

I.N.I.

Reformation Sunday
Oct. 27, 2013
II Cor. 5:17-21

In Christ Jesus, who knew no sin but became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Got Peace? The world would say, “are you kidding? Look at all of the wars and turmoil, terrorism and violence, murders and kidnappings. There is no peace in this world!”

But we do have peace through Jesus Christ. For Christ is our Peace! Without Christ we are filled with the terror of unresolved guilt because of our sins. That unresolved guilt plagued Martin Luther for many years until he was led by the Spirit to know Jesus, know Him not as his Judge, but as his Propitiator—his sacrifice that paid the price.

In our text the Apostle Paul writes the word reconcile or reconciliation 5 times in 5 verses. The basic meaning is “to change.” It comes from the old Greek word “to exchange coins in doing business.” Then it came to mean a change in relationship, to change from a hostile relationship to one of friendship and peace. It is ironic that the word first started with the payment of coins as the exchange price and now it is associated with the payment of the ultimate price—the payment of blood, of one’s life, of the life of the Son of God.

God’s love provided for our reconciliation to Him against whom we had sinned. But God’s justice also had to be satisfied---So God gave His Son as the propitiation—the payment price--for our sins. We were God’s enemies. By nature we hated God. We were dead in our sins. We did not want to nor could we bring about this reconciliation. And that is how we would have remained throughout eternity—eternally damned as God’s enemies. But God in His love took it upon Himself to change our status from enemy to friend, from outcast to redeemed child of God. He did this by sending His Son Jesus to take our place.

How amazing! God took His perfectly obedient Son, the Son who loved Him and whom He loved and made Him to be sin for us. This Great Exchange of Christ for us was the only way we could be reconciled and have our status changed. Luther wrote: **Jesus, You are my righteousness; but I am Your sin. You have taken upon Yourself what is mine and have given to me what is Yours. You have taken upon Yourself what You were not; and have given to me what I was not.**

Jesus is the One who carried in His body all the sins of all the people of all the world—all the sins of all who have lived, live now, and are yet to live in the future. He did not commit these sins, but He took them from us, who had committed them, in order to atone for them with His blood. Again Luther wrote: **He is the greatest of sinners. There is no greater sinner in the entire human race than the Son of God. This is so true that He is called sin itself. But His sin is ours. It was foreign to Him for He had none. He committed none. It was made His own because of the love wherewith He loved us. He bore it, and because of it He suffered as though He had committed it Himself. He is the Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. He is no longer an innocent person and without sins, but a sinner who has and bears the sins of the blasphemer and persecutor Paul; the denier Peter; the adulterer and murderer David. He has taken upon His body the sins committed by us, in order to render satisfaction for them with His own blood.**

The other half of the Great Exchange is that God no longer charges our sins to us but now credits Christ’s righteousness, His perfection, His holiness to us. Christ’s righteousness for our sinfulness—Christ’s perfection for our total imperfection---a Great Exchange indeed!

But there is more. Paul now tells us that this same God who reconciled us to Himself has also given to us the ministry of reconciliation. The ministry of reconciliation is the way by which God gets the message of reconciliation out to the world. That is our calling, every single one of us! Peter put it this way: **BUT YOU ARE A CHOSEN GENERATION, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, HIS OWN SPECIAL PEOPLE, THAT YOU MAY PROCLAIM THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT.**

To whom are we to proclaim this reconciliation in Christ?---to all the world! For the whole world has been reconciled to God through Jesus, their status has been changed because of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice. What a blessed calling that is for us. To announce to all people---sins forgiven, status changed, no longer guilty, free from damnation, righteous in God's eyes. What Peace!

This is an objective fact. It has been done. It does not depend on my repentance or faith. If it did I could never be sure of it being real or true or complete. God reconciled me and you and all people to Himself by Jesus' perfect life and perfect sacrifice for us. Repentance and faith simply makes this reconciliation our own, but it was already secured for us by Christ. And that is the message, the heritage, the treasure that has been handed down to us from the Reformation through commentaries, sermons, the Catechism, and hymns; and that is the heritage and treasure we need to hand down from our generation to the next generation and on and on until the end of time and the beginning of eternity.

It is not "If you believe, God will no longer charge your sins against you and you will be forgiven." No, it is the amazing Good News---"in Christ, what needs to be done for your salvation already has been done. God no longer charges your sins against you, you are forgiven. Believe it!"

Paul says that's our calling as ambassadors. An ambassador acts on the authority of the one who sent him. He speaks in his place and says what he would have said if he had been there. Paul writes, "We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." Believe what Jesus has done for you and it is yours now and forever and then go out and tell others what Christ has done for them.

We close this morning with two examples of Reformers expressing this peace of forgiveness and Christ's righteousness in their hearts with words of joy in these Reformation hymns:
Luther wrote:

Dear Christians, one and all rejoice, with exultation springing, and, with united heart and voice and holy rapture singing, proclaim the wonders God hath done, how His right arm the vict'ry won; right dearly it hath cost Him.

He spoke to His beloved Son: 'Tis time to have compassion. Then go, bright Jewel of My crown, and bring to man salvation; from sin and sorrow set him free, slay bitter death for him that he may live with Thee forever.

And the Reformer Paul Speratus wrote:

Salvation unto us has come by God's free grace and favor; Good works cannot avert our doom, they help and save us never. Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone, who did for all the world atone; He is our one Redeemer.

Since Christ hath full atonement made and brought to us salvation, each Christian therefore may be glad and build on this foundation. Thy grace alone, dear Lord, I plead, Thy death is now my life indeed, for Thou hast paid my ransom.

Amen.