

**The Man of Missions  
2 Corinthians 5:18-21**

Well, if you can recall the times that I've been up here, we've been talking about missions, and so today will be our final installment of the Missions series that we've been going through. And I want to tell you that what we've gone over and what we've attempted to cover is by no means this kind of comprehensive or total robust, you know, treatment of what the Scriptures teach about missions. There's a lot more that could be said; it's all over the Bible. What kind of has been given to you is my arbitrary poking at missions, so that's what we've been doing.

So, just to kind of jog your memory a little bit by way of being reminded of what the Scriptures do teach and what we have covered, we started off talking about the mission in general, just what it is and that was something we saw from the words of Jesus and the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. And the mission was simple; it was make disciples. That was it. Jesus's last words were very clear, our marching orders plain and simple, make disciples. That's what we were told. That's the mission. So, that kind of gave us the answer to the what. The what of missions is make disciples; that's what we do.

And then we looked at the motive of missions. Why? The why-question of why do we do missions? And Psalms 67 helped us with that, seeing that the motive is worship. That's why. Why do we long to share the gospel with people? Why do we long to make disciples? Why are we about this task? Why are we about this cause? Because we are enjoying God through Christ, and we want others to be in that process as well. Just like the Psalmist says, "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy..." That's hopefully what we're doing right now. We're glad. We're singing for joy, and so we're motivated to bring other people into that enjoyment of God only through Jesus Christ.

Then, we turn to the how question. How do we do missions? And there was a couple different messages there, and they were both in 1 Peter 2. So, we talked about first the method of missions and then the manner of missions - a lot of "m's." I'm sorry, but this just, you know, helps me, actually. Helps me - it's not you - it's me. So, the method of missions was essentially to proclaim. We have to open our mouth. All right? We need to, in this process of making disciples, we need to proclaim the message of the good news, and

that requires us opening our mouth and speaking. Proclaiming what exactly? Proclaiming the excellencies of God. Who He is. What He's done. And then we turn to the other important side of the how, and that is the manner in which we do it, our good deeds. We need to have good deeds. We need to back up our message. We can't just be speaking and speaking, but not living it out at the same time lest our message be completely hollow and really ineffective and in vain. So, those are the "m's" we've covered so far. Making disciples, it's all about for the drive of worship, the proclaiming, while we do this and living a life.

And now, we get to turn our attention to the man of missions, or who? Who does missions? Who, exactly, does missions? And hopefully, you already know the answer to this, but I hope this morning we'll just drive it home. And, you know, there's a lot. There's a lot that can inform you on this because in our day and age, we're a little bit further removed from Christ and the church and what we see in the book of Acts. So, there have been missionaries throughout history, and you add to that the ability for things to be printed, now, and to be mass-produced, and the internet. And so, we hear about a lot of history, and we can learn about a lot about missionaries. And there's some really great stories, and there's some really encouraging people that have lived their life sold out for the cause of the gospel. And they've gone different places. Right? People have traveled. They've kind of forged the way. They've been the trail blazers to these indigenous people groups, people that had no exposure at all to Christ or the gospel or the Bible; and so, people have done this, and they've gone to these unreached people groups, and they're still doing it. Right? And so, we have wonderful stories, and we have wonderful people we can learn from, but I think it's our pleasure this morning to learn from who I would say is the master of missions if you want to throw another "m" out there. But Paul, the apostle Paul, the man who planted churches all over the known world at his time, the man who had hands on experience with this and led the way and gets to be our model, and how he considers his ministry here in 2 Corinthians 5. So, we get to learn from him and see how that carries over to us today, even now, as God's missionaries in this sense.

So hopefully, you're there in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. We'll be covering verses 18-21, but just to help us a little bit with context, I'll just skip back one verse to verse 17. So, 2 Corinthians 5, starting in verse 17 down through 21; "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things

passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” So, we’re going to look at this passage today, and we’ll see three main things kind of come out here. And so we’ll start with our first couple of verses. In verses 18-19, we’ll see his ministry - his ministry. The ministry of the man of missions, not just Paul, but this carries over carries over... carries over to you and I as well, the person who does missions. Now, on your handouts, there’s not a whole lot extra other fill-ins or other blanks underneath this, but there are technically two more main points under this main point. So, if you want to jot these down you can do that, if not, that is totally fine, no pressure. But we’re going to see - kind of divide into two; in verse 18, we’re going to see the source of the ministry and then in verse 19, we’ll see the specifics of the ministry.

So, in verse 18, the source of the ministry - and it’s kind of important to get a little bit of the background, too, of 2 Corinthians. I know it’s been a while since Dale taught through 2 Corinthians, but maybe, to jog our memory a little bit and be reminded of what is happening, a lot of 2 Corinthians is Paul defending his ministry as an apostle. He needs to tell this church in Corinth, hey, I am truly an authentic representative of God, and you can trust me in my message, in my ministry. Right? Because, unfortunately, what happened in Corinth is other people started to come into the church and these false teachers and these false apostles and leaders started to gain influence; and they started to influence the church in Corinth in such a way that they said look at Paul. Look at all the suffering Paul’s going through. Look at all the hardship that Paul is enduring. Clearly, he’s not a representative of God. Clearly, there’s no way we can trust him because of all that he’s going through and what he’s experiencing. So Paul has to write this letter, and a lot of what he’s doing is trying to get the Corinthians back to understanding the truth that you can trust Paul, therefore you can trust the message that came from Paul which was the true gospel. So that’s what Paul is doing, and this kind of is it, couched. Our passage is couched right in here where he’s trying to show that (through the very fact that it’s not about what happens on the

outside) just because Paul's suffering doesn't mean he's not a legitimate apostle. He can be a legitimate apostle and suffer. This is an important thing. And so, he's talking about the temporal versus the eternal. He knows that there's so much more. The eternal is what matters, and that's what he's trying to convince his audience of at this point in the letter.

So, from that he goes to verse 17, which is kind of why I read that to help us a little bit; "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." ...after Paul saying it's not what's on the outside, it's about what has been transformed and radically changed on the inside. And you can hardly think of a more, you know, powerful analogy of someone being a new creature. Someone is a new creature; that sounds like complete transformation, and that's what Paul is saying. He said this is the case, if we're in Christ, we are a new creature, and that is true. That is true of Paul's life, and he goes on to explain how that takes place in verse 18. Because, see how verse 18 starts; "Now all these things are from God..." What things? Well, what he just told us in verse 17. The things, the truths, of how we are new creatures in Christ and this transformation that happens, this transformation that God does through us in Christ, this is from God. So, that's the source of this ministry. Paul's saying this is what happened. It was not something that I did myself. I did not rise up and decide one day I'm going to be an apostle, and I'm going to go start churches, and I'm going to get people to follow me, and I'm going to make money. That's not what happened. Paul's saying this came from God. God was the One who initiated. God was the One who recreated in me, and I am a new creation; so, this is all from Him, thus the beginning of verse 18; "...all... things... from God..." "...all...things are from God..." He is the source of the ministry.

He goes on to describe God a little bit more, and this is kind of Paul's attempt at showing you what he has gone through in his own leadership; "God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation..." So, this is Paul's journey. This is what Paul's story entailed. Right? He was one that was needing to be reconciled to God. He was not at peace with God, and I hope we would all be able to identify with that, and say we know what that means because that is true of us as well. That's true of the world as we'll see in a little bit. There is this broken - ever since Adam and Eve in the garden and the fall of sin - there is this broken relationship between God and mankind, and Paul saw himself in that. He

knew he was in this broken relationship, at odds, in opposition to God. In fact, the book of Acts helps us with it. Right? It reminds us of how really opposed to God Paul was. Right? If you remember, he wasn't just kind of sitting off on the side not really feeling the Jesus thing, he was actually in direct opposition. He was finding Christians. He was throwing them in jail, and he was giving the approval to those who were killing Christians. So, Paul was pretty opposed to God, very opposed. He knew that he was not reconciled. He knew he was not at peace with God. This is Paul's story, but Paul says in verse 18, here - what happened? God "...reconciled us to Himself through Christ..." There's this reconciliation concept that gets played out a little bit more in verse 19.

So, we'll get to that, but the idea of changing or exchanging to reestablish peace between two parties and reconciliation is how God made Paul a new creature. He took Paul who was completely opposed to Him, and He turned him around, and it literally was through Christ. If you remember Acts chapter 9, Paul was on his way to Damascus, and he was on his way to grab ahold of Christians, and he was on his way to arrest them with the authority from the Jews in Jerusalem. And then, Christ Himself appears to him and blinds Paul, all right, says, Paul, why are you persecuting Me? And at that moment, Paul's life is completely changed, and he would no longer be in opposition to God, but he would now be reconciled and at peace with God through Christ. So, this is how Paul kind of went about his ministry. It is not something he decided on his own. It's something that God did to him. God gave it to him. God literally intervened in his life on the way to Damascus.

But it was not simply God saying, wow, here's Paul who's opposed to the church; let Me neutralize him. Let Me set him off to the side and just kind of put him over there so he stops doing damage. All right? It's not a damage control thing. What God did was so much more. He not only stopped Paul in his opposition, but He spun him around, and He said now you are on My team. All right? You are no longer opposed to Me. All right? You are no longer trying to damage the church. You are now going to be one of the main proponents of Christ and the church. And that's exactly what happened at the end of what we see in verse 18. God not only made peace between Paul and Himself, but God gave Paul, gave us, the ministry of reconciliation. Now, Paul had this opportunity. Now, Paul had this ministry. He had this task to go and take this to other people, to be on the team of God. So, unlike the false apostles at Corinth, Paul received his ministry from God, and he

could share that with full confidence because he knew what happened, and he needed to let the church know this. So, that's the source. The source of the ministry of missions, it's from God. It is from Him. It's not like people just rise up and decide the message, and they decided what they're going to do, and they go do it, and that's not what Paul did. It came from God and His intervention.

Paul helps us out more with this understanding of how it happens, and reconciliation and how it takes place in verse 19, and that's the specifics of the ministry - the specifics of the ministry in verse 19. He elaborates, and he says this, "namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation." So, when we understand the concept of reconciliation, if reconciliation needs to happen, we need to identify something very clear and very obvious upfront; there's a problem. Right? There's a problem. If there wasn't a problem, then, there would not be the need for reconciliation. All right? But Paul makes it very clear "...that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself..." There's a problem between God and the world, and as we've already alluded to, that is the sin problem. That is what Adam and Eve committed back in the garden and plunging the whole human race into sin and thus in opposition to God.

Paul helps us out with this in other verses as well. Ephesians 2:1-3, talking about our life before Christ, he says this, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." James is pretty strong, too, in the way that he communicates it. James 4:4, he says this, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." So, here we see that the problem is not just individual; it's not just every individual with God, who is sinful and God is holy, it's the whole world. It's the system of the world as Paul said in Ephesians 2, the world's system being run by "...the prince of the power of the air..." or Satan himself and the indulgences of the flesh, people and their fleshly desires following after what Satan is putting before them in the world

around them; all that in opposition to God. So much that James says it's hatred towards God.

So that's the problem, pretty obvious, pretty clear problem; the problem of mankind is that they are completely at odds with God because of sin. In fact, they hate God, as it stands, and in a sense, when you look from God's angle as well, He identifies their sin. God Himself being holy and perfect sees sinful mankind, and He is not able to be in relationship with man. So, it does not work, and there's a big problem. However, we're thankful that there's a solution. Right? And the solution can be pretty simple if you look in verse 19. It's, really, two words, "...in Christ..." - "...in Christ..." What a beautiful solution. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. So, how does this problem go about getting resolved? It's through Jesus Christ. And we're familiar with this, but Paul doesn't wholly elaborate on it here in this passage. So, just for one moment, if you want to keep your spot in 2 Corinthians 5, we're going to turn over to Romans chapter 5, and check out what Paul has to say in Romans 5 regarding this reconciliation.

Romans 5:6-11, you'll notice as we go through this passage that Paul reiterates the problem once again in this passage; and then, he presents the solution, and he gives us a little bit more details. This is a good thing to do, to be able to see all Scripture tying in together in terms of this theme of reconciliation. So, Romans chapter 5 starting in verse 6; "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." Notice this first, the problem is also elucidated here in this passage. You see the problem, right? Look at verse 6 again; "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." Look down at verse 8; "...God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners..." So, the problem is reiterated. We're helpless people, ungodly people. We're sinners, very clear.

And then, we see what is done to change that; "...having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him." Verse 10; "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son..." So, Paul gives us a little bit more information here. It's not just Christ and His life that does it, it's specifically the death of Christ, His very mission. His very task that He accomplished when He came to this earth, going to the cross. Paul makes it very clear. How do we have reconciliation? How do we solve this dilemma? How do we solve this problem? It's in the death of Christ. It's in the death of Christ, specifically. And so, Romans 5 helps us with this to understand no, we don't have this opposition, potentially, between us and God. Wrath has been taken care of because wrath was poured out on Jesus instead of us, the ones deserving the sin.

You can go ahead and turn back to 2 Corinthians 5. We learn a little bit more in 2 Corinthians 5 also, about the concept of reconciliation. Paul helps us see that it's not just the death of Christ, but we learn more through how the death of Christ actually works. In 2 Corinthians 5, we're back in verse 19; "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them..." "not counting their trespasses against them..." It's beautiful words. You might also call it forgiveness, right, forgiveness - a wonderful experience. Colossians 2:13-14, Paul describes it this way, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." So, part of our opposition between us and God is that there is this debt that we could never pay because of our sin. Because of our sin, there's this debt, and he describes it in Colossians 2 as a certificate, a certificate detailing all of what we owed to God that we could never pay.

But then the beautiful imagery of what happened to that certificate; it was nailed to the cross, connecting the death of Christ, here, to forgiveness of sins, thus the offer for peace from God's end, the provision, the supplication of peace from God's end. So, this is really the only way which enemies can be at peace, when you think about it. Right? When people are at odds with each other, someone needs to do something. Someone needs to act. Someone needs to be willing to forgive. If parties hold on to grudges, they remain



bitter, then there's not really much hope of reconciliation. But this's the beauty of what we see about God and what we learn about Him, really, all throughout the Scriptures; how He is slow to anger, abounding in love, and He forgives. He's a forgiving and merciful God, and this is what He has done. He is taking the initiative. Right? He is taking the initiative to actually provide peace, to provide reconciliation. It's beautiful. This is the ministry that Paul is about, and this is now the ministry that is entrusted to us. Because, if we look on and see the end of verse 19, what does it say? "...reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

So, in the same way, just like Paul and his example on his way to Damascus, on his way to persecute and be in complete opposition to the church and Christ, God takes him, spins him around, and now he's on Christ's team. God does the same thing with us. God does not simply just neutralize us and set us off to the side, He actually takes us, establishes peace with us, and turns us around and allows us to be a vessel, a minister, someone that goes out and proclaims that same message that we had just experienced, to the world. It's a beautiful thing. I mean this is exactly what Jesus did in his ministry too, with people. Right? You might remember certain stories where He's interacting with people, people that're full of demons, tons of demons, and they're the outcasts of society, and they're out in the tombs because people want to stay far away from them because they have thousands of demons in them. And Jesus approaches them. Jesus approaches the man, and He cast the demons out into the pigs. All right? This man has now received his sanity back, and so he's amazed. He wants to follow Jesus. In fact, he wants to get into the boat and keep seeing where Jesus's going and keep learning from Jesus, but Jesus does something really interesting. He tells him, no, you're not going to follow Me. You're actually going to go back into your town; you're going to go back to where you're from, and you're going to tell everybody what I've done for you. Jesus entrusting to this man the ministry of reconciliation. Jesus taking him and saying you're on My team now, go. You know enough to go tell people what I've done for you. How about the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4, just the mind boggling nature of Jesus even interacting with a Samaritan woman and talking with her. This crazy love that He would even do that. And then when He reveals to her that He is the Messiah. She is amazed, and she turns, and she doesn't even let Jesus tell her, she just turns and goes back. She leaves her water pot

and she goes back to her town and tells her village about what Jesus has done.

So, this is the pattern. When people are brought into this relationship with Christ, when peace is established, when reconciliation is made, then people are now on the team of Christ, and He uses them to promote this message. So, we think about us. How does this impact us, the man of missions? Well, first thing we see is you can't be a missionary unless you're saved because if you're not saved, you're not at peace with God, and you have no message to proclaim. All you have is bad news, but once you have experienced that peace, and once you have come to know God through Christ - the death of Christ wiping away your sins and forgiving you - once you know that message of peace, you're good to go. You're a missionary. You are on the team of God now. There is not this step or there is not this kind of list of things that must be done. There aren't a certain amount of hoops to jump through. You, once you are saved, are now qualified. You've met all the prerequisites to be a missionary, so go, and do that. It's beautiful.

I think it's great that there are missions agencies. I think it's great that there are books that are written. I think those things are helpful, and they're wonderful, and I myself have learned a lot from them, but I think we can't forget the obvious truth here. This is what Paul did in his own ministry. He was saved. He was able to come to relationship with God, and then God just pushed him out to go take this ministry to others, to proclaim peace to the world. So, the same with us - all who are saved have the ministry of reconciliation. There's no excuse, and at the same time, don't be intimidated. You can go right now. You can be a missionary. You can be a minister of reconciliation because you have experienced it yourself. So, it's a beautiful thing. It's a beautiful process. This is what happened to Paul. This is what has happened to us by God's grace.

Paul then goes on to describe this more as he describes what this ministry of reconciliation looks more like, and we see that in verse 20. We see his mantle for the man of missions - his mantle. You might just also say his role, his burden, his duty, his responsibility. What is the role? What is the mantle that we now take up that Paul takes up? Though once again, we can see kind of two points underneath this. We see the definition of the mantle, the definition of the role, and then the second point we'll see is the description, the description of the mantle. So first, in the first half of verse 20, the

definition, the definition of the mantle or the role for this man of missions; “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” So, it’s pretty simple here. We are ambassadors for Christ. We are ambassadors for Christ. By definition, an ambassador is a representative of a ruling authority, someone that is over you, a higher power, and they have entrusted with you the ability to represent them wherever you might go. So, an ambassador is a representative. This can be seen in the time of Paul. There were generals of governors of the Roman province, and they’d be all around the known world because Rome was the dominating power at that time. And just in case we’re not familiar with the term of ambassador and what that entails, Paul basically defines it for us here in the verse; “...we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us...” That’s it. It’s really a simple concept. God is reaching people by making an appeal through people, through us, vessels - you and I - instruments. We are ambassadors.

How does God get His message out? Through people. This is the way He’s designed it. He set it up and designed it in such a way that he uses you and I, weak human beings, to be His mouthpiece and to proclaim this message. And there should be no question in our lives because, hopefully, we’ve made Christ our Lord and our Master. So, if He tells us speak, we say absolutely. If He tells us jump, we say how high. We will respond to what He wants us to do. This is the role of the ambassador. You don’t get to change it. You don’t get to make the calls. You don’t get to change the message. In fact, when you bring the message, as a messenger, you’re not giving your own opinion. That’s not your role. That’s not your place. Your place is clearly prescribed, and that is to take what the higher ruling authority has given to you and just relay that message. That’s what you’re to do. You’re the messenger, so don’t speak of your own opinions, and don’t worry about how people might respond to the message you’re going to give; because, what’s your main chief goal? To represent - you’re representing the One who sent you.

And so, this is how Paul saw his ministry. His ministry was not his own opinion, not his own doing, not his power, and it definitely was not concerned with what people thought of him. He was representing Christ, and he knew that full well. Acts 20:24 is a great statement that kind of represents this; “...I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I

may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.” He knew what he was about doing. He knew who he was representing, and he knew what message he was giving. He knew and nothing detracted him. So, there’s not just the message, but there’s also the life style. There’s also the actions. An ambassador represents the person that has sent them out. So, as a representative, their conduct is important. Their conduct inherently represents the ruling authority. So, should their conduct be immoral, should their conduct be suspect, then it automatically reflects on the one who has sent them, and Paul knew this as well. And we ought to as well, and this is something we have spoken about already in 1 Peter 2, that our good deeds need to back up this message that we bring. We need to have the right manner of making our appeal as ambassadors. So then, that is the definition of the mantle; we are ambassadors for Christ, representatives with the message and in our conduct. But there’s more. There’s a description of this role. The description of the mantle is the second half of verse 20; “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” Begging, he says, “...we beg you on behalf of Christ ...”

And I have to take a technical moment here to look at that word “you,” just in that phrase. Paul says “...we beg you on behalf of Christ ...” Unfortunately, every now and then in our translations from the Greek text into the English, things can get translated differently, and sometimes when we add words to help understand the tense (some translations will put it in italics, or they’ll put it in brackets), they’ll do something to let you know that, hey, the Greek text that originally Paul wrote doesn’t actually say this, but to help us understand the sense, we supplied this word. Well, “you” is one of those words. “You” is not actually in the Greek text, so when we look at this verse, maybe, if we took the “you” out, it would say something a little different; “...we beg... on behalf of Christ ...” or “...we [plead]... on behalf of Christ...” rather than the “you.” And this actually kind of makes a little bit more sense because if we were to leave the “you” in there, then that would understand... that would come to mean that Paul is begging the Corinthians. He’s begging the Corinthians on behalf of Christ, and what is he begging them? To be reconciled to God - that sounds like a call to salvation - but when we look at the beginning of the letter and Paul’s interaction with these Corinthians, there’s a church there, and he’s writing to the church. So, if he’s writing to the church, doesn’t that imply that these are

Christians, these are believers? So why would Paul be appealing to believers to be reconciled to God? Doesn't seem to fit. So probably best to take that out and to understand it as this is how Paul pleads with any general audience that he pleads with. Any respective person he comes across, anybody that he gets to interact with, he pleads, and his plea is, and his begging is be reconciled to God. So it's an appeal to anybody who's at enmity with God, who's no longer... who's not at peace.

And then the word, the phrase, "...be reconciled to God." The start of this message here. It's great because it's an interesting combo here. It's an imperative. It's a command. He's telling them to be reconciled, but then it's just in a weird form here. It's passive form. It's not active. It's passive; it needs to be done to you. You need to "...be reconciled to God." So, how does one do this? Well, this just ties right back into what reconciliation is in the first place. It's the fact that God has provided reconciliation through the death of His Son and the forgiveness of sins. God has provided the peace there, so how are you to then be reconciled to God? You embrace it. You don't work your way towards it. You don't do a certain amount of good things and then, now, you've earned peace with God. You simply embrace the provision of peace in Jesus Christ. You simply latch on to that, and say this is enough; and God is now at peace with me, and I am at peace with God. I'm a friend of God. That is what this message is - being reconciled to God.

So this is how the message begins, and it continues on into verse 21, and that's what we see in this last point, his message, the message of the man of missions. It starts off with "...be reconciled to God." And he continues in verse 21; "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." So once again, under this point, we have two different things we can see. In the first half of the verse, we can see the imputation of sin - the imputation of sin; and then the second half, we see the incorporation of righteousness. So in the beginning, how is it, exactly though, that we can come back to this? How is it that God can reconcile the enemy world with Himself? Because there could be the tendency, there could be, actually, the temptation here to think that what God does is He pretends like your sins don't exist. In order to be at peace with you or with the world... is He kind of brushes your sins off to the side and just kind of says, aw, I just won't look at that, and we'll be friends. That's not exactly what's happened, and in fact, if that is what would

happen, then we'd have an inconsistent God. It doesn't match up with His character because we hear Him described in Scripture as a holy God; thus He's perfect. He can't sin. There's no sin in Him, and He's also just. He's fair. He's fair. So, to just overlook the sin and pretend like it doesn't exist is not just. So, what does He do? He punishes the sin. He punishes the sin. And this is the gospel, really, in one verse, verse 21. If you take Evangelism Explosion, you'll learn this verse. It's a great verse. If you're just starting out, you want to know how to summarize the gospel pretty succinctly, here's a great verse for it. What does God do? God makes the One who knew no sin - Paul doesn't say explicatively explicitly by name here - but it's Jesus.

Jesus, in John 8:46, says, "Which one of you convicts Me of sin?" 1 Peter 2:22 says, Jesus "who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth..." 1 John 3:5; "You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin." So, clearly in our passage here, the One who knew no sin is Jesus. So, what did God do with Jesus who knew no sin? He made Him to be sin on our behalf. He imputed. He counted. He took and He gave to Him our sin, and this is in order that Christ might receive the punishment. And this is an amazing concept. It's perplexing to think about this. It's perplexing to think that Jesus had all He'd ever known as perfect fellowship with His Father, perfect love, harmony, peace with His Father in eternity past. And then, He comes down on this mission to earth, and He knows that when He goes to the cross that He has that moment where the perfect harmony and the peace between Him and His Father is severed, and He cries out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" because God Himself is punishing Jesus as if Jesus had lived the life you lived, as if Jesus had lived the life I lived. And we know this is just a scandal. It's an absolute scandal because that is not true. We know Jesus is perfect, and we've seen it in His life, and we've seen it in all of Scripture. Everyone testified to His perfect holy life, yet this is God displaying His justice and His wrath. He punishes sin; and not punishing you and I, He punishes the perfect, holy One, Jesus His Son. It's a perplexing thought.

So Jesus becomes sin on our behalf, but what happens as a result? The last part of verse 21; "...so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." "...we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Once again, this exchange is amazing that God treats Jesus on the cross as if He lived your life, and He treats you as if you lived His life. It's insane. It's incredible that God would do this and that this exchange would take place, but it

upholds God's holiness and His wrath and His justice, and at the same time, it's a perfect display of His love. It's a perfect display of His love for us. And this is a beautiful message, and it ought to capture you. And hopefully, it already has because you are one of His own, and you know that this message is a message of peace and reconciliation that you have already embraced. Hopefully that's where you're at, and if that's the case, then praise God, because now guess what we get to do? We get to turn around and deliver this same beautiful message to people who don't know it yet, who've not experienced peace with God.

It's a wonderful thing to think about and to look at the example of Paul, to see his missionary, kind of, qualifications here. It's simple, right? Not a ton of qualifications, not a huge list, He was saved; God took him and saved him and set him off on his ministry. Now go, go tell people about Me and what I've done for you. So Paul saw himself as an ambassador, and he did not take it lightly. Paul was serious in the way that he approached his ministry. He did not change the message. He was careful to protect the message that God gave him, and he made sure his life was also blameless, above reproach, to represent the God whom he served and represented as an ambassador. And then, Paul knew the message, and he loved the message, and he says it multiple times throughout his letters. And this is just another instance of Paul declaring boldly the message of the gospel, to be reconciled.

Isn't it wonderful? God's done the work. God's done the work. The work is done. The message is set, and we just get to put that before people. That's a missionary. That's it. You don't have to go fly to a jungle and chop down trees and make a little hut. Right? It's simple. It's this beautiful message of peace that's already been accomplished, and all we have to do is pass it along as a representative of God. So hopefully, we can be encouraged by this, and, hopefully, we can consider how we are doing in this, in our lives, in our speech, and just in our love for the gospel.