the king. Isn't that a picture of how Jesus, the true king, died for traitors and rebels like us?

We who betrayed his love. But our king was too powerful for death to hold him down. After paying our debt of sin, he rose from the dead and our king is really alive today.

we are a new creation raised to new life in him with a new identity reconciled to God and a new purpose sharing the message of Jesus.

[33 : 53] And Edmund, he shows us what this new reconciled life is like because right at the end of the story, he rides out into battle against the white witch. And what does he cry at the top of his lungs?

for Aslan. He couldn't help but live for the glory of the one who had reconciled him.

And neither can we. We live for Jesus who reconciled us as his ambassadors sharing the message of how Jesus can reconcile others as well.

Let the echo of our days be for Jesus our King. Let's pray. Let's pray. Father, remind us that we are a new creation in Christ.

Where we doubt that we have really changed, remind us that everything has changed. Help us to live in our new identity as those reconciled to God and safe with him forever.

[35 : 23] Help us to live in our new purpose of sharing that message as your ambassadors.

Challenge us to share it boldly and clearly, knowing you go with us and you have given us authority to speak on your behalf.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit as we go out into this week into the places that you have sent us. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing another song.

It's called When I Survey. Play. And this song talks about what it caused our king to reconcile us to God. And it finishes with our right response to him.

Please stand as we sing. Thank you. Amen.