

The Ministry of Reconciliation

Be Reconciled to God

Many times we counsel people going through problems using psychology and comforting them in their sorrows. This isn't necessarily bad, but if the person isn't a believer and you have helped them resolve their problems what have they gained? What is it to gain the world but lose your soul? Our underlying counsel to unbelievers ought always be "be reconciled to God". If you don't want His help then don't think that I can help you as if I'm superior to Him.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1) Love is our motivation

- For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.
- When we were justified by faith the love of God filled our hearts
 - Romans 5:5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.
- This can be understood as God's love for us and also that love filling our hearts that we love Him in return in the same way that He loved us.
- It is the love of Christ that compels us to reach out to others – that is the driving factor, the motivating factor, of our lives
 - If we aren't driven by the love of Christ we need to ask ourselves if we're even born again – if we're saved – if we've been forgiven – if we've received the gift of eternal life
 - For those who have been justified by faith the love of God has been poured into our hearts
- How is the love of God manifest?
 - John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
 - Romans 5:6-8 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- Paul writes about the love of God being demonstrated in that Christ died for us while we were still sinners just after talking about the love of God having filled our hearts through the Holy Spirit.
 - What he's really saying is that the love of God has the salvation of sinners at heart and that's going to happen through sacrificial love, not a mushy sentimental idea of love.
 - Christ's love wants to ultimate best for all people – eternal life in Him.
 - If our love only seeks after a person's temporal comfort then it's not God's true love, although God's love wants us to care for people in the here and now as well.

2) Reconciled to God through Christ

- Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.
- Sin is the underlying factor that caused our separation from God – our break in relationship with Him.
 - Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.
 - A Holy God will not allow sin into His presence
 - As sinners we need our sin to be dealt with before we can be reconciled to God
 - It is this reason that Jesus took our sins on the cross, forgave us, and gave us His righteousness
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- Now being the righteousness of God we can be reconciled to God – we have been given direct access into His presence through the death of Christ
 - The old is gone – the old sinful life that separated us from God
 - The new is here – the new life in Christ through whom we've been reconciled to God
 - Our relationship has been made new – it has been reconciled
- Along with a reconciled relationship come the benefits thereof
 - Peace, joy, rest, contentment, hope

3) Christ's ambassadors of reconciliation

- All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.
- Not only have we been reconciled to God through Christ and compelled by His love to reach out to others by His love, but we've also been given the ministry of reconciliation
 - In other words, it's a responsibility given to us by God as well as an internal motivation of love also given to us by God
- We are Christ's ambassadors
 - We live for him and by his values
 - Our purpose is to represent Him in all things and at all places
- His primary purpose is the reconciliation of the world to God
 - Our primary message to the world is: Be reconciled to God
- Matthew 10:7-8 As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.