

Be Ye Reconciled to God

By Jerry Mawhorr

2 Corinthians 5:14-6:2 "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 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." That is the plan of God for you who have gone down into those baptismal waters, and profess that you are dying and that you are recognizing your death and your association with Christ in his death. Being raised to walk in newness of life that you may henceforth not live unto yourself, but unto him that died for you and rose again.

"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." Christ walked on the earth in the flesh. He also was killed, he died, he rose again, and now he is ascended up into heaven. You also should have died with Christ and you have been risen to walk in newness of life and therefore we don't know that old man. You are a new creature.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Has that happened to you in your life? You've become a new creature in Christ Jesus? Anyone who comes to the cross, anyone who bows their heart, anyone who repents truly from their heart, and is filled with the Holy Spirit; they will be a new creature in Christ Jesus.

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 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. We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in the time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the day of salvation.)"

I would like you to realize tonight that this passage here was not a passage that was written to the lost. This is written to the church at Corinth. Now I understand that the church of Corinth, as you read through the book of 2 Corinthians, had a lot of issues going on in the church. I would like you to notice that this passage was written to the church. This is not an appeal to a bunch of lost individuals, but it is an appeal to those that profess to know the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. As you notice here in verse 20 Paul says *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."* So here Paul is still appealing to some in the church at Corinth to be reconciled to God. Evidently Paul must have recognized that there were the unrepentant in the church at Corinth, which I would say tonight that there are many who are unrepentant, who associate themselves with the church of God. Yet if Paul were here he would make an appeal to you to be reconciled to God.

We go a number of chapters here in 2 Corinthians, and we get back to 2 Corinthians 12 and we see a little bit of what was happening in the church at Corinth. In 2 Corinthians 12:20-21 Paul writes, *"For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I should bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed."* Then in 13:5 Paul closes his letter with these words, *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"* Evidently here in chapter 5 of 2 Corinthians, Paul is appealing to some of the Corinthians to be reconciled to God. He realized that sin was still going on in the church, much of the things that he mentioned here and his heart was going out to the professing church there in Corinth to be reconciled to the Living God.

Now I believe even as Jesus taught that there are tares among the wheat and I believe that there are tares among the wheat right here. I would like to speak to the tares tonight; (you might not even know

you are a tare) and maybe God will show you as we go down through this message here that you are not a part of the wheat. I appeal to you and I will later on say, “I stand in the place of Christ, and I beseech you to be reconciled to God.”

Now let us go back to 2 Corinthians 5. We are going to spend the rest of our time in this passage. What is reconciliation? If you notice in verses 18-20 the word reconcile or reconciliation is mentioned 5 times. What is reconciliation? Reconciliation is simply this: taking two parties that are at enmity with each other bringing them together where the enmity is no longer there and they can be friends and they can fellowship together. If you are a minister or you do counseling, you know what it is like to bring a husband and a wife together; they’re having problems with each other, they’re warring with each other, and you bring them together and you bring reconciliation into a marriage. That is taking one party that is at enmity and the other party that is at enmity and bringing those two parties together and bringing a reconciliation. Such reconciliation requires both parties’ approval. You cannot bring a couple together and reconcile them if one of the parties is unwilling to reconcile.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning—a famous English writer—her parents disapproved so strongly of her marriage to her husband Robert that they disowned her. Almost weekly Elizabeth wrote love letters to her father and mother asking for reconciliation. They never once replied. After ten years of letter writing, Elizabeth received a large box in the mail; she opened it and to her dismay she found the box full of all her letters sent to her parents. Not one of them had ever been opened. Here Elizabeth had made a sincere desire to make reconciliation with her parents, but her parents were not open to reconciliation and therefore reconciliation was not possible or it never came about. We are going to talk about two parties that are at enmity with each other—God and man. I am going to share with you that both God and man must come together and reconcile each party, for there is true reconciliation. Here the Bible addresses reconciliation between God and man.

Let us look first at what is man’s enmity towards God. Jesus said this in Luke 19:12-14, he gave a parable. Here is the parable that he gave. “*A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him...*” Why did they hate him? The next verse says. “*And sent a message after him, saying, ‘We will not have this man reign over us.’*” There is the enmity in the human heart; there is the enmity. Man is shaking his fist at God and man has an enmity towards God, and man way down in the depth of his heart is saying to God, “I will not have you to reign over me”.

Man in his fallen nature refuses to be in subjection to the will of God. We call it in the Bible, rebellion. Do you know when Adam and Eve were created in the Garden, and God placed them in the Garden, God would say things to Adam, I’m sure, like, “Adam, hey, would you come over here and let’s walk together.” And Adam in his heart, in the pureness of his heart would say, “Oh, yes Lord, I would love to do thy will, O God,” and he ran and he took part in fellowship with God. Maybe God told him to go over there and tend the Garden, and he would say, “Oh yes, Lord, I love to do thy will.” If you had been back there in the Garden of Eden, you would have heard Adam and Eve before the Fall, rejoicing in their heart to do the will of God. There was no enmity at all in their hearts against their Creator, until that day when Satan tried to convince them that, “You shall be as God; you shall call the shots in your life; you need to take part of this tree, and you shall be as gods”. And once that happened—once Adam and Eve partook of that tree in the Garden—there was an enmity that settled upon their hearts, and they began to live, and they began to say to God, “We will not have you to reign over us.”

Before you were converted that enmity was in your heart, too. It doesn’t matter whether you grew up in a Christian home. It doesn’t matter if you have been to church all your life. It doesn’t matter whether you grew up in New York city in the Bronx, your parents were on drugs and you grew up in an awful situation. When you were born into this world, you were born into sin and in the depth of your heart there is an enmity towards God, which says, “God, I want to live my own life, I will not have you to rule over me”. That is the enmity that is in the human heart. Psalms 2 describes it this way, “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” What is the root of that rage? Why do they want the bands

broken asunder and the cords cast away? Those bands and those cords represent the commandments of God, the will of our Creator. They want nothing to do with those commandments, they want nothing to do with those restraints, and they rage and they say, “Throw off these commandments! We want nothing to do with them”. That’s their enmity. Their anger or enmity is at God’s law, which is his will. They do not want to come under submission to it.

About two months ago, a few of the brothers in our congregation were out at a football game in a little town near our community. We go out on Fridays, sometimes Saturdays, and we take some signs, and we carry them out to the football games near our community there were we live. We had gotten a few signs from a brother out in Oregon, and one of the signs that we carried said this, “Whosoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery”. Well, that’s the law of the Lord. We were walking into this football game, and we didn’t get very far into the crowd, when a man came out of the crowd and he was in a rage. He came up to us and he said, “Listen, I married a divorce woman”. The man threatened us, literally threatened our lives. He said “You’re not going to get out of this football game alive tonight”. He was in a rage. After listening to his diatribe for awhile I walked away and I wondered, “Why is this man so angry? Why is there such a rage upon his heart?” I realized the reason he was so angry. He looked up at that verse and that verse represented to him that God Almighty, through his Word, was trying to tell him how he needed to order his life and he did not want anyone telling him how to order his life. When he saw God trying to tell him through that word, “You need to order your life this way,” he flew off in a rage.

Why do the heathen rage? They don’t want the cords of God’s will, his commandments, the bands. They don’t want them, so they are in a rage. Romans 8:7 says, “*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*” It cannot even come into obedience; it cannot even be submitted to the law of God. Man’s nature in his fallen state can never come under submission to the will of God. Man needs a new nature. If you think somehow by your own efforts and works you are going to somehow subdue yourself and come under obedience to the law of God, it will never happen. Jesus said, “Ye must be born again”. You must have a new nature.

Man has enmity in his heart towards God. Well, God has enmity too, towards man. Psalms 7:11 says that God is angry with the wicked every day. God is angry with the wicked every day! Have you ever thought about that? That God is angry with the wicked every day! Man is angry with God, and God is at enmity with man and here is why. God’s nature is so holy. (I don’t know how to explain this to you. As I was meditating on this it is so difficult for us to grasp. We live in a fallen human body. We live around fallen human beings, in a fallen world and we don’t understand how a God could have no sin within and could be perfect and pure in every way. It is hard for our minds to fathom it.) That God that we serve in heaven is so holy. He is so holy. There is not a fiber in him that is not holy and as he looks down upon this sinful world that holiness in God is stirred. There is enmity within his heart. God’s nature is holy, it’s righteous, it’s pure, and God has a holy hatred for rebellion and sin. It is said of Jesus Christ that he loved righteousness and hated iniquity. He loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows, because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity. The very nature of God as he sits upon the throne (if I could convey to you the very nature of God), he is so holy and pure, that within him he hates iniquity. He hates it with a passion. As a matter of fact the Bible says that he abhors it. The word “abhor” means to shudder with hatred. Have you ever seen someone so angry, and so hateful, and vengeful, that they shudder? God abhors it. Romans chapter 12 says because God abhors it, you and I ought to abhor it too. Jacob have I loved, but Esau Have I hated.

You have heard this before, but I am going to use this as an illustration. If someone, a gardener, truly loves flowers, he must, *he must* hate weeds. He must! If his nature is one to love the beauty and the fragrance in the flower in his garden, he must hate weeds with a passion. If our God (and our Bible tells us this) loves righteousness, and he loves purity, and he loves holiness, he must in his very nature so hate, and be so angry at anything that is so unholy, and unpure, and unrighteous. It is his nature. It is his very nature. God is not in the gray areas. Do you know that? Although this world is trying to pull him into the gray areas. He is not in the gray areas. God either loves righteousness or hates iniquity. Well, eternity is going to bear this out.

The Bible says that over here in eternity is a place called heaven. It is where God pours out his love, and his mercy, and his blessing on people who are redeemed. He loves them with an everlasting love. It is a place where the Bible says God shows his kindness towards those that go there forever and ever and ever and ever. It is a wonderful place called heaven. On this opposite extreme is a place called hell, in which those that go there are tormented day and night forever and ever and ever and ever. It is the opposite extreme of what heaven is. Interestingly enough there is nothing between that point over there and this point over here. There is no landing place between heaven and hell. Jesus said that between these two places there is a great gulf fixed. There is nothing there. You are never going to land anywhere in between.

When I was growing up, I was thinking that somehow the good people go up to heaven and the bad people go off to hell. Maybe I would land kind of right here in the middle somewhere: a little bit of hell and a little bit of heaven. I've got news for you. There are no landing places here in the middle. You are either going to be in heaven and be blessed eternally and have the love of God poured upon you forever and ever and ever, or you are going to be in hell eternally and have the wrath of God poured upon you forever and forever and forever. There is nothing in between. God loves righteousness and he hates iniquity.

Romans 12:9 says, "*Abhor that which is evil and cling to that which is good.*" God is at enmity with man because man is in his rebellion and sin and it is provoking the Lord and his nature. I want to try and convey this to you because many of you think, "Well, I'm not that bad of a sinner". You take some very pure heart and some very pure mind, young people, and you take them down to the very dregs of our society, in the inner city—Philadelphia, or New York. That pure mind is aghast with what they see and it is shocking to them what they see because their heart is pure in many ways. Take the living God, who is totally pure, who is totally righteous, who is totally holy, and you set sin before him and he is aghast. He is aghast with it. Even those sins that happen in your Christian home. The time that you roll your eyes in disrespect towards your parents, he is aghast with it. He abhors it. It is no small thing to God. Yes, I know he abhors the drunkard and the prostitute, and all those evil things, but he also abhors your sin. God is holy. 1 John 1 says that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

I thought about those four beasts as they sit there at the throne. The Bible says they have eyes within and eyes without and they rest not day or night saying, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty". Do you know that they don't say, "Merciful, merciful, merciful Lord God Almighty or Loving, loving, loving Lord God Almighty or Patient, patient, patient Lord God Almighty or Lonsuffering, longsuffering, longsuffering Lord God Almighty?" They say "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty". God is holy. Perhaps that is His supreme attribute: His holiness.

God is also just. He is a just God. Think about this. God will always mete out judgment for sin; all the time. God never looks the other way. He never excuses it. God is just every way. All sin will be dealt with. Do you realize that? All sin will be dealt with. Can you imagine a human judge sitting at his bench and in comes a murderer, and he looks at the murderer and he says, "I judge you guilty to be hanged" and that man goes off to be hanged? Next comes in another murderer and the judge says to him, "I'm going to let you go free. You are free to go." You look at that man and you say that he is an unjust judge, but our God is a just God. He is just in this sense: that every transgression and disobedience shall receive just recompense of reward. God never overlooks sin. God is exacting. There is no sin that slips by him, big or small. Do you realize that? God has to be that way because he is just. He cannot just overlook things. "Adam and Eve, hey, you made a mistake. You slipped up. I'm just going to overlook it this time." Maybe you and I would think that way. "God, why don't you just overlook it this time. It was just one sin." Do you know that God let that sin stand and he meted out judgment for it and this whole world fell behind Adam and Eve because God was just?

God in his very nature cannot overlook sin. Something is going to have to pay for it. Someone is going to have to pay for it. In the final judgment in Revelation 21 the books are open, and I don't think they are going to open those books up and get a bunch of broad generalities out those books. "You know old Tom over here had some weaknesses and old Tom made a mistake here and there, but we're just going to judge him on some broad generalities". I believe that when they open those books up in the final

judgment that God's records will be incredibly exacting and every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment. I think God is so just that His records are so exacting that when man stands at the judgment they are going to be amazed at the justice of God that nothing will slip by Him. Ecclesiastes 12 says that God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing whether it be good or whether it be evil. God is a just God and he is a holy God.

Let me throw something in here about the justice of God. Some people say, "You know, what about the African out there? He didn't have the opportunity that some of you have had. What is God going to do? One thing that God is going to do is be just. He will be just and in that judgment His justice will amaze all, but God will be just. Jesus said it this way when he was walking upon the earth. Those in Sidon and those in Capurneum did not receive his message. Those that turned away from his miracles would not believe on him. He said that in the judgment it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah then for you. That means in the judgment when a Jewish man from Capurneum stands up there before this holy and just God and beside him is a Sodomite, who was sleeping in Sodom when Abraham rose up and was meditating and he looked out in the field ahead of him and saw Sodom and Gomorrah go up in smoke, as that Pharisee or that Scribe or that Jew stands there and beside him that Sodomite who was destroyed at 5:30 in the morning as he lay in his bed drunken from the night before from his reveling, he probably is going to look over and say, "Boy, Sodomite, this judgment is going to be hard for you." Jesus said it will be more tolerable for the Sodomite than you in the Day of Judgment. Why? Because you had opportunity. My son walked in front of you. He performed miracles in front of you. You saw great things and rejected the light. Jesus said that if my Son would have walked in Sodom and Gomorrah they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Don't think tonight that you are clear because you are not as bad as that man walking out there on the streets is. Do you know tonight, those of you that have gone to church and grown up in Christian homes, that God is going to require more of you than of them? To whom much is given, much shall be required and when the judgment comes, whether it be the judgment seat of Christ or the great white throne judgment, God is going to mete out justice in an incredibly beautiful way. Nothing is going to be overlooked. God is holy and He is just and in His holiness and justice He is at enmity with man because man has sinned and violated His holy law. God abhors man's rebellion.

While I was thinking about this I realized the folly, the absolute folly of trying to justify yourself before God on the basis of your own works. What a folly, trying to come to this holy and just God and saying, "I deserve to get into heaven on the basis of my own merits." That individual has no concept of the holiness of God, nor a concept of the justice of God. Paul in Philipians 3 brought all his credentials: circumcised the eighth day, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee of the Pharisees; and he brought all his credentials together. Finally he looked at those credentials and he looked at the holiness and justice of God and he took all those credentials and he threw them out and said, "All this stuff is nothing but dung." I have some of that dung in the back of my pasture. It is pretty worthless. None of you are going to justify yourself before that holy and just God on the basis of your own merit. God is a just and holy God.

We have two individuals or two entities that are at odds with each other: God and man. Man in his very nature, fallen as it may be, he does not want God to reign over him. Some of you have that beating in your breasts, "I want to go my own way." God in His very nature is holy and that attitude from man causes God to be at enmity. So here we have God and man at enmity one with another. The wonderful news tonight is that God is taking the first step at reconciliation. I like that. When you are sitting together and you're counseling with a couple or maybe a pair of brothers and you are trying to bring reconciliation. It is a beautiful thing when one of them breaks his heart down and sticks out his hand and says, "I'm willing to make reconciliation. I'm willing to make the first step and to bring this thing together." I think it is beautiful tonight that God in heaven, having enmity and being angry with the wicked every day as he looked down on humanity did not just walk away and leave humanity in their condition. God said, "I'm going to make a step. I'm going to take the first step and try and bring reconciliation between me and man."

Let us read in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 "...God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world

unto himself, not imputing their trespasses....” Maybe you don’t realize this—it is an amazing thought—but do you realize that every human being in this world God has already reconciled to Himself? He has already reconciled the whole world to Himself through the death of His Son. It says here in verse 18 that all things are of God who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus on the cross that day said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” He was bearing the enmity. He was bearing the enmity of God’s holy nature against sin. 1 John 2 says that He bore the enmity of all sin, of the whole world. In other words, God stuck out his hand to man and said, “Listen, I’m going to take the first step. I’m willing to reconcile myself to you. I’m going to take the enmity that I have in my heart towards your sin and I’m going to pour it out upon my Son, because I want reconciliation with you.”

Listen to these verses in Colossians 1:20, “*God made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.*” Ephesians 2:16 says, “*And that he might reconcile both Jew and Gentile unto God in one body by the cross; having slain the enmity thereby at the cross and came and preached peace to you that were a far off and to them that are nigh.*” The cross of Jesus Christ was God taking His enmity towards man and His sin and rebellion and slaying it on the cross. Now He is coming and what a privilege we have to go out into the world and preach peace to every man and tell man that God has reconciled Himself to you, now you be reconciled to Him. That is wonderful news. That is actually the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. God took the first step in reconciliation.

Do you remember the Christmas story? You’ll probably hear a lot of it over the radios in the stores over the next month, month and a half. Do you remember the baby Jesus was born and at His birth there was a multitude of angels that came? In Luke 2 here is what it says, “*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace goodwill towards man.*” Goodwill means that I’ve got good intentions. I want peace. God is saying through that little child, “I had enmity with you, humanity and that little child is my arm extended down to you saying, I want goodwill towards men. I want man to be reconciled to me”. God is not a mean ogre as some people think he is. Paul said, “Behold the goodness and severity of God”. I believe both of those are applicable. You look at the Bible and you see the goodness and severity of God and I have spoken much about the severity of God and I think there is a place to understand the severity of God, but in that place there is also the goodness of God.

Yes, we could talk about His justice, His exacting justice, His holy nature that must abhor sin and punish it, but we can also talk about the goodness of God. The fact that God reached His hand out to man and offered man an opportunity for reconciliation and said to man, “I love you. I want to have mercy upon you. I delight to have mercy upon you. I’m willing to save you,” is the goodness of God. Well, here in verse 20, with that in mind, God is taking the first step and trying to bring reconciliation between Him and man. Paul writes, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” God has taken the first step in reconciliation; now you be reconciled to Him!

When I used to live in Houston, Texas, I remember one time driving across I-10. It runs through the south from the east coast to the west coast. As I was driving along I-10 heading towards Florida, somewhere in Alabama or Louisiana I came across a billboard and it impressed me very much. I still remember it to this day. Right on the right side of the road as I was driving east on I-10, I saw a huge billboard. It was a picture of the Lord Jesus on it and He was on the cross. It was a close up of His face and there were thorns around His head and His head was bleeding and it was beaten. It was a gruesome scene. Above the picture of the Lord Jesus were three simple words that stuck in my heart. Those words were simply this: “It’s your move.” In other words God is saying, “I’ve given you My Son. I want reconciliation. I want to come together with man. I have given My Son and He was crucified on the cross. Now it’s your move.” It is your move. God has already moved and taken the first step to reconciliation with you. He has slain His enmity and has poured out His wrath. Here Paul says, “We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” It is like Paul is writing this and he is saying, “Listen, I am standing in the place of Jesus Christ. He is there at the right hand of God and He has presented His body a sacrifice for sin. He was buried; He is risen; and He is seated at the right hand of God and He has given

me the ministry of reconciliation. As an ambassador of Christ I stand here, O ye Corinthians, and I plead with you, be ye reconciled to God.”

I stand here amazingly—who am I? I stand here before 13 to 14 hundred people and I stand here in Jesus Christ stead. I will tell you his heart. As He sits at the right hand of God I will tell you His heart. I can stand here this evening and I can plead with you and it can come straight from the throne of God. I beseech you to be ye reconciled to God. I believe if Jesus Christ were here that he would plead the very same thing. I would encourage you to take advantage of your opportunity.

I don't know if you realize this, but the psalmist says, “What is man that thou art mindful of him?” Did you ever think of the reality that God could have redeemed the angelic race that was fallen? He could have sent Jesus to redeem the angels, but he sent Jesus born of a virgin into the human race that you and I might be redeemed. The psalmist says, “What is man?” What is man, God, that you would redeem humanity? Only eternity will tell the great opportunity we had to be reconciled to God. The angelic host sinned against God and God gave them no opportunity for reconciliation, but God has come to you and has offered you an amazing privilege and opportunity that you now can be reconciled and restored to the living God. It makes you wonder like the psalmist, “God, what do you see in us? What is man that Thou art mindful of him?”

Now some people when they read this passage, they are taught universalism—that this passage teaches that because God reconciled the world unto himself that all men must therefore be reconciled. Eventually everyone is going to get saved. That is not the case because Paul goes on and says, “I realize that God has reconciled Himself to you, now you be reconciled to Him”. We have a place in this reconciliation. Man must reconcile himself to God.

I read a story one time of a man by the name of George Wilson who was convicted of robbing the mails and murder back in 1829 and he was sentenced to be hung for his crimes. Andrew Jackson was the president at that time, and Andrew Jackson came to the man and offered him a pardon. Amazingly enough, the man refused the pardon. It was very unusual that the man would refuse the pardon and they sent the case to the Supreme Court at that time. The Supreme Court ruled that a pardon is only applicable if the one who is pardoned receives it. Otherwise the pardon is of no use. It is not valid. Andrew Jackson said, “This man who committed the crimes must be hanged because he refused the pardon.” God is offering pardon, but man must reconcile himself to God. Man must be willing to lay down his enmity.

I have read and I don't know if it is true or not—some of you history buffs can tell me if it true—I have read that when General Lee and General Grant got together during their surrender that General Grant reached out his hand to shake General Lee's hand, but before General Grant would shake General Lee's hand General Grant said, “Give me your sword”. Give me your sword. Give me that symbol of enmity before we can be reconciled.

The Gospel, the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ is that God has come to reconcile man to Himself. God has given His Son Who has died on the cross and shed His blood. God has poured out His wrath, His enmity towards sin upon His Son. That is the glorious news of the gospel. God is calling upon man to be reconciled unto Him and to come and lay down their enmity. Listen to this verse: “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near, let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man is thoughts.” Let the wicked forsake his rebellion. Let the wicked forsake his enmity towards God. Let the wicked forsake his own way. Let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him and unto our God for he will abundantly pardon. God wants to reconcile everyone one of you if you are not reconciled with him, but He is telling you to lay down your sword before you come to be reconciled. Let the wicked forsake his way and his rebellion and then let him return unto the Lord.

Notice here that mercy and pardon are preceded by forsaking enmity. Jesus said, “Repent and believe the gospel.” That word repent is to turn from your enmity, and you and I, we know that in our heart that it has to be that way. You and I, we go out and witness and talk to the violent homosexual and that homosexual says, “Yes, I understand that Jesus died on the cross. Yes, I understand that He was buried. Yes, I understand He rose again from the dead, and yes, I want to go to heaven, but I'm going to hold onto my homosexuality.” You would say to that man, “You must lay down your hostility towards God.” Every one of you (and I have too) needs to lay down your enmity. The fact that God came to

reconcile Himself to the world demonstrates His great love towards all men. This ought to be a motivation to reconcile with Him. In verse 14 of chapter 5 Paul alludes to that when he says, "*The love of Christ constraineth us.*"

Just to give you a little testimony of my life—I was 19 years old and as I was growing up, I did not grow up in a Christian home. I know of only one time on my mind where I remember my mother going to the cabinet and pulling out a big, white family Bible. I don't remember if she ever read it to us. Our parents never sat down and taught anything from the Bible. I don't remember ever reading from the Bible in our home. We went to a Presbyterian Church maybe once or twice a month while I was growing up. My understanding of God was much like this: God was a mean God and somehow when I got to heaven they would have those scales there at the pearly gates, and they would put my bad works on one side and my good works on the other and which ever weighed the most that's where I would go: either heaven or hell. That was my understanding of God and who he was.

One day while working at a golf course in Lexington, Ohio, the owner of the golf course professed to be a Christian and he put some tracts on the wall. I was cleaning the golf shop, sweeping the floors and closing down the building when I noticed for the first time tracts on the wall. I went over to the tract rack and I picked one up and began to read it, and for the first time in my life as I read through that gospel tract God opened up my eyes to the realization that God loved me and salvation was not dependent upon my good and bad. It was dependent upon the death and burial and resurrection of His Son. For the first time in my life I realized that salvation was not of works, but salvation was something that God wrought through His son and that I can come to God and be reconciled with Him, even that night. I came and reconciled myself to the Lord.

God wants you to be reconciled. I want to also bring out something that this passage teaches in chapter 6 verse 1, and that is the need for immediate reconciliation. "*We then as workers together with him beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain, for he saith I have heard thee in a time accepted and in the day of salvation have I secured thee. Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.*" Now Paul, realizing that God had done such a tremendous thing in reconciling the world, and opening up the door for all men to come in, pleads with them. He says, "Listen, if it be the case (and it is), that God has opened up the door for all men, there is an urgency here." I believe Paul understood a little bit about life and death and he realized that life is a precarious thing. That life can be taken from us at any moment.

Paul, obviously having seen the Lord Jesus Christ, realized the magnitude of what was happening. Someday, my friend you will see the magnitude of this whole thing. You'll see how big it is. Nowadays you have things that distract your mind, but in that day you'll see, oh this thing was so big. Paul realized that so as he stood before or as he wrote this letter he said, "Listen, because life is so precarious I beseech you to receive reconciliation or to make reconciliation with your God and do it now. The word now there is simply defined as this present moment. As I pondered that I realized that life is simply god's gift to us: a time period in which we have hope of making reconciliation. Man through out his life is heading for an irreconcilable destine. Have you ever thought about that? Man is given a lifetime. It may be 15 years, it may be 30, it may be 50, it may be 80, but man has been given a period of time, and in that period of time man must reconcile himself to God. He is given that life time and once that lifetime is passed, once that trap door opens beneath his feet and he slides down into irreconcilability, once that day of death comes there is no longer any hope for reconciliation. This little period called life is God saying to us, "I have reconciled Myself to you. Now is this period called life, you be reconciled to me."

When Paul looked out and he saw the precariousness of life, that life could be taken at any moment, he said to the Corinthians, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." You don't know what is going to happen in the next ten minutes. He urged them in this letter that now is the accepted time. To leave this life dooms the soul to the realm of the irreconcilable. You know what to me is the greatest tragedy of hell? That in hell are simply those who had an opportunity to be reconciled to God and to live eternally in His favor, but now forever they are in a state and in a realm of irreconcilability. That is hell enough for me. That is what hell is. There will be no more preachers there,

young lady. There will be no more invitations. There will be no more Bible School. There will be no more fathers and mothers crying and praying. There will be no exits there. It is a place where man is irreconcilable. God has given man the opportunity and I speak to your soul and speak to who you are. That soul which is going to live forever I speak to you individually. If you die and go to hell, if you die and end up irreconcilable, your blood is off my hands. Hell is a place of irreconcilability. When the trap door of death opens under your feet there are no more opportunities to reconcile with God. Do you know that can happen at any moment?

My mother tells the story—and I have told it a number of times. It is just a powerful story of my mother when she was just 9 or 10 years old she had an older brother named Junior who was in the military. He went to World War II. World War II had ended and he had come home and he had gone up to a little town where I had grown up, Shelby, Ohio and he had gone to the airport and rented a little airplane. He wanted to come out and show Mom and Dad that he could fly. It was a beautiful day in May. I think it was May 30 or May 31 around Memorial Day and he had gotten an airplane and one of his buddies and they had flown out of the Shelby airport. They had gone about 20 miles to Manse to where my mother's parents lived on a farm about 40 acres. My mother says she was standing out there and it was a beautiful day and Junior was up flying around in the sky and everyone was proud of him. The war was over and everything looked right and wonderful. As they were looking and watching Junior kept getting a little lower and a little lower as he circled the farm. Finally he got so low that he was going behind the buildings and they would lose sight of him as he was flying around the farms and finally he went around for the last time around their big, white barn there on the farm. My mother says that he disappeared behind the barn and he never came out the other side. She said she took off running (she was 8 or 9 years old) and she said there were two fences between her and that plane. She says she ran and she never remembers going through, under, or over any of those fences, but it was a miracle of God. She ran straight to that plane and when she got there, she was the first one there and she saw her brother Junior who was 21 or 22 years old, and his friend lying there in that wrecked, mangled mess of steel and they were both dead.

I thought to myself, "Here is a man, my uncle. I never knew him. As he was flying around that barn on that beautiful day, if he never took opportunity to reconcile himself with the living God (I have no evidence that he did), as soon as that plane hit the ground, at 21 years old this man lost his opportunity for reconciliation with the living God." The living God who gave all He could to reconcile Junior to Himself and now Junior hits the ground and in a matter of seconds Junior wakes up in the realm of the irreconcilable. He is there tonight and there is no hope. Those who wait until the eleventh hour often die at ten thirty.

Through this message I want you to know that God is after you for your good. He wants good, and He wants reconciliation from you. The truth of the matter is, and I don't mean to scare you, but the trap door of death can open up on any of us at any moment and all of a sudden we are gone. If you are not reconciled to the Living God and you have not laid down your enmity, you tread on dangerous ground. God is after you.

I read this story one time of a woman who was driving down the highway. She was going the speed limit, but she noticed in her review mirror that a semi truck was closing in on her and was right up on her tail. She began to be a little anxious and put the gas down and increased her speed, but she noticed the semi was right behind her and stayed up as she increased her speed. She put the gas down a little farther and she increased the speed further: 70, 75 miles an hour and that big semi truck stayed right on her. She began to panic and she went to the next exit and immediately took the right and went off the exit to the stop sign and the truck followed her and went off the exit to the stop sign. She ran the stop sign. The semi truck ran the stop sign. She panicked and ran her car into the gas station; stopped the car; opened her door; ran into the gas station and the man in the semi came right in behind her and parked at the gas station. The man jumped out of the truck; ran to the car; opened the back door and pulled out a man that was lying on the floor of the back seat who was waiting his opportunity to kill her. He pulled him out. This truck driver had this woman's good in mind and she never realized it.

God has been chasing some of you down for awhile and He has got your good in mind. The Spirit of the Living God—God is after you. I pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. I pray you in Christ's stead to lay down that enmity in your heart and to come and embrace the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and to bow your knee and thank Jesus for dying for your sin. He has got your good in mind. There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who has repented.

Come Ye Sinners Poor and Needy

Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore,
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love, and power;
He is able, He is able,
He is willing, doubt no more.

Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him;
This He gives you, this He gives you,
'Tis the Saviour's rising beam.

Agonizing in the garden,
Lo your Saviour prostrate lies!
On the bloody tree behold Him!
Hear Him cry before He dies:
"It is finished, it is finished!"
Sinners, will not this suffice?

Lo! The rising Lord ascending,
Pleads the virtue of His blood;
Venture on Him, venture freely,
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus, none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.

Saints and angels, joined in concert,
Chant the praises of the Lamb,
While the blissful seats of heaven
Sweetly echo with His name;
Hallelujah, Hallelujah!
Sinners here may do the same!

This booklet was transcribed from a message preached by Jerry Mawhorr at Charity Youth Bible School 2006. Transcribed and adapted by D. Cooper, 2007.

Index #T3756



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