

Text— 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Our sermon text is addressed to Christians, for the New Testament book from which it is taken opens with the following words: “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” (2 Corinthians 1:1-4)

Realize the terms “church of God” and “saints” refer specifically to people accounted righteous and holy in God’s sight, that is, true Christians—people with heart-deep faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord, for Romans 4:5 relates: “to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” So, our sermon text is indeed addressed to Christians.

Fellow Christians, we ourselves are comforted of God, for we all know God’s comfort which is based on His marvelous mercy shown to us in Jesus Christ. Jesus has paid for all of our sins in full with His own holy and precious blood that He shed while nailed to the tree of the cross. Furthermore, Jesus’ victorious bodily resurrection from the dead after three days in the grave is proof-positive that His supreme sacrifice of Himself for our sins has been accepted by God the Father; and, that fact is truly comforting to us, for Romans 4:25 assures us that Jesus our Lord is He, “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” Romans 5:1-2 adds, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand,

and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

Yes, we Christians rejoice in hope of the glory of God, for we know, “our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Philippians 3:20-21; Ephesians 2:8-10) Hence, we certainly should show our thanks to our gracious God and Savior, by being fruitful in good works—works done in full accord with God’s Word.

Oh beloved, it is right that we be fruitful in the faith, for our sermon text shows us:

“CHRISTIANS ARE TO SERVE CHRIST”

With that as our theme, may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) What is to motivate Christians to serve Christ
- 2) How Christians are to serve Christ

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Verses 14 & 15, ----- (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

Our sermon text opens by actually telling us what is to motivate Christians to serve Christ, for the apostle Paul in writing to his fellow Christians plainly states: *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.* Think about it. Christ’s love constrains us Christians – compels and presses us – to serve Him, rather than serving our sinful flesh, the devil, and the wicked world.

Consider Christ's amazing, infinitely valuable, love for us wretched sinners: Christ died for us and triumphantly rose again! And, how many people did Jesus die for? Most? Some? Only the elect? No! For twice our Scripture selection clearly states that CHRIST DIED FOR ALL. Indeed, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18) Yes, 1 John 2:2 informs us that Jesus Christ, "is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Thus, the only people who are lost are those who stubbornly reject Jesus Christ in unbelief, thereby forfeiting the forgiveness of sins and salvation Jesus earned for them.

Looking again at the opening verses of our sermon text, notice we are told *that if one died for all, then were all dead*. Therefore, it behooves us to take it to heart that every naturally conceived human being is by nature "dead in trespasses and sins," as Ephesians 2:1 relates. Oh, if we are honest, we must all confess as did David the psalmist, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalm 51:5) Furthermore, we ALL commit all manner of actual sins in thoughts, words, and deeds, daily, for Psalm 14:2-3 reports, "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Consequently, the love of Christ for us sinners is truly amazing, since He had every right to let us go straight to hell because of our sinfulness; but, He didn't, rather, He, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a

man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." — as Philippians 2:6-8 relates. Then, Jesus bodily and triumphantly rose from the dead after three days in the grave, for Acts 2:24 reports that Jesus Christ is He, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."

Now, since Jesus so amazingly loves us, we should certainly be motivated by His love NOT to live unto ourselves, *but unto Jesus who Himself died for us, and rose again*. And so, Romans 6:11 says to all Christians, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Yes, fellow Christians, Christ's amazing love to us should motivate us to serve Him in love, for 1 John 4:19 declares, "We love him, because he first loved us." Accordingly, let us heed 1 John 3:18, which says, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." Yes, let us walk-the-walk and not merely talk-the-talk, because empty lip-service is NOT true service to Christ.

Fellow Christians, let us therefore endeavor to serve Christ, being motivated by His love, striving to be fruitful in the faith of Jesus Christ, which God has given us and preserves in us.

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As we ponder our sermon text to its conclusion, let us see how Christians are to serve Christ.

Verse 16, ----- (2 Corinthians 5:16)

Like the apostle Paul and his fellow Christians in the early New Testament era, we Christians today are to know no man after the flesh; that is, we are NOT to play favorites among people simply for earthly gain and carnal motives, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace," declares Romans 8:6.

The apostle Paul and his fellows were blessed in

knowing Jesus after the flesh; that is, they were permitted to see Jesus visibly. However, that time ended.

We Christians today do not know Jesus after the flesh by means of our physical eyes, although we will behold Him with our eyes when our bodies are raised back to life on the Last Day, when Jesus comes in glory to judge all people. So, for now we are simply to serve Christ as He would have us serve Him, rather than living in service to our sinful flesh, the devil, and the wicked world.

Take it to heart that as the apostle Paul and his associates no longer knew Christ after the flesh, but knew Him spiritually; so also, we Christians today, knowing Christ spiritually, are to focus on the spiritual needs of all people, since mankind's greatest need is to personally obtain the forgiveness of sins and salvation which Jesus our Lord and Savior earned for all people.

Verse 17, ----- (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Christians are to serve Christ by realizing the change made in themselves by the Lord when He gifted them with faith, for we just read: *if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

Indeed, Christians are new creatures because they are regenerated, born again, having been transformed from enemies of God into friends of God, adopted sons of God. It's as we read in Romans 6:3-6 and Romans 8:14-15, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of

God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Colossians 3:1-10 adds, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Accordingly, it's clear that we and all other Christians are to serve Christ by being fruitful in the faith, bringing forth good works – works done in full accord with God's Word – rather than serving the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh.

Verses 18 & 19, ----- (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

ALL things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, in that, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." — as James 1:17-18 informs us.

Note well that to ALL Christians, God has given *the ministry of reconciliation*, the great Gospel tidings, *that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

Observe that the entire world has been reconciled to God IN CHRIST. There is not one human being who is NOT reconciled to God in Christ, for Jesus paid for ALL the sins of ALL people. Furthermore, on God's part, in His heart, the world's trespasses, the world's sins, are no longer imputed, no longer credited, to them, because Christ has truly paid the price for ALL the sins of ALL people. This fact of objective reconciliation is also known as objective justification. To us Christians this wonderful *word of reconciliation* – the Gospel of Christ – has been committed.

The Gospel of Christ is NOT news of a possible reconciliation of the world, but is rather the good news *that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.* It's as Romans 5:18 also informs us, where we read, "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

However, John 3:36 states in no uncertain terms, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Thus, the only people who are lost are those who stubbornly reject Jesus Christ in unbelief, thereby forfeiting the forgiveness of sins and salvation – the reconciliation and justification – He earned for them and all other people.

Accordingly, we Christians are truly privileged in that God who called us to faith by the Gospel of Christ has also *given to us the ministry of reconciliation* and has *committed unto us the word of reconciliation.* Oh, not every Christian is a pastor or teacher; but, every Christian is to witness for Christ and is to support the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, especially the Gospel.

Verses 20 & 21, ----- (2 Corinthians 5:20-21)

Take it to heart that the reality of the objective reconciliation of the world, objective justification, will NOT benefit the individual unless the individual

accepts the Gospel and believes it personally, subjectively, trusting and confiding in Jesus Christ, which is why our sermon text closes by saying: *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.*

Think about it. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Nevertheless, that fact does not benefit the individual until he or she believes it, takes it to heart, trusting in Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior and Lord, thereby being subjectively reconciled to God; this is known as subjective justification.

Hence, Christians are to serve Christ by spreading the word of reconciliation, the Gospel of Christ, for God *hath made Jesus, His only begotten Son, who knew no sin, who had no sin of His own, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.* Thus, there is no more important way to serve Christ than spreading His Gospel, for in Romans 1:16-17 we read, "the gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Romans 10:17 adds, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Take it to heart that God-given faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior and Lord is vital if one would be saved, since Jesus is the ONLY WAY to God and heaven.

Therefore, let us never forget what our sermon text shows us concerning the fact that Christians are to serve Christ. Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord; and, let us go forward being fruitful in our God-given faith, especially endeavoring to do as Christ Jesus would have us do— witness to others of Him and see that His Gospel is proclaimed. Amen. m.e.l.