

2 Cor 5:11-6:10

May 6, 2018

Reconcilers

**Main Point:** The message of reconciliation to God through Christ is the core of the reason for the church's existence. This message must be proclaimed because it is easy to miss. It is a message that is radically transformative in the most comprehensive, life-altering way. And it is a message that is always urgent because of the always present war against it.

**SI:** Persuading others to be reconciled to God The core of Paul's reason for being an apostle. His main mission in life. The reason for the letter, the reason for his work. The cause of Christ, the mission of the church.

**Intro:**

From the film, The Incredibles.

10 year old boy Buddy, knows about the Supers. They are born with gifts and talents that are given to them and used to rescue the world from evil.

Buddy wants to help Mr. Incredible... "I'm Incredi-boy!" Complete with home-made superhero costume.

No, Buddy, go home.

A few scenes later... Mr. Incredible facing another villain, Bomb Voyage. Incrediboy flies onto the scene, very proud of his rocket boots. Mr. Incredible not impressed and tells Buddy to fly home. Buddy is embarrassed, thinks he's not wanted. He can invent things, but he's not really a super. He wasn't born a Super. And Mr. Incredible says, "go home, Buddy."

Much later, Buddy, now a few years older, turns himself into the villain Syndrome. He has amassed an impressive array of tools – an airplane, all kinds of weapons, a computer generated self-learning monster, and a seductively voiced partner to lure in Mr. Incredible. All for the sake of the demise of Mr. Incredible.

Paul is persuading those who are within the church to be reconciled to God...

Who are these within the church who need to be reconciled to God?

They are those who are lit up by outward appearances

They are those who are followers of the super-apostles.

The whole topic means that there was conflict in Corinth. Conflict is not a bad thing, it sharpens the lines of division so that we can understand what is truly at stake. It wasn't a personality issue, it wasn't a church practice or governing issue, the issue was the purity of the gospel message. It is easy to get distracted, to miss what is most important!

What are the characteristics of this reconciliation? What is it? What is it about? How is it accomplished? What does it look like? How is it manifested? How is it displayed?

The Message of Reconciliation > 5:21

### **1 Must Be Proclaimed (not assumed)**

To the Church > Paul writing to the church – an appeal to those in the church

To the World > v. 17 – if anyone is in Christ – new creation

By a Team > we are ambassadors – not alone

B/c it is a message of love – v. 14 - sharing this message is out of love, not power (like the fake Supers)

It is tender / gentle – a compassionate appeal, persuasive for the sake of the other

It is uncompromising – it is hardened by the truth, not mushy, not touchy-feely, not giving in to the attacks.

### **2 Is Radically Transformative**

Vs. 15-16 > NO LONGER live for themselves...

We used to live for ourselves

We regard no one according to the flesh... The word “regard” is the word “known” - The Message uses “evaluate”

This doesn't just happen, there has to be an exchange – 5:21 –

It is huge > the only truly life-changing message b/c it is from the inside out, not the outside in. It is not behavior modification, it is heart transformation from death to life b/c Jesus went from life to death. The pattern of death and resurrection. The great transfer.

This is what God has done, designed, and this is the only way. This is why he pleads with them. They are being led astray. They are hard hearted. They want to try other things. They are prone to wander.

Story of Rosaria Butterfield and conversion and how she learned all these stories of other people in her church and all that they went through to be converted. ‘One more push and you'll be born again.’ Her point was that your flesh doesn't want to die and it is incredibly painful to die to the flesh and be raised to new life.

that has all kinds of implications:

Our legal **standing** > from dirty, unrighteous, unclean to clean, righteous, holy

**Status** of relationship from conflict to peace

**Desires** – from the ways of the world to the ways of God

**Perspective** -: vs. 16-18 – we used to care about outward appearance, we used to judge people according to the flesh, but no more! Not in the church! That is not how we do. We don't ignore culture and color, tastes and background, it's just that we don't consider those things in determining someone's value or contribution or worthiness.

What Paul is getting at, I propose, is he is asking each individual that is attached to the church somehow, and to the church at large: “Who are you? What is your identity? What do you say you are?”

The Church is in Danger – why the church in Corinth was in danger... They were drawn away by outward appearance – rhetoric and oratory. They were marketing gurus. They were putting up billboards everywhere with their faces emblazoned. They had Glamour Shots doing their makeup and lighting. They had 1000s of followers on social media. They were experts at boasting about outward appearance.

And here are Paul and Timothy and Silas and Apollos giving their qualifications > 6:3ff.

The message of Reconciliation must be proclaimed, it is radically transformative, and last:

### **3 Is Always Urgent**

Paul pleading with them! We persuade, appeal, implore

We too, can be susceptible to receiving the grace of God in vain. Meaning: the grace of God is useless to you! Is nothing to you! Can even be used by you to further your own ends.

Back to Buddy from the Incredibles – He wanted to be near the Supers, he wanted to be a Super, for his own ends, for his own glory, his own fame, to make a name for himself. And so he became a false super, all in an artificial way: He made himself into Syndrome, a super-villain through artificial, outward means. He wasn't born with it like Mr. Incredible and Elasti-girl and their kids.

He made himself into a fake Super – and it was used to destroy instead of to build up.

And us, too. We can be led astray by false power...

What does that look like? You can be self-deceived. Pray for your leaders, that we would not be self-deceived by the allure of ego-driven power.

The love of God, the grace of God is incredibly good. But unless it has and is transforming your inner being, it is useless to you. You can use the grace of God to feel better about yourself. And instead of dealing with your sin, and taking it to Christ the sin-bearer for you, you can hide behind the grace of God.

### **Conc:**

See where Paul is going with this? See why God has this for you? For us?

Who are you going to be? What are you known for? What are we known for? What is our badge to the world? Our identity? What is yours? What qualifies us to be ambassadors? This is who you are! This is what is most important and the church is always in danger of being deceived by the false Supers.

Reconciliation is about two enemies making peace. I appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

