

**2 Corinthians 5:10-6:2**  
**(Isaiah 52:7-10; John 14:25-27)**  
**“Be Reconciled to God!”**

## **Introduction**

Paul is defending the gospel of Christ against a first century version of the “prosperity gospel,” and has used a number of illustrations to argue for the paradoxical nature of life in Christ, a life that appears to the world to be a kind of death, but that is to those who are being saved the only life worth living. So what is needed, always and everywhere, and needed desperately today by the American church, is a rediscovery of this gospel in its biblical fullness, the gospel that isn’t simply found in a few places, but that fills the New Testament gospels and letters.

Last Sunday, we listened to the apostle as he called us to a new understanding of the nature of reality, of the nature of humanity, and of life’s purpose. In the verses before us this morning, Paul offers us a rich and instructive gospel summary cast in terms of the peace that Christ has made between a holy God and rebellious sinners like you and me, and a description of the new life that is ours in Christ.

The central theme is reconciliation, and Paul develops this idea in a number of ways that flow logically from one another. He underscores the necessity of reconciliation, the basis of reconciliation, the perspective of reconciliation, the ministry of reconciliation and, finally, the urgency of reconciliation. The great cry of this passage is, “Be reconciled to God!”

## **Body**

### **1. The necessity of reconciliation: the judgment seat of Christ (5:10-13).**

The gospel is not for those who think they are doing pretty well but want a little boost to get better. It’s not for those who do not want to change, or for those who want to be calling the shots for their lives. It is for those who realize that, no matter how hard they try, it’s not good enough, for those who long to be changed from the inside out, for those who realize that they are alienated from the God who made them for intimate friendship with himself, and who long to be reconciled to him – or at least *want* to long to be reconciled.

The torque comes from this: the Bible throughout tells us that the day is coming and is inescapable when we will stand before the Lord and give account of what we’ve made of this life he has entrusted to us. Paul writes, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or

evil” (5:10). What is the result of such knowledge? He goes on: “Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others” (5:11). Whether or not you believe it, whether or not you ever consider it, it is an inescapable fact: we will all appear before the Lord and give account. How can any mere human survive such an encounter?

## **2. The basis of reconciliation: the love of Christ (5:14-15).**

The basis of our hope, and the sole basis of our reconciliation is this: the love of Christ. So we need not be controlled by fear of judgment or fear of failure or fear of anything that may come, nor even of death itself.

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised (5:14-15).

Here we have simply stated the single all-encompassing description of our salvation: union with Christ. Christ died for us, and we who are his through faith have died in his death. Christ lives for us, and we now live in him. Death now has no power to separate us from the love of God in Christ. This is a central theme, perhaps the central theme, of Paul’s letters (see, for example, Galatians 2:19-20; Colossians 3:1-4). Everything else that he wrote issued from this tremendous fact: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come” (5:17).

## **3. The perspective of reconciliation: the eyes of Christ (5:16-17).**

This should give us an entirely new perspective on everyone and everything. “From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh” (5:16). We now begin to see people through the eyes of Jesus. We have no right any longer to look at people with disdain and contempt. They are people of infinite worth and value, because they are created in the image and likeness of God, no matter how much they have defaced and damaged that image.

Jesus looked at people completely differently than did the religious folk of his day: he ate with notorious sinners, touched lepers, and offered hope to those whose lives were broken. He said to all, “Come follow me.” Paul calls us to see life, even people who cause us pain, through the eyes of Jesus.

## **4. The ministry of reconciliation: ambassadors for Christ (5:18-20a).**

But it’s not enough to see people with Jesus eyes. We have been entrusted with Jesus’ ministry. The One who reconciled us has given us this ministry of reconciliation. “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us” (5:20). Do you realize that? Have you considered the

meaning and significance of the life you have been given in such terms as these? You are God's ambassador to those whom he has entrusted to you: your parents and children, your spouse, your friends and neighbors and fellow workers.

And it begins with a new approach to life. God's forgiveness and mercy are not an excuse to live however we want to live. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (5:21). This does not merely refer to our being considered righteous in Christ, but constitutes a call to begin to grow up into the person Christ has redeemed us to be. We are so to live that people will have reason to believe that the gospel is true.

## **Conclusion**

### **The urgency of reconciliation: the appeal of Christ (5:20b-6:2).**

So Paul concludes this section with a plea: This is urgent! Don't delay! "Behold, now is the favorable time; behold now is the day of salvation" (6:2). This is God's word through Paul to us, and he intends it to be his word through us to those he entrusts to us. As ambassadors for Christ, he makes his appeal through us.

So, two final questions: Are you reconciled to God in Christ? If not, I plead with you to realize that "we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Knowing the fear of the Lord, I plead with you not to meet the Lord without having received his forgiveness and grace. Don't meet him still alienated from him when he has provided a way of reconciliation at such great cost to himself.

And if you are reconciled to God, are you faithful and intentional in fulfilling your calling to be an ambassador for Christ, God making his appeal through you? This is for every one of us who is a child of God, not just preachers and evangelists. If you are in Christ, you are to see the world through the eyes of Christ, and to pray for authentic opportunities to invite those he places in your way to be reconciled to God.