



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

A Message From The King (2 Corinthians 5:21)

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Interim Bible Study Schedule

Wednesdays at 12 noon in HHR #6.

Everyone still working in the capitol is welcome.

Just bring your lunch and join us.

What is THE Gospel? Can you explain it? Or has anyone ever explained it to you? Do you know it well enough that you can state it in a sentence or two?

Many major companies have a mission or purpose statement. Even Capitol Commission Missouri has one: "The mission of Capitol Commission is to carry out the Great Commission in the capitol community." Without sounding glib or disrespectful, the church's "company line" with the gospel can be stated in one line. The Apostle Paul wrote out the gospel message in one sentence in 2 Corinthians 5:21. In this lesson, we will seek to unfold this packed statement so that we may be reminded of what God has accomplished on the behalf of sinners and so we may be better equipped to proclaim that message to other sinners.

For it is true—there is a message from the King to be passed along to all.

INTRODUCTION

An ambassador is a person who has been officially appointed and sent to represent an entity such as one's government for a special task or diplomatic assignment. An ambassador's duty is to present the positions and wishes of the country he or she is representing. They are not authorized to mix in a little of their own opinions and thoughts on the situation, but only to relay what they have been given. It can be a very important task—going as a representative for one's leaders.

In 2 Corinthians 5, the Apostle Paul labeled himself and his missionary staff as "ambassadors for Christ" (5:20). He had been appointed by God to present a message on God's behalf to all people (cf. Acts 9:15-16). As an ambassador, Paul was not permitted to proclaim his own personal message, thoughts or ideas. Rather, like a modern-day ambassador, he was sent in

behalf of the King to relay the message (and that message only) that he had been sent to deliver.

What is God's message Paul was sent to deliver?—that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself not counting their trespasses against them" (5:19a). Paul stated that God had reconciled people to Himself and now, they have been given this ministry of reconciliation (5:18-19). Paul's passion in calling people to be reconciled is openly visible as he continued: *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?* (5:20b).¹

But Paul did not stop. He continued his message by teaching how God is reconciling people to Himself:

2 Cor. 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

In this short verse, Paul gives the gospel in a "nutshell." In other words, Paul the Ambassador of the King is declaring to the reader the essence of the message from the King.

I. GOD MADE...

The King's message began with a declaration of the action of the King. One may ask, "Who is this King?" The King is the One...

...whose name is *Yahweh*, whose title is *Adonai* (Lord)
...who created all things by the power of His word, who sustains all things with the power of His might
...who is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe
...who is self-existent, eternal, all-knowing, omnipotent and in all places at all times
...who is full of grace, mercy, compassion, love and wisdom
...who is also just, jealous for His Name, and holy, holy, holy.

This is the King whom all people have rebelled against with their sin. But yet, this is also the King who has done all so that reconciliation could be made possible.

Paul made this point quite clear in his second letter to the church at Corinth. In chapter 5 alone, he writes that "we have a building from God" (5:1), "He who prepared us" (5:2), "all these things are from God" (5:17), and "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (5:19). Peter made the same point in his sermon on the day of Pentecost when discussing the death of

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PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

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Jesus by saying, “this man delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23a).

The first essential element of the King’s message is that the King has done all things necessary for the reconciliation He is calling for to take place. Do not think He instructed people to clean themselves up and then come to Him. Do not think He did His part and now, people need to do theirs. No! God has done all on the behalf of sinful rebels because they are totally helpless (Romans 5:6).

And it was while people were still in their helpless, sinful condition that God powerfully demonstrated His love for them by sending His Son to die (Romans 5:6-11). *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life* (John 3:16 KJV; cf. 1 John 4:9-10). “Who offered up Jesus to die? Not Judas for money; not Pilate for fear; not the Jew for envy—but the Father for love.”²

II. HE WHO KNEW NO SIN BECAME SIN

Who does not know sin? Who is blameless and has never done anything sinful in their life?

It is the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who knew no sin. Paul is claiming that Jesus was blameless and innocent in life. He did not live a lifestyle of sin or even commit one act of sin. This is an incredible statement by Paul since he brilliantly argued in his letter to the Romans that everyone has sinned against God and that all are guilty before His judgment seat (Romans 1-2-3).

The teaching on the sinless nature of Christ can be found throughout the rest of the New Testament Scriptures. Peter, an eyewitness and close disciple, wrote about Jesus that He “committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). Another close disciple, John, stated “And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin” (1 John 3:5). And Hebrews 4:15 says, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” Jesus never acted in a way that was contrary to the word and will of God. He never disobeyed a command; He never overlooked the good He was called upon to do.

All people, in contrast, sin in these ways every day of their lives. Every sin in the life of every person is an act of rebellion toward their maker. The laws

and commands of God are not just some arbitrary rules that He thought would be good for people to do or not do on earth. Instead, they are derived from His holy essence. His holiness decreed these things to be right and wrong; therefore, a sinful act, word or thought, is an affront against His holy nature.

Think on this: If one receives a speeding ticket on a Missouri Highway, the governor does not take it personally. He does not think that these people hate him and desire to see him fail for the law does not come from who he is (he may be a speeder himself). But this cannot be said of the King of the Universe. The breaking of His laws and commands are an attack on His holy character and person. It is for this reason that sin separates people from God—as it did Adam and Eve (Genesis 3). It is for this reason that wages of sin is death (Romans 3:23). Thus, the serious consequences for sin do not come because of the “size” of the sin, but rather because of the “size” of the One sinned against.

WHO OFFERED UP JESUS TO DIE? NOT JUDAS FOR MONEY; NOT PILATE FOR FEAR; NOT THE JEWS FOR ENVY—BUT THE FATHER FOR LOVE.

--OCTAVIUS WINSLOW

Paul is not saying in this passage that Christ became a sinner, like me and you, but rather that our sins and the punishment due those sins were placed upon Him. Imagine a court of law. The defendant is found guilty, but the judge declares someone else, totally innocent, as guilty and assigns to them the sentence to be carried out. Christ did not become a sinner—He remained blameless—but carried upon Himself the punishment for our sins.

Isaiah 53:5-6 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

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III. THE CHILD OF GOD HAS BEEN MADE RIGHTEOUS IN HIM

The Bible is truly a source of comfort for God's people. But it can also be a source of consternation with passages such as:

- *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God* (Matthew 5:8).
- *O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart* (Psalm 15:1-2).
- *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord* (Hebrews 12:14).

A person must be holy and righteous if they desire to walk with and dwell with a holy and righteous God. But, as has been noted before, there is no one who is righteous, no one who does what is good, no one who seeks after God or His righteousness (Romans 3:12-18; cf. Psalm 14:1-3).

But what has the King done for helpless rebels? He has taken their guilt and the punishment due their rebellion and placed it upon His sinless Son; and has taken the righteousness of His sinless Son and placed it upon helpless rebels. Thus, they are no longer considered guilty before the judge, but are now declared innocent and right with God. This act is called “justification.”

In another letter, Paul fleshed out this transaction in another way.

Colossians 2:13-14 **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.**

The “certificate of debt” is the sentence that sinful rebels have accrued against them because of their sin. But for those whom God has redeemed, it has been canceled by Christ by taking it to the cross. The imagery is the

same—Jesus Christ is paying the debt owed the King by sinful rebels and they are receiving forgiveness and the righteousness of Christ.

CONCLUSION

There is nothing within the sinful rebels to make them deserving of the King's grace. There is nothing that they have done or can do that would commend them to the King for this great act of mercy. But because of the work of Christ on the cross, the King now sees these former rebels clothed in the righteousness of His Son. Thus, reconciliation can take place.

And the King is sending His ambassadors to proclaim this good news and to call, implore and beg men and women on His behalf to be reconciled to Him (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Through Jesus Christ, the glorious sinless Son of God, God can forgive your sins, are you interested?

P.S.

This, my friend, is Capitol Commission's ministry to you in the state capitol. To bring it closer to home, this is my ministry to you in Jefferson City. God is not sending His ambassadors (which in reality, is every believer's position & role) to come to you and implore you or beg you to vote 'yea' or 'nay' on this bill or that bill. He has called His people to spread the news that God desires all to repent of their sins (2 Peter 3:9), be reconciled to Him, and to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). And specifically named in the “all” are “kings and all who are in authority” (1 Timothy 2:2).

I desire to be of help to you. Feel free anytime to call or write (contact information is at the foot of page 1. I would like to visit you sometime in the near future, so I hope I may find an open door.

¹ All Scripture references quoted are taken from the New American Standard Bible update.

² Quoted by John R.W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 61.