

We Have The Ministry of Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:16–21

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Rev Joe Sanders

First Baptist Church Coshocton, Ohio

I have been given a new life. I am born again. Jesus has taken away the guilt of my sin. Jesus has forgiven all that I have done that dishonors God. What about you?

Jesus has reconciled me to God. He has made me righteous. He has made me a child of God. What about you?

Jesus inspired me to live my life for Him. He has endowed me with all that I need for each day. He has enabled me with the power to overcome the sin and temptations of my past. What about you?

Jesus has honored me as His ambassador to sinners. He has provided me with a spirit of reconciliation. He has empowered me to live this new life. What about you?

So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:16–21 (NLT)

Every sinner needs to know that they can have a new life as a gift from God. People are living their lives held captive by sin. It doesn't matter if they are co-workers, neighbors, or family. They have no power over their addictions. They have no control over their tongue. Their thoughts run wild. Many of the people we know have a desire for a different life. They may say they want a new job, a new car, a new house. There may even be conversations about having a new spouse or partner.

They want things that will make them feel good. They have a desire for the things that take away their problems. The people at work, next door, and even family members are longing for a different life. Their conversations are about how bad things are in their lives. Or they talk about what they will do some day in the future. One thing is for certain they don't like the life they are living.

But what isn't obvious is the sin that makes them prisoners to their own life. I'm talking about the negative attitudes, bad thoughts, and the lies they believe. We've had conversations where one person has nothing but depressing things to say. Whenever the subject of the conversation changes, that same person has a despairing remark. They blame others for all the problems in the world, and their own problems. They need a new mindset, a new life.

There are those folks who have bad thoughts. You know what I mean, the individuals who aren't depressed, but who are angry all the time. They're mad at the simplest things going wrong. They're unable to stop themselves from lashing out at others. They need a new mindset, a new life.

What about the people who believe the lies they been told all their lives? They think they're weak, or useless, or ugly, or dumb. They live without hope of changing or their lives being any different. They live out these lies by not trusting others, expecting others to take care of them, and rejecting help. They need a new mindset, a new life.

They can only find that new life when they chose Jesus as their Savior and Lord. What they are experiencing isn't a mental health problem, it's a spiritual problem. The negative attitudes, the bad thinking, and lies have driven them away from God. They think that God is out to get them. They believe that God has abandoned them. They've taken up the belief that God doesn't love them. So, they do what makes them feel good in unlimited negative ways. They act selfishly because they are the only person that matters. They may even go so far as to blame and mock God.

They need to hear that Jesus can give them a new life. They need to hear that Jesus has changed your attitudes, your thinking, and revealed the truth to you. They need to hear how Jesus loves them even though they don't love Him. They need to hear that Jesus will give them a new life, new attitudes, new thinking, and the truth. We can speak the truth into their lives.

2 Corinthians 5:18 *All of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ.*

No sinner can earn their salvation, Jesus is the one who brings us to God. How many of the good people in our world don't have a relationship with Jesus? We've said it about a lot of different people: he's good a person, she's a good person. They are compassionate and kind. They are involved in activities that help the poor, the ill, the imprisoned. They speak words of encouragement, they make others feel better about themselves. Others may say that they deserve to go to heaven. They might even believe that their kindness to humanity has earned them a spot in heaven. The words they say sound nice, they're language is uplifting. They come off as positive and helpful. They might even give you the shirt off their back. Had they walked the earth at the same time Jesus did, He may have looked at them and said come follow me. But they walk away sad because they think they're already good enough. They don't need to follow someone else. They don't want to be told that they are missing something in their life. They like themselves just as they are.

We've meet people who look like they've turned around their lives. They say, look at me I'm a new person. What is on the outside certainly looks new, looks improved, looks better. But, they're like an AMC Gremlin, you remember that car? That car was a beater when it was new. Take an AMC Gremlin through the car wash and it's clean on the outside. It's still the same beater car.

People are like that, right? What is most important hasn't changed. Their behaviors change, but their spiritual issues haven't changed. They aren't in a right relationship with God. They remake themselves, but they've kept God at arms length.

To be right with God and to have a new life is choose Jesus. In spite of how a person looks on the outside they need Jesus to be in a right relationship with God. People may think and say they don't need God. People may act like they are changed on the inside but without Jesus, God has not returned to their lives.

Being in a right relationship with God is what the Bible calls righteous. To be righteous is to trust God, to believe He is working for the good in your life, to receive God's love, to be forgiven of your sins. As long as anyone thinks they're okay on their own or that they don't need God to change they are lost. That is they are far away from God, unrighteous, and out of relation with God.

No one needs to be out of relationship with God. No one needs to be unrighteous. No one needs to be far away from God. Through Jesus, God is offering to everyone a gift. That gift puts us in right relationship with God so that we are forgiven of our sins, we are empowered to overcome sin, we are encouraged in the midst of crisis, we are strengthened to do and to say what glorifies and honors God, we will have a new life that extends forever and forever. Sinners need to hear this, right?

2 Corinthians 5:19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.

Each sinner that confesses their sins is no longer guilty of offending God. Confession is admitting your sins and repentance is turning away from your sin. When I say confession I am often including repentance. You gave your life to Jesus by confessing and repenting your sins, and turning to Jesus. That decision made you right with God. Your choice to have Jesus forgive your sins has God looking at you as not guilty.

Sinners, when they search their souls, want to be forgiven. They want the guilt to be taken away. Guilt is powerful. It is powerfully destructive. Its power is unhealthy to everyone's heart, body, spirit and soul. Guilt drags people deeper into sin. Their sin blinds them to the sin in their lives. Being blind makes people unable to care about what they can't see. They can't see their sin. They can't see how sin has taken control of their minds. In their minds they can excuse any action as benefitting their needs.

Lonie and I were watching a show on TV. The main character was narrating about how people think. He said, "everyone has voices in their head, what matters is what voices you listen to and what you do in response to those voices." It hit me how true this is; people listen to the voice of guilt, they listen to the devil. They live according to the devil's guilt.

Jesus has made it possible for every one of our family members, everyone of our neighbors, all of our co-workers to be free of the guilt. His life, death, and resurrection has made it possible for the guilt of our sins to be removed. He has made it possible for every person to be forgiven of their sins. When any person – young or old, male or female, black or white, American or Asian, European or Latino, educated or illiterate – who trusts in Jesus to take away their sins is made right with God.

For every person was once right with God. Likewise, every person became selfish, proud, greedy, a sinner. So, God through Jesus is ready and is able to reconcile us to Him. He is ready to forgive any person who confesses their sin and turns to Jesus. God will look at every individual to call upon the name of Jesus as guiltless. God will look at each person who proclaims Jesus as their Savior and Lord as free from sin and its power. God will take anyone who trusts in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as His child.

It is both a privilege and an honor to represent Jesus to others. We are the people who are guiltless. We are the only ones who can talk about a new life in Jesus. We are the people who have been set free from the power of sin. There is no one other than you and me who can talk about overcoming the devil's schemes and temptations. We are God's Children. We are in the unique position to talk about once being lost and now being found. Jesus found us. Jesus called us to Him.

2 Corinthians 5:20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"

Regardless of the sinner we can invite them to come back to God! Freedom from sin is the new life that is found in Jesus. What you and I have in Jesus, is what everyone needs. Even in our failures what we have in Jesus is what everyone needs. Especially in our failures, what we have in Jesus – forgiveness of our sins – is what everyone needs.

Every sinner looks at their lives and at our lives, thinking we aren't any different. But, they haven't been forgiven, and they don't know what it means to be forgiven. They don't know what it means to have a new life. They don't know what life is like with Jesus in their heart. Sinners look at our mistakes, our sins, and can't comprehend being able to claim the grace, mercy, and love God. They are still living the old life. They carry the guilt of their sin with them day after day. This guilt is so deep, so powerful that they can't comprehend life without it.

The guilt that is in their soul, their spirit drives their thinking and their actions. They need an invitation to a new way of living, a new way of thinking, a new set of beliefs. They need to hear that Jesus will give them this new life. That He is the only way to have a new life. He is the only path to be right with God. He is the only one who can forgive their sins and take away their guilt.

We will share the new life that we have in Jesus Christ. We will tell them of the blessings of being forgiven. We will speak the hope, peace, joy, and power of Jesus. Family members, neighbors, and co-workers want to be free of their guilt. They want to be made new. They want a new life. Every person needs to make the choice for themselves.

You and I are going to plant this Good News that Jesus gives a new life. We are going to water the Good News that Jesus forgives the old life and throws it away. We will harvest this Good News so that family, neighbors, and co-workers can be born again.

Each person that we speak to will need to make their own decision in their own time. The choice is personal. It starts with their minds and their hearts. But, it enters their spirit and touches their souls. When they experience the mercy, grace, love and power of God they are changed.

Ours is the opportunity, the privilege of sharing the Good News.

Have you been carrying your guilt and your sin? You can give it to Jesus. You can hand it over to Him. He will take it from you, giving you a new life.

Choose today what you will do. Will you choose to live in your guilt? Will you choose to live in your sin?

Jesus is ready to give you a new life, free from your sin and your guilt. Today choose Jesus.