

**SERMON: 2 Corinthians 5:19-21 NEW STATUS FOR THE WORLD AND YOU!**

<sup>19</sup> *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,  
Not imputing their trespasses to them,*

*And has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

<sup>20</sup> *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.*

<sup>21</sup> *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us,  
That we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Have you ever been given a new status / a promotion? Sure you have. You advanced from 8<sup>th</sup> grade to high school. You held a “temp” license first, then a regular driver’s license. Somewhere along the line, your family went from a some type of “visa” status in the U.S., to full-fledged U.S. citizenship. Each of these changes was marked with joy. Our text talks about the astounding new status which God gives—from sinners to saints!

*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.* The word “reconcile” means to bring together in peace. The word has two parts, “re-“ and “concile.” “Re-” means “again” or “back”—as in rewind or replay. “Concile” is not an English word itself, but we do have the word “conciliatory.” A “conciliatory” letter is written with gentle and winsome words so as to defuse a disagreement. A married couple pulling opposite ways seeks to “reconcile,” to get back together in peace. Accountants “reconcile” the books, making sure the money received minus money spent, when added to the previous balance, does in fact equal the new balance. Both sides of the ledger agree.

We read, *God was in Christ “reconciling” the world to Himself.* God was at odds with the world. The world, misled by Satan, rebelled and still rebels against God. God says one thing, the devil leads human flesh to say the other. When told, “Don’t do this” or “You must do it this way,” the response is “Wanna bet!” “Oh, yah?!” Sinful man and God are on pulling opposite ways on the same rope. Guess who’s going to win? Not you. Nor is God an old “softie,” who simply lets it slide. God is JUST. He will punish those who rebel! Yet, God is love, “*The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9). God has provided “reconciliation” in Christ. In Christ, He has removed the division, has “reconciled” the whole world to Himself. From enmity to friendship! Through Christ there is peace; you are again pulling in the same direction with God.

How can this be? *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* Chris “redeemed” the world, bought back, ransomed, rescued, at an extremely high price. Can you fathom God’s action and love for you? Would you knowingly send your son to have his spotless record sullied by taking the blame for rebels? Can you imagine the Son, willingly going forth to be punished for repeat offenders? In Jesus, you *become the righteousness of God!* In Christ, you are no longer a violator. In Christ you are more than cleaned-up-a-little before God. so that He says “Good enough. D-. You pass.” You deserve an F, but you get an A+! You become the “righteousness” of God. You do not just resemble righteousness. You become the righteousness of God! A new status! Reconciled! Thank you, Jesus!

Let’s answer the question, “When?” “When was this new status pronounced upon the sinner?” The mind simply wants to say, “When the person came to faith, when the person asked for forgiveness in Jesus’ name.” In the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, Jesus says the repentant tax collector “went to his house justified rather than the other.” (The word “justified” means “pronounced Not Guilty!”) The man was forgiven. God told Abraham that he would have as many descendants as stars in the sky. *Abraham believed God, and He [God] counted to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:1-6).* Abraham was “justified.” --- Yet our text says, *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.* (“Not imputing” means not to “charge something against,” or “tally/log” something against” one’s record.) Note! At the fulfillment of Christ’s “work” for us—His sinless life, His innocent death, His victorious resurrection—at t that point, the acquittal was made and the verdict “not guilty” issued upon all the world! *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.* At the completion of Christ’s “work” for the world, God issued a change of status for all the world. Forgiven!

Theologians call this truth “objective justification” or “universal justification.” As an objective fact, based on Jesus taking the punishment, paying the price, for all the sins of all the world (He died for all - 2 Corinthians 5:15), the “not-guilty verdict” is /was passed! *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.* Forgiveness has already been pronounced upon all. It is not merely available for all. God is not merely waiting until one repents and believes in Christ to announce His verdict. Rather, through Jesus’ death and resurrection, forgiveness has already been declared, objectively, for “all the world.” *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.* It’s a done deal—a pronouncement made upon the whole world. Whether one believes it or not, Jesus has atoned for sin, and the verdict has been passed—“Not guilty.” It’s for you! It is the beautiful and powerful Gospel message. It’s a message without conditions. God did not announce, “I will forgive you, IF you repent; I will forgive you, IF you have faith.” Forgiveness is not dependent on you at all. It has already been won and declared in Christ!

But what about the unbeliever? Will he go to heaven too? No. While it is true that righteousness has been pronounced upon him, the unbeliever walks away—“I don’t believe it”—and loses for himself the “not-guilty-verdict” already issued through Jesus’ payment—a payment that cannot be paid in any other way.

But what about Jesus’ statement, that the tax collector went home “justified”? His “justification” was after repentance, wasn’t it? Theologians here use the term “Subjective Justification” or “Personal Justification” for this concept. Are there two kinds of justification, then—two types of being pronounced “Not Guilty”? No, it’s one and the same one. It’s a matter of the perspective, the angle, from which one is looking. On one hand, God’s Not-Guilty verdict has already been pronounced to all the world through Christ. On the other hand the benefit, the comfort, the assurance of that verdict floods the sinful heart through personal repentance and faith in the Savior. Both are true. A gift by God’s grace!

Objective and subjective justification dare not be separated. If one speaks only of objective justification—that the world is pronounced not guilty—then all go to heaven, even unbelievers. If one speaks only of subjective justification—that when the sinner come to faith in Jesus, then the verdict is given—then forgiveness depends on the individual—“because I repented, because I asked for forgiveness—I am now forgiven.” Such is self-righteousness and not Scriptural. *By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight (Romans 3:20).*

In our weakness and misunderstanding, the two are sometimes sadly mixed. When someone sins against you, sees the error, and asks for forgiveness, do you ever say: “Ok. But don’t do it again!” or “Ok. But promise not to do it again.” That’s a conditional forgiveness, based on a persons deeds. It’s not Scriptural. How much comfort is there, for someone on their deathbed, to hear, “If you have faith in Jesus, you are forgiven”? Not much. For the troubled sinner, or one filled with fear of facing the Father, “IF” adds all the weight right back onto the struggling sinner. Rather, the fact “Jesus has covered all sins. They’re forgiven!” is an open door to trust Jesus!

“Your status is changed in Jesus!” *God has committed to us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us.* Paul says we are *ambassadors* for Christ—representatives, agents, messengers. When Jesus said, Go and make disciples of all nations, He wasn’t talking only to the Eleven. They couldn’t and didn’t cover “all” the earth. They died, before many, many people were yet born. The words of Jesus and here of Paul apply to every Christian. Does your stomach begin to squirm? “Not me. I can’t do that. That’s what the preacher is for.” True enough; but, friends, you have many more opportunities to touch people’s lives beyond what I am able to do. The devil wants you to shut your mouth. The goal is simply to share God’s message and kingdom with sinful hearts. Simply speak to your children or grandchildren about Jesus. They are not threatening, are they? You don’t have to preach a sermon, or follow a formula, or quote the exact words of passages. Simply from your heart, present to their hearts, Jesus, their best friend and Savior, who forgives, and grants to imperfect people forgiveness and life in heaven. No “if’s.” When visiting troubled or dying friend, how much comfort is there just to talk about old times? Gently share Christ, your Savior and theirs, who died and lives. A few words, not a sermon. “In Jesus we have been pronounced Not Guilty.” This is the “objective” truth is the comfort the comfort we “subjectively” need.

The text says, *We implore you, on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.* We beg you, not to walk away from the great salvation won and declared to the world in Jesus. Christ came for sinners.! God has reconciled sinners to Himself. Through Jesus. It’s a done deal. Don’t disregard the new status in Christ and walking away. Forget self-pride, forget about your shabby record. In Jesus, *Be reconciled to God!*

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---