

"Union Workers"

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[0 : 00] I welcome you to turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. We will be continuing our study of this wonderful book.

I have a bit of a warning for you. I have not gone off the deep end. It's just a demonstration. The word of God is like a sword.

It is living and it is active. It cuts. It is deep. And it is powerful. That's just a prop.

It's not actually sharp. But as we read the word today, I want you to think of that.

To think of that sword. Because the word is like that sword. Just as a sword is a powerful tool for a purpose, so too the word of God is a powerful tool for a purpose.

[1 : 11] The word of God, as we will learn in this passage today, is here to bring reconciliation. To bring peace.

It unites man and God by its power. And will have ended the hostility between you and God.

Now, like a man being knighted, the sword comes out.

It's tapped on your shoulders. And then it is handed to you. To wield. To use. The word of God, which has been brought into our life, has saved us.

And it is now given to us to wield for God's good purposes. Just as a knight swears oaths as to how he will use his power, so too we are under obligation to our Lord to wield his word to good effect, to his purposes.

[2 : 32] And that is what we will learn from this passage here today. Please follow along with me as I read verses 18 through 20 of 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ. As though God were pleading through us, we implore you, on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Hopefully you've seen the theme of reconciliation as we've read today.

[3 : 40] All the scriptures we've read today have been about this idea. At the end of Romans 5, it talks about God will reconcile us through Christ.

The passage Vicki just read talks about it pleased God for all the fullness of God to dwell in Christ and by him to reconcile all things, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Today, too, the passage we study is about reconciliation. But rewinding a bit to two weeks ago, when we were studying the last section in 2 Corinthians, we learned that we are a new creation in Christ, that we are changed.

That is, that if we have believed on him and in his gospel, we have not left the same way we came in.

We learned that we are dead to our former ways, as Paul says, we reckon that Christ died for all, therefore all have died.

[4 : 50] And we learned that we are now alive to God, for we have died with Christ. Verse 17 shows that so beautifully.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

This is the same all things that starts our passage here today. Verse 18, now all things are of God. This is not Paul starting a new idea, talking about everything in the world. He's talking about all the things of you.

All the new things that he has created in your life, since you have believed in him. He has washed out the old and brought in the new. And the purpose of those things are for him.

[5 : 53] They are all of him. All of the things of who we are, are now new in Christ, and they exist for God.

They are God's things for God's purposes. God is not one among many auctioneers, trying to purchase and bid on the things of your life, trying to get what space he can of the things that you do. He has not just purchased the Sunday morning, so then you have to give that time to him. But he has purchased all of your life. He has bought the whole lot for a price above every other bidder, the price of his son.

And so the whole passage revolves around this, around God's works and purposes, in purchasing us, and then calling us to work as well.

That God is a minister of reconciliation, one who works to bring peace. What this means is the same gospel that we learned about two weeks ago that brings newness, also brings peace.

[7 : 19] It brings peace between us and God. That is what reconciliation is, to bring peace between two parties. When there is a split between two people, some issue has arisen, and now there is a divide in the relationship, reconciliation is when they come back together.

And this is what our God loves to do. God is a peacemaking God, and he makes peace through the blood of Jesus Christ.

That is his ministry of reconciliation. This means, first of all, that there is a split between God and man.

There is no need for reconciliation if you were together in the first place. But there is only a need for this because there is a division between us and God.

We have rejected him. We are like the Israelites when they ask for a king in 1 Samuel. 1 Samuel 8, verses 7 and 8.

[8 : 33] And the Lord said to Samuel, Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you. For they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me that I should not reign over them.

According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day, which they have forsaken me and served other gods, so they are doing to you also.

Our God has established good rules. He has created this world to be a wonderful place. And like a teenage girl protesting after being told she can't go out to a party at 10 o'clock at night, like her protesting, she then runs away believing her parents are cruel and then she finds out she's bitten off more than she can chew and that her parents' rules are for her good.

So too, we have rebelliously run away from God and created a huge gulf and we reap the rewards of those actions.

So I want to let you know that if you are here today and you have not trusted in Christ, there exists a gulf between you and your creator, wider than any of your good deeds can ever cover.

[10 : 07] Know that there is a great gulf between you and the goodness of God, that you have made him your enemy if you have not repented and trusted in Christ.

All here who have trusted in Christ once too had him as our enemy, but now we have peace with God. So the story continues after this great gulf because God is a peacemaker, a reconciler.

The same God who has made us new for his sake is the same God who brings us close. He makes peace with us.

Though we were once enemies and rebels, he calls us friends and brothers. Verse 18. Now all things are of God who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ.

This is a gospel note. This is one of the notes that combines into the beautiful melody that is the good news of Jesus Christ.

[11 : 23] That God would make peace with his enemies, would make peace with us. You don't want to be the enemy of God.

You will not win that battle. Your rebellion will end. And so it is good news when you hear that there is a way to make peace.

It is amazing, too, that God would try to reconcile with us. That after we broke the relationship in the first place, not that we would come to him asking for forgiveness, but that he would come to us and offer it first.

I mean, think of when you fight with people. How often do you say in your heart, until they come and ask for forgiveness? That's it. You don't go.

I'm going to go as far as possible to convince them to accept forgiveness and to mend that relationship.

[12:34] It makes me think of an example in our own history where we can see forgiveness and peacemaking work out. At the end of World War I, the Allied powers punished Germany.

They said, you started this all and you're going to pay for it. They laid huge fines on them that left their economy destroyed for decades.

They cut down their governments, reduced their power, they humiliated them, and they deserved it. Much of the war and the death that had happened could rightly be laid at Germany's feet and demanded that they paid the price.

But then, a few decades later, World War II, you may have heard of it, the rise of Nazi Germany, what happened here is after the harsh punishment that they were under, that led a charismatic person to be able to take advantage of the nation and lead it down a dark path.

Lead it to the rise of Nazi Germany. World War II, the terror and the destruction, the Holocaust and the horrors of it.

[14:07] But that war is brought to an end. Germany is forced to an unconditional surrender. And now, the Allies have to decide once again what to do with Germany.

I mean, did Germany do bad things? Did they deserve punishment? Yes. We know they did. But the Allies decided that instead they would bear the cost of the war and that they would help Germany rebuild after it.

They showed great forgiveness in that they paid for the nation that did all these horrible things to have a chance to recover instead of punishing them like in World War II.

I mean, some estimates put the death toll in World War II at over 60 million. And yet, we helped them after.

The American people paid massive costs to fight in this war. And then, they continued to pay more to help the offenders rebuild.

[15:30] They did this to bring peace and reconciliation. To bring a real peace. They did not do this because Germany deserved this help, but because it must be brought back into good relations with everyone else.

so too, we are like Nazi Germany. We are the vile offenders in the war against God. God is on the right side and we are on the wrong side and we break his rules.

We are rebels and he makes a way at his own price for us to have peace. We are bad children hating our parents for trying to teach us and yet they still love us.

He still loves us. Verse 19, that is that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

reconciliation. This is God's purpose with the world. Though the blame for the war sits rightly at our feet, the price is paid by him for we could never pay it.

[16:59] He is the great worker of peace in our lives. But if you're here today and you don't feel a deep sense that you are a sinner, I have a few things for you to consider.

For I too know what it's like to not believe that I'm all that bad. I mean, deep down in your heart, there is a part of you that does not want to accept just how bad and how wrong the things you have done are.

But when I think about my own sinfulness these days, I think about how good God has been to me and how I have treated him in return.

My uncle, who is not a Christian, he has a plaque in his house that says, beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy. that's actually good theology.

Not that I'm suggesting you go out and drink, but the point being that God created good things in this world to show his love for us.

[18:21] Every good thing in this world is here because God loves you, and he is speaking that love to you with these good things.

things, every ray of sunshine, every beautiful day swimming, every mountain view, every time with your friends, every good meal, these are messages of love from your creator.

He could have created it to be bland and boring. think about when as human beings we want someone to focus only on one thing.

We make everything else as bland as possible. Think about work, how often the workspace is just austere and empty. God could have created that and say, no, you're here for me. Don't look at any of these other things. But he says, I want to fill your life with as much goodness as possible. So he creates this beautiful world and beautiful lives.

[19 : 32] I mean, who do you think designed the joy of love between a man and a woman? Who decided to make food so wonderful?

Who has made the beauty of the mountains? God. The pain of this world is a human invention. But all of the good of this world belongs to God. And what do we do with it? I mean, let's go back to the beer example. Does anyone ever take this flavorful and relaxing beverage and use it to do evil? Does it ever cause people to sin? Do people ever take something good that God's created and wield it for bad? God? I think about affairs, which take the goodness of what God made a marriage to be, and it uses it as justification to tear a family apart, to break trust, to lie, and to hurt people? That's what we do with the good that God gives us. The world is full of goodness that God gave to us to use for God, and we spit in his face.

[20 : 53] We are deeply sinful. But look back at verse 19. That is, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.

See how God brings peace to us? By not imputing, that means not charging or counting our sins to us.

God, in Christ, does not charge your crimes to your own account. And that is how he makes peace. Think of this, your every crime, your every last drop of guilt doesn't belong to you anymore. power. It's been charged to his account. You had a great fortune given to you in the privileges of this world.

You had great advantages given by God. You are made in his image. He has filled the world with his glory to point you to his goodness. and then you have squandered it, going into debt, millions of dollars of sin.

[22 : 14] And then God hands you Christ's credit card and says charge it all to this account and charge every future purchase on this card.

Except instead of money, these are crimes. and instead of millions of dollars, these are life sentences and eternities in hell.

And they are charged to Jesus on that cross. God was so determined to save you that he made a way to cancel every debt that you have.

2 Corinthians 8-9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that through his poverty you might become rich.

How hard is it for you to forgive someone? I mean imagine this. Someone is in trouble, you help them, then they are ungrateful, they refuse your advice, they end up back in trouble, and then they accuse you of being cruel for not keeping them out of trouble.

[23 : 38] How easy is it for you to forgive that person? This is how much God loves the world, that he would charge our sins to Christ so that he might bring peace.

this is the sword of peace. You might wonder, sword of peace, how is a sword a peaceful object? But first, it starts as the sword of execution. Your head belongs on the chopping block, with the sword falling against it.

But instead of the sword falling against us, it fell on the sun. Our head's on the block, and instead the sun steps forward to take it for us.

It is a sword of peace, because when the sword falls on him, the debt is paid, and there now stands no more judgment and condemnation to fall on us.

[24 : 56] It is the sword of peace because it falls on him instead of you. I mean, what peace can you have with God while he prepares for your execution?

What peace can you, how can you be reconciled with him while he is sharpening the blade of your destruction? salvation. But once the sun lays down his life for you, how can you continue to hate him and to be his enemy?

God has reconciled you by the sword, by his word of reconciliation, by his ministry of peace, by his ministry of reconciliation, as Paul calls it.

praise God. And now the sword is handed to you. You don't just get this great gift and get to do nothing with it.

You are to go forth and bring that peace out to the world. Look at how this passage commands us to work in light of what has been done for us.

[26 : 19] He has given us the ministry of reconciliation. That's at the end of verse 18. End of verse 19. And has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

And finally verse 20. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ. He didn't just save you to strew you around the world as redeemed layabouts.

He saved you for his glory and to bring his news to others. I mean, who will talk about the glory more?

Who speaks about their car more often in this example? The man who buys a car? Or the man who in the time of his desperate need is given a car outright for free?

The second one will brag about it. Like, man, what a great gift. Like, you won't believe what this person did for me. They were there when I needed them.

[27 : 28] Who will boast more in their master? the servant who thinks he deserves the station he has and the pay and the privileges?

Or the one who used to be the enemy and has been lifted up far above his station and has been given everything?

God has saved this place to be a house of redeemed trumpeters blowing forth his glory in all places. So that is your first application point.

Go sing the praises of God who forgave your every debt, who reconciled you to himself through Christ. Do it in every place and in every time and in every way that you can manage.

And just as God made peace with us, so too we are to preach his peace to others. We have been entrusted with his ministry of reconciliation.

[28 : 40] God has an agenda. When he appeared in human form in Christ, he had a plan. It says God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

That mission is not finished. there are still people that God wants to reconcile to himself to make peace with. So you are to go out and preach his peace, his gospel.

We have been entrusted with this ministry of reconciliation, with his peace preaching work.

work. I mean, we know how people wear brand names on their clothing. Companies hope that they will be ambassadors for their products that you can see like, oh, he's got Nike.

That looks really good. I want some Nike stuff. Well, God has put his brand name on you. You are called after the name of Christ.

[29 : 50] That's why you're called Christians. because he's branded you. Go bear that forth. Go be a brand ambassador and plead with others to make peace with their creator through Christ by whom you're called.

Verse 20, now then we are ambassadors for Christ. If there was anyone here today who has not made peace with God by Christ, as Paul says, be reconciled to God.

It is not too late. It is not too late. The end of verse 20, as though God were pleading through us, we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

That is what you should be. You should be pleading with men and women, pleading as if God is pleading through you for sinners to come to repentance.

So application two, go tell people that their creator has made a way for peace. They must, like Nazi Germany, unconditionally surrender and their every debt will be paid by him who they once hated.

[31 : 17] finally, we are to be peacemakers and this is because our God is a peacemaker.

You are to be like your father, so go and make peace wherever you can, even at great costs to yourself.

So often, the difference between strife and peace is a little sacrifice, a little willingness to be inconvenienced or to take a loss.

I mean, this is what Christ says, blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God. They shall be called sons of God because they do the work of their father.

Will you do the work of your father? will you make peace wherever possible? Romans 12 18, if it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

[32 : 28] Be peace workers. I mean, you know what made peace between you and God when he forgave all of your debts.

peace. So be a peacemaker by forgiving others' debts, being quick to forgive their crimes against you.

Be quick to forget others' failures and to forgive their shortcomings and watch the beauty as you reap a harvest of peace.

I know it's not easy. It wasn't easy for Christ to forgive you. It wasn't cheap for him to do it. It cost him his life. So radically forgive others and you'll be amazed at the peace it brings and the beauty of it.

[33 : 26] Proverbs 19 11 says the discretion of a man makes him slow to anger and his glory is to overlook a trespass.

To overlook, to just forget it. Or James 3 verses 17 through 18. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. Application number three, make peace wherever possible, especially by forgiving quickly and abundantly.

Let's close in prayer. Lord God, what a joy it is to be reconciled to you. We ask that we would enjoy the privileges of our fellowship with you, that as we celebrate this Lord's Supper today, that we would remember the price of our reconciliation, of the peace we have, and that we would boldly go before your throne as sons.

And we ask that you make us into peacemakers, peace preachers, and into those who love to trumpet the glory of you who saved us.

[35 : 06] We pray all these things in your son's name. Amen. Amen. Amen.