

## Preached on 2/18/24 at GBC

### "The Gospel Message"

### II Cor.5:21

God's "**ambassadors**", His representatives in this world are called and sent forth with a **SINGLE, SIMPLE, DOGMATIC MESSAGE** concerning God's work of reconciliation - "**And all things [are] of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, 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. 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.**" God has sent forth those He reconciled, those who have been regenerated and converted by the Holy Spirit through the preaching **OF THIS "ministry of reconciliation"** as His representatives to tell those He has reconciled to Himself **this same glorious truth** - "**God was IN CHRIST, reconciling the world unto Himself, NOT IMPUTING their trespasses unto them.**" **Listen to me closely:** This is how you distinguish and **KNOW** if someone is truly an "**ambassador for Christ**". If someone claims to be an "**ambassadors for Christ**" and they are pointing sinners to Moses and the law, sounding forth the thunderings and lightnings of God's wrath to sinners, they **ARE NOT** "**ambassadors for Christ**". If they are encouraging sinners to produce "good works" in order to attain, gain, or maintain salvation by their own performance, they **ARE NOT** "**ambassadors for Christ**". If they are telling sinners **they must make their own peace with God** by fasting, or prayer, or mourning, or by some great change in their character and conduct, they **ARE NOT** "**ambassadors for Christ**". The true "**ambassadors for Christ**" "**beseech**" sinner's to be reconciled to God in their minds based on the assurance that God "**was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.**" The word Paul used that was translated "**did beseech**" means 'to call to one's side, or to **SUMMONS**'. It's basically the same word translated "**ADVOCATE**" that the Apostle John used in **I Jn.2:1**. So anyone who forsakes this message of reconciliation, or alters this message, **THEY ARE NOT SENT** of God, but have gone out on their own in a business to which they were not commissioned. **God's commission is clear** - **That we in Christ's stead should beseech men to be reconciled unto God, and that by the blood of Christ alone.** **So am I clear on what we are called and sent to declare?** After Paul made it clear what our mission and ministry is, he closed this great chapter by telling his hearers, including us, what the fruits of this reconciliation are, and by **WHAT MEANS** we come to partake of it. I hope I can somehow with the simplest of words declare to you the **one true Gospel**. I want to ask and answer **TWO QUESTIONS** this morning.

**FIRST:** By what means has reconciliation been accomplished for all God's elect? **Paul teaches us an important lesson about HOW WE SHOULD fulfill this role** - **Vs.20,21** - Paul didn't leave it up to his readers to draw their own conclusions concerning the ground, hope, or cause of them being "**reconciled to God**". Paul dogmatically draws the conclusion for them - "**For HE (that's God the Father) hath made HIM (that's Christ the Son) to be sin FOR US (that's all God's elect in every generation) who knew no sin (this is referring to Christ the Son).**" What we see in these words is a confirmation of the truth set forth by God's prophet Jonah long ago while in the stomach of the whale - "**But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay [that] that I have vowed. SALVATION [is] OF THE LORD.**" (**Jonah 2:9**) The true and living God **DID NOT** entrust His glory into the hands and fickle free will of the fallen sons of Adam. This God, the God of the Scriptures, chose sinners in Christ their Head and Surety before the foundation of the world. In essence, before there was ever a sinner, **THERE WAS A SAVIOR**. God the Father

gave those He chose to the Son, committing their salvation to the work He sent the Son to do. **So the answer to the first question - By what means has RECONCILIATION been accomplished for all God's elect?** - is simply this - **God the Father made Christ the Son to be sin for us.** It would be easy to get caught up by this statement, interjecting our own humanistic concepts or fleshly ideas into what Paul declared - **I don't want to do that.** So let's just simply interpret Paul's words on this matter in light of what the entire canon of Scripture teaches us concerning reconciliation, propitiation, substitution, and satisfaction. **Listen to this statement from Pastor Mahan's commentary on this passage:** "Someone said: 'The Gospel can be summed up in **TWO WORDS** - substitution and satisfaction.' Christ as our **SUBSTITUTE, made full and complete SATISFACTION for us before God's holy law and righteous justice. IN HIM** we are wholly sanctified, completely justified, and eternally saved." **To state it as simply as I can:** By the first part of this verse, Paul dogmatically states that God the Father made God the Son our Surety and Substitute **LEGALLY** accountable for the sins of His people. Christ became our scapegoat; He became our sin bearer. **All the guilt, penalty, and condemnation required by God's holy law and infinite justice which God's elect rightfully and legally deserved fell on Christ as their Surety.** He took full responsibility for His people's sin. Christ was not "*made sin*" for all the sins of all the people, but for a specific group - "*US*". It is the same group of whom Paul wrote in **Vs.19** - "*To wit, 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.*" **Here's a great question:** How can God legally "*not impute their trespasses unto them*" and still be **JUST**? He couldn't just ignore their sin, or merely **PRETEND** like they didn't commit them. There is **ONLY ONE WAY** He could **JUSTLY** not charge or reckon their sin to them, because their **SINS** became Christ's **LEGALLY BY IMPUTATION ALONE**. We see that typified throughout the Old Testament - The animal God killed to cloth Adam and Eve; the lamb brought by Abel; the ram caught in the thicket that Abraham sacrificed in the place or stead of Isaac; the **PASSOVER LAMB**; all the sacrifices of the Old Testament tabernacle. **That's why we read Isaiah 53 in the Call To Worship. Turn back Isa.53:4-12.** All these **types and shadows** pointed to the work Christ would do as the Substitute and Surety of His people by His obedience unto death - "*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*" (**Rom.5:10**) As a mere man, I can't adequately express the unbelievable and joyful content of this transaction between the persons of the Godhead to reconcile sinners. I love the way Robert Hawker stated this: "That **CHRIST**, who knew no sin, should be made sin for his people: that he who is holiness itself, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; should be counted unholy, and have all the iniquity of his people laid upon him! yea, he that is One with the FATHER, over all **GOD** blessed for ever, should be made a curse for them: what a world of mysteries is contained in this subject?" The **IMPUTATION** of the elect's sin to Christ **was a real transaction** - "*I, [even] I, [am] he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*" (**Isa.43:25**) When Christ bore our sins in His body on the tree, being made legally and judicially responsible for them, He truly felt in His sinless humanity, **both body and soul**, the condemnation and wrath of the sins of those He represented, which they rightfully deserved - "*My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me.*" But in and through it all, He was still that "*holy thing*", and praise God, the Father's words still rang true, **EVEN WHEN CHRIST WAS MADE SIN:** "*Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.*" Remember, "*it pleased (satisfied) the Lord to bruise Him.*"

**Here's the second question - What is the fruit or effect of this reconciliation, accomplished through Christ being "made sin" - "that we might be made the righteousness of God IN HIM."** Think about what Paul's words mean to the "chief of sinners", including you and me. **Because CHRIST ("who knew no sin") was made sin,** the fruit and effect of His work is that all those who are his people, (**who in themselves are all sin, and know no righteousness**), they are made the righteousness of **GOD** in him. This is no mere "POST IT NOTE RIGHTEOUSNESS". David stated it this way before Christ was "made sin" at His passion - "*Blessed [is he whose] transgression [is] forgiven, [whose] sin [is] covered. Blessed [is] the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit [there is] no guile.*"(Ps.32:1,2) Listen to Paul as He restates David's truth after Christ came "*in the fullness of time*" - "*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, [Saying], Blessed [are] they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed [is] the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*"(Rom.4:5-8) All those reconciled to God by the death of Christ are really and truly considered and **MADE** righteous before God **BY CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS**. This glorious work is done in exactly the same way that **CHRIST** stood forth in **GOD'S** view as the sinner's Surety, and was beheld, and made sin for them - **BY IMPUTATION ALONE**. **Think about it this way:** This Divine transaction is the sole cause of the elect's justification before God. This "*work of God*" didn't merely place His people in a favorable position so that they could work out a righteousness by their obedience. **Christ ALONE is His people's righteousness**. **What amazing grace - we though sinners in ourselves, are made, not merely** the righteousness or holiness of a man, but "*made the righteousness of God IN HIM.*" That's the meaning of Paul's words in **I Cor.1:30,31** - "*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*" The prophet Isaiah issued these comforting words to God's church concerning their **STATE** in Christ - "*Surely shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*"(Isa.45:24,25)

Any other message of reconciliation or satisfaction than this, **i.e.,that God made Christ to be sin for His people and made His people the righteousness of God in Him is "ANOTHER GOSPEL"**. If your Savior hasn't "*bore your sins in His body on the tree*", and made you the very righteousness of God **IN HIM**, at present you are still "*dead in trespasses and sin*", and an "*enemy in your mind by wicked works*." May we by God's grace see ourselves in Christ, being brought by faith to a greater awareness of our unchangeable state of justification based on **CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS ALONE** before the one true God. I love John Bunyan's statement on Christ's **IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS** - "And, indeed, this is one of the greatest mysteries in the world; namely, that a righteousness that resides in heaven should justify me, a sinner on earth!"