

# 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

2 CORINTHIANS - PAUL'S MINISTRY IN THE LIGHT OF THE INDESCRIBABLE GIFT  
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## Overview of Second Corinthians

2Co 1:1-7:16	2Co 8:1-9:15	2Co 10:1-12:21
Character of Paul	Collection for the Saints	Credentials of Paul
Testimonial & Didactic	Practical	Apologetic
Past: Misunderstanding & Explanation	Present: Practical Project	Future: Anxieties
Apostle's Conciliation, Ministry & Exhortations	Apostle's Solicitation for Judean Saints	Apostle's Vindication of Himself
Forgiveness, Reconciliation	Confidence	Vindication
Gratitude		
Ephesus to Macedonia: Change of Itinerary Explained	Macedonia: Preparation for Visit to Corinth	To Corinth: Certainty and Imminence of the Visit
2Co 1:1-7:16	2Co 8:1-9:15	2Co 10:1-12:21

[2Corinthians written ~ 56-57AD - see Chronological Table of Paul's Life and Ministry](#)

Adapted & modified from [Jensen's Survey of the New Testament \(Highly Recommended Resource\)](#) & [Wilkinson's Talk Thru the Bible](#)

2 Corinthians 5:18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [ta de panta ek tou theou tou](#) katallacantos [hemas heauto dia Christou kai dontos](#) ([AAPMSG](#)) [emin ten diakonian tes katallages](#).

**Amplified:** But all things are from God, Who through Jesus Christ reconciled us to Himself [received us into favor, brought us into harmony with Himself] and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation [that by word and deed we might aim to bring others into harmony with Him]. ([Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** And all things are from God who reconciled us to himself by means of Christ and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ([Westminster Press](#))

**ESV:** All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ([ESV](#))

**HCSB:** Now everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ([Holman Christian Standard Bible](#))

**KJV:** And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

**NEB:** From first to last this has been the work of God. He has reconciled us men to himself through Christ, and he has enlisted us in this service of reconciliation. ([New English Bible - Oxford Press](#))

**NET:** And all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and who has given us the ministry of reconciliation. ([NET Bible](#))

**MH:** This new situation is wholly God's doing, for he is the one who restored us to his favor through the work of Christ and entrusted us with the task of announcing this reconciliation. (Murray Harris' expanded paraphrase of 2Corinthians).

**NLT:** And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** All this is God's doing, for he has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ; and he has made us agents of the reconciliation. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Weymouth:** And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and has appointed us to serve in the ministry of reconciliation.

**Wuest:** But the aforementioned all things are from God as a source, the One who reconciled us to himself through the intermediate agency of Christ and gave to us the ministry whose work is that of proclaiming the message of this reconciliation, ([Eerdmans](#))

**Young's Literal:** And the all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and did give to us the ministration of the reconciliation,

**NOW ALL THESE THINGS ARE FROM GOD, WHO RECONCILED US TO HIMSELF THROUGH CHRIST: ta de panta ek tou theou tou katallacantos hemas eauto dia Christou:**

- **all:** Jn 3:16,27 Ro 11:36 1Co 1:30 8:6 12:6 Col 1:16,17 Jas 1:17
- **who:** Lev 6:30 Eze 45:15 Da 9:24 Ro 5:1,10,11 Eph 2:16 Col 1:20,21 Heb 2:17 1Jn 2:2 4:10
- [2 Corinthians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See also "shorter version" of commentary](#) on 2 Corinthians 5:18

## THE MINISTRY & MESSAGE OF RECONCILIATION

**Now (de) - Barnett** writes "The unemphatic particle (de) at the head of this sentence marks a further development in the writer's line of thought." ([The Second Epistle to the Corinthians. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Eerdmans](#)) ("May well be regarded as the finest conservative exposition of this epistle"—Cyril J Barber)

**All...from God - From God** = He is the Source. He is the Agent. He is the Initiator of reconciliation. This is also a good reminder that the supernatural transformation just described (2Co 5:17) originates from God (cp Paul's great doxology Ro 11:33, 34, 35, 36-+, cp 1Cor 8:6). God is the "driving force" behind the redemption and reconciliation of all mankind. He acts "unilaterally."

**James Reid** in The Interpreter's Bible adds that...

All this redemptive work that Christ has done to help and transform men is from God. Men neither deserve it nor share the credit for the results. Moreover, Christ does not do it apart from God's direction and action. God did it all, through Christ.

**All things are from God** - See Devotional by F B Meyer

**Spurgeon** amplifies **all things are from God** writing that...I would have you look on this text as being a summary of all the things which we have preached to you these years. It has been my endeavor, constantly and continually, to maintain that salvation is of God's good will, and not of man's free will; that man is nothing, and that Jesus Christ is both Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. And I think I may truly say, "Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum"—"all things are of God." And oh my brethren, what a large summary it is! it contains words which grasp the compass of everything that your mind can think upon—"all things;" and it proclaims him to whom all things owe their being—"God." Grasp this total if you are able, "All things!" What is here omitted? Surely whatsoever the Christian can desire is to be found in those words "all things." But lest even that should not be comprehensive enough, our summary contains a still greater word, one which is supreme over all, inasmuch as all

things spring from his loins, and yet he remains still the same, as full as ever. "All things are of God." If we be thirsty, here are streams that never can be exhausted. If we be hungry, surely here is bread enough and to spare. If we be poor, here are treasures and riches that are utterly inexhaustible, for here we have all things, and all things in God. ([High Doctrine - And All Things Are of God - 2Cor 5:18](#))

**R. Kent Hughes** adds that all through this section (2Cor 5:18, 19, 20) what "catches our attention here is that reconciliation is God's unassisted work. Here God is shown to be the Creator of the messenger, the ministry, and the message of reconciliation. This text is wholly God-centered. God is the mover of every mention of reconciliation in these verses. ([2 Corinthians Power in Weakness - Preaching the Word Crossway](#))

**Bernard** observes that...Paul is especially anxious in this Epistle to trace up spiritual blessings to their true Source (God); see 2Cor 1:21, 2:14, 4:6, 5:5, and cf. 1Co 3:23....The important point to observe in the present passage is that it is God Himself who is the ultimate Author of this Reconciliation; cf. Ro 5:8+, Ro 8:31, 32+, and especially Jn 3:16. That the Reconciliation is "through Christ" is the heart of the Gospel of the Atonement (cf. Ro 3:24+, Col 1:20+, etc). ([2 Corinthians 5 Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**Now all these things are from God** - What is the natural question you should ask? What **things**? Clearly Paul is pointing back to the supernatural work of God including the believer's death and resurrection in Christ and especially the the new creation of sinners into new creatures in Christ. Some commentators restrict the "things" to the new creation of the preceding verse, but others (Bengel, et al) take this as an allusion that goes back to 2Cor 5:14.

**Spurgeon** explains that "**all things** of the new creation are of God..."What things?" do you say again. We answer, all things that refer to the new nature—all things that refer to our new privileges and to our new actions—whatsoever things refer to the new nature are of God. (Read his entire messages - [High Doctrine - And All Things Are of God - 2Cor 5:18](#))

**Henry Alford** explains **all these things** writing that...in this new creation: he passes to a more general view of the effects of the death of Christ—viz. our reconciliation to God)

**Through Christ**- Paul goes on to explain this truth in 2Cor 5:21. God's plan of redemption and reconciliation is solely based on Christ's finished work on the Cross (see also Ro 5:10+ below). In other words reconciliation of man to God is effected through Christ because His death removed the barrier to reconciliation as described even in the OT by the prophet Isaiah...

But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. (Is 59:2).

Paul's phrase **through Christ** parallels a similar teaching in Romans where he explains...

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Ro 5:1+).

**Comment:** Sinful man was at enmity with a holy God, so God moved toward us demonstrating "His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8+) which the result that He brought peace which is not just an end to hostilities but the restitution of a broken relationship in which we who were once God's enemies have now been made His friends! Amazing grace indeed!

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. (Ro 5:10+).

**Cranfield comments on Paul's change from [justification](#) to reconciliation in the preceding passages noting that:** Justification is a judicial term used in the law courts. A judge may acquit an accused person without ever entering into any personal relationship with the him or her. He just announces the verdict, not guilty. The accused hardly expects to be invited over for dinner by the judge, and probably hopes that he will never see him again. (**Ed:** In reconciliation it is in fact as if the Judge enters into a personal relationship with the justified sinner, who is now, as it were, "invited over to dinner!")

**Paul** again alludes to the fact that the reconciliation is through Christ in his letter to the Colossians...

**Through Him** (Christ) to **reconcile** all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He **has now reconciled you** in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach (Col 1:20+, Col 1:21, 22+)

**The Lord Jesus took our place that we might have His peace.  
He took our sin that we might have His salvation.**

**P E Hughes** writes that. "As in the original creation all things were brought into being by the Word of God, so also in the new

creation God through His Son, who is The Word, is the sole Author of all things. "Nothing is of ourselves", says Chrysostom in a fine passage; "for remission of sins, and adoption, and unspeakable glory are given to us by Him.... But, behold, a new soul (for it was cleansed), and also a new body, and a new worship, and new promises and covenant and life and table and dress, and all things absolutely new. For instead of the Jerusalem below we have received that mother city which is above, and instead of a material temple we have seen a spiritual temple; instead of tables of stone, fleshy tables; instead of circumcision, baptism; instead of the manna, the Lord's body; instead of water from a rock, blood from His side; instead of Moses' and Aaron's rod, the Cross; instead of the promised land, the kingdom of heaven; instead of a thousand priests, one High Priest; instead of a lamb without understanding, a spiritual Lamb.... But all these things are of God by Christ, and His free gift." ([Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians. The New International Commentary on the New Testament](#))

## **MAN RECONCILED TO GOD NOT GOD RECONCILED TO MAN**

**God who reconciled us to Himself** - Notice it does not say that God needed to be won over, but the reconciliation is described as taking place in them rather than in Him. In other words reconciliation is not something man does, but something he receives by grace through faith in Christ. As someone has well said "*Religion is man's feeble effort to be reconciled to God*"

How helpless guilty nature lies,  
Unconscious of her load,  
The heart unchanged can never rise  
To happiness and God.

**Phil Newton**...God not only originates the work but bears the full load of it by meeting the righteous demands of His justice through His Son. The price of reconciliation is immeasurable. ([New Creatures](#))

**Geoff Thomas** - The staggering message of the New Testament is that reconciliation is a work of God. Here he is, the offended and injured party, the one sinned against, and yet he sets up the whole machinery of reconciliation... It is a work that does not draw within its scope human action. It does not enlist the assistance of men. It does not depend upon the activity of men. ([2 Corinthians 5:18-19 God and Sinners Reconciled](#))

**Alfred Plummer** adds that "Greeks thought of God as estranged from men, and it was He who needed to be won over. Jews thought rather that it was men who by their sins were estranged from God, and the sins had to be 'cleansed,' or 'purged,' or 'covered,' in order to bring about reconciliation (see 1Jn 2:2). Paul follows Jewish rather than Hellenistic thought. It is man who is reconciled to God, rather than God to man. ([2 Corinthians 5:18 International Critical Commentary](#))

**Garland** has an interesting way of saying the same thing...When the verb is used in the active voice, Christ or God is always the subject; when it is used in the passive voice, humans are the subject. In other words, "God reconciles; man is reconciled." Reconciliation assumes ruptured relationships, alienation, and disaffection. The problem, however, is not with God, as if God were some cruel taskmaster from whom humans rebelled. Human sinfulness created the problem, and this sinful condition had to be dealt with before there could be any reconciliation. (Garland, D. E.. Vol. 29: 2 Corinthians. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers)

In the introduction to his sermon on reconciliation, **Spurgeon** writes...There has been a long-standing quarrel between God and man. It commenced in that day when our first parents hearkened to the serpent's voice, and believed the devil rather than their Maker. Yet God is not willing for that quarrel to continue. According to the goodness of His nature, He delights in **Love**. He is the God of peace; and He has, on His part, prepared everything that is needful for a, perfect reconciliation. His glorious **wisdom** has devised a plan whereby, without violating His **Justice** as the Judge of all the earth, and without tarnishing his perfect **Holiness**, He can meet man upon the ground of **Mercy**, and man can again become the **friend of God**. That blessed work was done long ago; and now all that remains is that man should be reconciled to God, that he should be willing to end the dispute, and that his heart should turn towards his Maker again in love, and peace, and perfect reconciliation. He bids us, His ministers, and, indeed, all His servants, — each according to his opportunity, and experience and knowledge, and ability, and grace, — to go abroad amongst the sons of men, and exercise "**the ministry of reconciliation**," to labor to bring men into harmony with God, that they may be willing to accept what God has done toward the making of an everlasting peace, and ending, once for all, this grievous quarrel. ([2 Corinthians 5:18 The Ministry of Reconciliation](#))

**Reconciled** ([2644](#)) (**katallasso** from **katá** = an intensifier + **alláso** = change) means to exchange one thing for another and was used for example to describe the exchange of coins for others of equal value. This Its original meaning of to change, exchange, etc. transferred to mean to reconcile. Reconciliation refers to an objective state of peace, not simply a feeling of peacefulness.

**Katallasso** (and **katallage** - see 2Co 5:19) were frequently used in secular Greek. The Greek words for **reconciliation** derive from

words for exchange, in which by extension enmity is exchanged for peaceful relations. And so the Greeks spoke of people in opposition to each other being "reconciled" or being made friends again. When people change from being at enmity with each other to being at peace, they are said to be reconciled. **Katallasso** meant to legally reconcile two disputing parties in court. Paul used this common Greek term in his writings to describe a believer's reconciliation to God, such a reconciliation made possible by the finished work Christ on Calvary.

#### Related Resources:

- A W Pink's [The Doctrine of Reconciliation 31 chapter book!](#) - about 31 pages
- [Reconciliation - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)

Notice the aorist tense which defines a completed action in the past.

**Thrall** explains that the **aorist tense** indicates "that the Christ-event (2Co 5:14, 21) in principle effected the reconciliation in an objective fashion, **prior to any consequent human response**. It is an act of God accomplished whilst humanity was still hostile towards him (Ro 5:8, 10). At the same time, the **aorist imperative** (of katallasso) in 2Cor 5:20 shows that it is not complete without the individual human response. (Thrall, M. E.. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of the Corinthians. London; New York: T&T Clark International) (Bolding added)

**Vincent's** note on **katallasso** is illuminating...

"The verb (**katallasso**) means primarily to exchange, and hence to change the relation of hostile parties into a relation of peace; to reconcile. It is used of both mutual and one sided enmity. In the former case, the context must show on which side is the active enmity. In the Christian sense, the change in the relation of God and man effected through Christ. This involves

(1) a **movement of God toward man** with a view to break down man's hostility, to commend God's love and holiness to him, and to convince him of the enormity and the consequence of sin. It is God who initiates this movement in the person and work of Jesus Christ. See Ro 5:6+, Ro 5:8-ntoe; 2Cor 5:18, 19, Eph 1:6+; 1 Jn 4:19). Hence the passive form of the verb here: we were made subjects of God's reconciling act.

(2) a corresponding movement on man's part toward God; yielding to the appeal of Christ's self-sacrificing love, laying aside his enmity, renouncing his sin, and turning to God in faith and obedience.

(3) a consequent change of character in man: the covering (cp "atonement"), forgiving, cleansing of his sin; a thorough revolution in all his dispositions and principles (as summarized in 2Co 5:17).

(4) a corresponding change of relation on God's part, that being removed which alone rendered Him hostile to man, so that God can now receive him into fellowship and let loose upon him all His Fatherly love and grace (1Jn 1:3, 7). Thus there is complete reconciliation. **AMAZING DIVINE GRACE AND MERCY INDEED!**

**Katallasso** refers to the exchange of hostility or enmity to a friendly relationship. The basic idea of reconciliation is the restoration of friendly relationships after a period of enmity or estrangement. Thus **katallasso** means to change a person for the purpose of being able to have fellowship together. As discussed, Scripture always portrays God as the Reconciler and sinners as the ones reconciled, since it was human sin that ruptured the relationship between God and man Isaiah, for example, recording...

But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)

In the NT, **katallasso** speaks of the change that God makes in man through regeneration ([New Birth](#)), so that he may be reconciled to God. The idea is to set up a relationship of peace not existing before. To reiterate, man is reconciled to God, but God is not said to be reconciled to man.

**Reconciliation** produces **restoration** of a relationship of peace which has been disturbed between God and man in the garden of Eden. Sinful man is reconciled in that his attitude of enmity toward God is changed to one of friendship.

**Matthew Henry**...Reconciliation supposes a quarrel, or breach of friendship; and sin has made a breach, it has broken the friendship between God and man. The heart of the sinner is filled with enmity against God, and God is justly offended with the sinner. Yet, behold, there may be a reconciliation; the offended Majesty of heaven is willing to be reconciled. He has appointed the Mediator of reconciliation. He has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, 2Co 5:18.

**John MacArthur** explains that...**reconciliation** is not something man does but what he receives; it is not what he accomplishes but what he embraces. **Reconciliation** does not happen when man decides to stop rejecting God but when God decides to stop

rejecting man. It is a divine provision by which God's holy displeasure against alienated sinners is appeased, His hostility against them removed, and a harmonious relationship between Him and them established. **Reconciliation** occurs because God was graciously willing to design a way to have all the sins of those who are His removed from them "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12-[Spurgeon's note](#)), "cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19), and "cast all [their] sins behind [His] back" (Isaiah 38:17). ([MacArthur, J. 2 Corinthians. 2003 Moody Publishers](#))

**Barrett** writes that in regard to **reconciliation**...It is not necessarily implied that the enmity existed on one side only, but it is plainly stated that in this case the initiative to reconciliation was God's, who found in the death of his Son (Rom. 3:25 f.) a way in which his love for the sinner and his wrath against sin could be accommodated, so that he might both be righteous himself, and justify the man—the sinful man—who relies on faith in Jesus. ([Black's New Testament Commentary The Second Epistle to the Corinthians](#))

**James Denney** commenting on Romans 5:9-+ (and Ro 5:10-+) reminds us that before we were **in Christ** and were still dead in our trespasses and sins (Ep 2:1-+) "in Adam" (cp 1Co 15:22)...

We were in a real sense objects of the Divine hostility. As sinners, we lay under the condemnation of God, and His wrath hung over us. This was the situation which had to be faced: Was there love in God equal to it? Yes, when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. **Katellagemen** (in Ro 5:10-+) is a real **passive** (**Ed**: recipients of the action or effect): **"we"** are the objects, not the subjects, of the reconciliation: the subject, is God, 2Cor.5:19, 20, 21. Compare Ro 5:11-+: (ten katallagen elabomen = "the reconciliation we received.)

To represent **reconciliation** (katellagemen) by an active form, e.g., "we were won to lay aside our hostility," is to miss the point of the whole passage. Paul is demonstrating the love of God (Ro 5:8-+), and he can only do it by pointing to what God has done. That we on our part are hostile to God before the reconciliation, and that we afterwards lay aside our enmity, is no doubt true; but here it is entirely irrelevant. The Apostle's thought (Ro 5:10-+) is simply this:

"If, when we lay under the Divine condemnation, the work of our reconciliation to God was achieved by Him through the death of His Son, much more shall the love which wrought so incredibly for us in our extremity carry out our salvation to the end."

The subjective side of the truth is here completely and intentionally left out of sight; the laying aside of our hostility adds nothing to God's love, throws no light upon it; hence in an exposition of the love of God it can be ignored. To say that the reconciliation is "mutual", is true in point of fact; it is true also to all the suggestions of the English word; but it is not true to the meaning of **we were reconciled** (katellagemen) nor to the argument of this passage, which does not prove anything about the Christian, but exhibits the love of God at its height in the Cross, and argues from that to what are comparatively smaller demonstrations of that love. ([Romans 5:9ff Commentary - Expositor's Greek Testament - online](#))

The **Believer's Study Bible** adds that...**Reconciliation** has reference to a change in relationship from hostility to love, acceptance, and friendship. The atonement of Christ accomplished two things: (1) The cross propitiated (satisfied) the wrath of God and reconciled man to God. Few realize that the Bible pictures man as an enemy of God (see Ro 5:10-+, Ro 8:7-+, Ep 2:12-+, Ep 2:15-+) in his unredeemed state. (2) In repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus, a man is reconciled to God by the death of Christ. His basic relationship has changed from that of an enemy of God to that of a friend of God. ([Criswell, W. A. Believer's Study Bible: New King James Version. 1991. Thomas Nelson](#))

To summarize, to reconcile is to take someone who is hostile towards someone else and change that into a friendly relationship. Unsaved ungodly man is an enemy of God and is hostile toward Him and God takes the initiative in this estranged relationship and send Jesus to be our Mediator Who based on our faith in His sacrificial death and resurrection life brings us into a friendly relationship with God.

The great triumvirate of **redemption**, **propitiation (atonement)**, and **reconciliation** is totally the work of God, accomplished through the death of Jesus Christ. **Redemption** pertains to sin, **propitiation** (or satisfaction) pertains to God, and **reconciliation** is for people (we were reconciled). **Reconciliation** is the removal of enmity that stands between people and God. **Reconciliation** is the basis of restored fellowship between people and God.

**Through Christ** - Through His fully satisfactory sacrifice for man's sin. Through His once for all time finished work (see **It is Finished**) He became our Our Great High Priest, through Whom we are now able to approach the Father. **Related Study: through Him = through Christ**)

**This covenant stands secure,  
Though earth's old columns bow;**



**The strong, the feeble, and the weak  
Are one in Jesus now.**

**Christ** ([5547](#)) (**Christos** from **chrío** = to anoint, rub with oil, consecrate to an office) is the Anointed One, the Messiah, **Christos** being the Greek equivalent of the transliterated Hebrew word **Messiah** (**mashiach/masiyah**). In the OT the word "anointed" was closely linked with two offices -- king and high priest. It was prophesied that Jesus, from David's kingly line (Mt 1:1, cp 2Sa 7:13, 16, Isa 11:1, Jer 23:5, 33:15, 16, 17, Zech 12:8, Lk 1:31, 32, 69, 70), would one day hold ultimate authority in our world. As High Priest, Jesus offered himself up for us and lives today to make intercession for us (Heb 7:25+, Ro 8:34+). In Jesus' day, then, the Christ was thought of as Israel's deliverer (cp Ro 11:26+).

**AND GAVE US THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION: kai dontos (AAPMSG) emin ten diakonian tes katallages**

- **Gave us:** 2Co 5:19,20 Isa 52:7 57:19 Mk 16:15,16 Lk 10:5 24:47 Ac 10:36 13:38 Ac 13:39 Eph 2:17 Col 1:20
- [2 Corinthians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See also "shorter version" of commentary](#) on 2 Corinthians 5:18

**SINNERS RECONCILED TO BE  
MESSENGERS OF RECONCILIATION**

This statement may be the clearest expression of his calling and mission in all his writings.

**Ironsides...** This ministry of reconciliation is God's call to lost men everywhere to come to Him with all their sins, with all their griefs, with all their burdens, and be reconciled to Him.

**Gave** ([1325](#))(**didomi**) is a bestowal which is based on decision of will of giver (God in this case) and no merit of recipient (Paul, et al).

**The ministry** - Paul has previously alluded to **ministry** or service = **"the ministry of the Spirit...the ministry of righteousness"** (2Co 3:8, 9; cp 2Co 4:1; 6:3).

**God...gave us the ministry** - It is both a gift and a stewardship (responsibility). While the direct application is to Paul, the wider application is clearly to all believers. The question arises then -- will I be found as a faithful steward when Christ returns? In his first letter Paul wrote...

Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants (not **diakonia** but [huperetes](#)) of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. (1Co 4:1,2)

**Comment:** [Huperetes](#) describes the the men down in the galley of an ancient ship, doing one thing -- rowing and with their eyes on one man, the man standing at the front of the hull, shouting "Row, Row, Row."! Why? Because if anyone gets out of synch, the whole boat is thrown off course! What a picture -- There are no big "I's" or little "u's" in the ministry! Servants of Who? Of Christ! A God-called preacher marches to the beat of a different drummer and if he doesn't he's not worth being in the pulpit.

**Ministry** ([1248](#))(**diakonia**) means the rendering or assistance or help by performing certain duties, often of a humble or menial nature serve, including such mundane activities as waiting on tables or caring for household needs—activities without apparent dignity.

- Note: For numerous additional insights concerning this word group (diakonos, diakoneo, diakonia) see the study of diakonos

Since service associated with the word **diakonia** necessarily involved dependence, submission, and constraints of time and freedom, the pagan Greeks regarded **diakonia** as degrading and dishonorable. Service for the public good was honored, but "voluntary giving of oneself in service of one's fellow man is alien to Greek thought. The highest goal before a man was the development of his own personality. ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

That last sentence is strikingly contemporary, and is mindful of the fact that a culture that is focused on self-actualization and self-fulfillment will find little value in **servant hood**.

In Greek eyes, **diakonia service** is not very dignified. Ruling and not service is proper to a man. The formula of the sophist expressed the basic Greek attitude: "How can a man be happy when he has to serve someone?" expresses the basic Greek attitude.

For the Greek in his wisdom and freedom there can certainly be no question of existing to serve others.

**Diakonia** - 12x in the epistles to the Corinthians - 1Co 12:5; 16:15; 2Co 3:7, 8, 9; 2Co 4:1; 5:18; 6:3; 8:4; 9:1, 12; 13; 11:8

**Ministry of reconciliation** - This is primarily a proclamation of what God has done or accomplished. The proclamation and reception (by divine grace through personal faith) of the Gospel (in which is **the word of reconciliation** 2Co 5:19) is the means by which sinners are reconciled and brought into a state of favor with God, after natural estrangement or enmity (by virtue of being born in the likeness of their father Adam).

**Henry Blackaby** rightly reminds us that...Sin breaks our relationship with God; it severs relationships with others as well. Broken relationships are the epidemic of our day. Sin alienates family members, separates friends, divides churches, and destroys marriages. Sin creates mistrust, jealousy, hatred, and greed, all of which devastate relationships. Only Christ has the remedy for the disastrous effect of sin on human relationships. As His ambassadors, we are to take the message of reconciliation to a broken, divided world. We urge reconciliation first with God, and then with each other. How tragic when God's messengers of peace harbor enmity toward each other. It is a travesty to carry a message of love and yet be filled with hatred. If there is someone whom you refuse to forgive, your message of reconciliation is hypocrisy. The evidence that you are a disciple of Jesus is that you love your fellow Christian (John 13:35). In each of your relationships, make certain that your actions share the love and forgiveness that reflect what you received from God. Then you will not only speak the message of reconciliation, but you will live it as well. ([Experiencing God Day by Day](#))

**Reconciliation** (2643) (**katallage** from **katá** = an intensifier + **allásson** = change - see study of verb **katallassein**) describes the change from a state of enmity between persons to one of friendship. It pictures the reestablishment of an interrupted or broken relationship. **Reconciliation** is a vivid word, pointing to the making of peace after a quarrel. **Katallage** describes the bring together again people who have been estranged and describes the state of those who have been restored to friendship. In the New Testament it refers, of course, to God's reconciling of the world to Himself through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. **Thayer** describes it as "the restoration of the favor of God to sinners that repent and put their trust in the expiatory death of Christ." (See also [Reconciliation - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#))

The concept of reconciliation refers to an objective state of peace with God, not simply a feeling of peacefulness. The strictly secular usage in 1Cor 7:11, 15 speaks of peace restored to a married couple in the case where one is a believer and the other is not.

**Reconciliation** assures us of the future bliss of eternal life and Christ's risen and exalted life is the guarantee - this should be cause for exultation.

As **Geoffrey Wilson** pointed out...The resurrection is the proof of our reconciliation.

God changes us from enemies to family, from foe to friend, from alien to adopted. The **reconciliation** is the effect of the death of Christ, and so reconciliation brings out the significance of the Cross, where God's wrath against sin was poured out on His Son Who was made sin on our behalf.

**Katallage** originally was used in Greek to describe an exchange (or profit from exchange), especially of money (of the business of money changers, exchanging equivalent values). This word group then began to acquire a wider sense of exchanging any one thing for another. Aristotle, for instance, speaks of professional and mercenary soldiers who are willing to barter their lives for trifling gain. And then the meaning came to be more than anything else, the change of enmity into friendship, as in the present passage.

**Barclay** summarizes the truths about **reconciliation** writing that...

First and foremost, Paul sees the work of Jesus Christ as above and beyond all else a work of reconciliation. Through that which He did, the lost relationship between man and God is restored.

#### **Man was made for friendship and fellowship with God.**

By his disobedience and rebellion he ended up at enmity with God. That which Jesus did took that enmity away, and restored the relationship of friendship which should always have existed, but which was broken by man's sin.

It is to be carefully noted that Paul never speaks of God being reconciled to men, but always of men being reconciled to God. The most significant of all the passages, 2Co 5:18, 19, 20, three times speaks of God reconciling man to Himself. It was man, not God, who needed to be reconciled. Nothing had lessened the love of God (Jn 3:16); nothing had turned that love to hate; nothing had ever banished that yearning from the heart of God (2Pe 3:9). Man might sin, but God still loved (Ro 5:8, 1Jn 4:8, 10, 16, 18). It was not God who needed



to be pacified, but man who needed to be moved to surrender and to penitence and to love.

Here then we are face to face with an inescapable truth. The effect of the Cross—at least in this sphere of the thought of Paul—was on man, and not on God. The effect of the Cross changed, not the heart of God, but the heart of man (**Ed**: Although clearly God was **propitiated** or "satisfied" - see following paragraph). It was man who needed to be reconciled, not God. It is entirely against all Pauline thought to think of Jesus Christ pacifying an angry God, or to think that in some way God's wrath was turned to love ("God is [present tense = continually] love" 1Jn 4:8), and God's judgment was turned to mercy (Remember all of God's attributes are Eternal and Immutable), because of something which Jesus did...

When we look at it in Paul's way, it was man's sin which was turned to penitence, man's rebellion which was turned to surrender, man's enmity which was turned to love, by the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ upon the Cross. It cost that Cross to make that change in the hearts of men. ([Barclay, William: New Testament Words:.. Westminster John Know Press, 1964](#))

**Propitiation** of God makes possible man's reconciliation to God...The basic idea of propitiation in Hebrew terms is that of covering what is offensive, so restoring friendship, or causing to be kindly disposed. The Greek terms lack the physical reference to covering but introduce the idea of friendliness where antagonism would be natural; hence, graciousness. Naturally, therefore, the idea of expiation entered into the concept. It is especially to be noted that all provisions for this friendly relation as between God and offending man find their initiation and provision in God and are under His direction, but involve the active response of man. All heathen and unworthy conceptions are removed from the Christian notion of propitiation by the fact that God Himself proposed, or "set forth," Christ as the "mercy-seat," and that this is the supreme expression of ultimate love. God had all the while been merciful, friendly, "passing over" man's sins with no apparently adequate, or just, ground for doing so. Now in the blood of Christ sin is condemned and expiated, and God is able to establish and maintain His character for righteousness, while He continues and extends His dealing in gracious love with sinners who exercise faith in Jesus. The propitiation originates with God, not to appease Himself, but to justify Himself in His uniform kindness to men deserving harshness. Compare also as to reconciliation, as in Romans 5:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18. ([Propitiation - by William Owen Carver in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#))

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**Is Your "Bell" Sounding the Good News of Reconciliation?** - There's a story about a bell that hung in the belfry of an old church. When some visitors tried to ring it, nothing happened. So they investigated and discovered something most unusual. The bottom of the bell was plugged with wood. Stranger yet, a door had been cut in the side of the bell and a padlock had been used to secure the door. The church was using the old bell as a strongbox in which to store money. This was a clever idea, but it certainly wasn't what the bell was designed for.

Just as a bell is made for ringing, Christians are meant to sound out the good news of salvation. But many remain silent and keep the precious message of reconciliation with God to themselves. Think carefully about your own life. Do you keep your knowledge of Scripture and your joy of knowing God locked up inside? Sound out the Gospel story! —Paul R. Van Gorder.

**If Christianity is worth having,  
It's worth sharing.**

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**Illustration of Reconciliation** - The story is told that Britain's Queen Victoria and her husband, Prince Albert, had a spat not long after they were married. Albert went away and angrily locked himself in their private residence at the palace. The queen pounded furiously on the door, and when Albert asked who was there, the answer was, "The Queen of England, who demands admittance." But the door did not open. Victoria knocked again, and again Prince Albert asked who was there. The answer was the same: "The Queen of England." But the prince would not open the door. Finally, the story goes, Victoria knocked in a more restrained way, and when asked who was there, responded, "Your wife, Albert." The door opened immediately and the royal couple was reconciled. (as told by Tony Evans)

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**Undeterred Determination** - (God...has given us the ministry of reconciliation) - One of the great privileges of serving at Moody Bible Institute was hearing about graduates who had impacted the world for Christ. Their stories of sacrifice, perseverance, and passion for the gospel were inspiring.

In the late 19th century, Mary McLeod Bethune spent 2 years studying at Moody in Chicago, training to become a missionary in Africa. But after she graduated, no mission board would give her the opportunity, as an African-American woman, to serve on the mission field. Unable to fulfill her dream to go to Africa, she didn't give up on her calling to serve Jesus. Undaunted, she started a small school for African-American girls in Florida that would eventually blossom into Bethune-Cookman College. She became a powerful force for change in the status of women.

Mary's legacy was forged by her determination to serve Jesus even in the face of shattered dreams. She knew that God had entrusted to her "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18)—and she wouldn't give up.

That wasn't just a mandate for Mary McLeod Bethune. Telling people they can be reconciled to God through Christ is a calling given to all of us. Look for a way to make a difference for Jesus today—right where you are! — by Joe Stowell ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Wherever You have placed us, Lord,  
Give us the courage to proclaim  
To people who are lost in sin:  
"You can be new in Jesus' name."  
—Sper

**One of the qualities God looks for in His people  
is a heart that is willing to serve Him.**

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**Family Stories** - Everybody loves a family story, and today's Bible reading contains one of the most well-known stories in all of Scripture—the Parable of the Lost Son.

Author Henri Nouwen, in his book *The Return Of The Prodigal Son*, suggests that all Christians, at some point in their walk of faith, are represented by each of the three main characters. At times we are the wayward child in need of repentance and forgiveness. At other times we are the big brother who wants to hold on to resentment and withhold forgiveness. But as we mature, we become like the father, whose highest desire is to have all his children reconciled.

Nouwen ends the book with these words: "As I look at my own aging hands, I know that they have been given to me to stretch out to all who suffer, to rest upon the shoulders of all who come, and to offer the blessing that emerges from the immensity of God's love."

What role are you playing in your family story? Do you need the courage to repent and seek forgiveness? Or do you need the compassion to extend forgiveness?

God has given His children the "ministry of reconciliation" (2Corinthians 5:18, 19). Now would be a good time to start.

Lord, grant me the courage to confess my faults to those I've offended, and the grace to accept the confessions of those who have offended me. May I become a minister of reconciliation to bless my family on Your behalf. Amen.

A right attitude with your family begins with a right attitude toward God.— by Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**Make Peace** - It was a dramatic story of forgiveness. In December of 2000, on the Battleship Missouri Memorial, a dozen American survivors of the attack on Pearl Harbor embraced three of the Japanese pilots who had flown attacking planes. The reconciliation ceremony had been arranged by the American-Japan Friendship Committee.

That moving scene is only a dim reflection of what God's grace does for us. Although we are sinful, we can be brought into a relationship with God through simple faith in Jesus. Because He died on the cross in our place, God blots out the record of our sins and makes us right with Him.

The Lord in His amazing love has not only forgiven us but has also given to us "the ministry of reconciliation" (2Cor 5:18). We have the honor of sharing the good news with others so that they too can be at peace with God. And when we are right with God, we are also to do what we can to live at peace with everyone (Ro 12:18).

Have you accepted God's offer of forgiveness in Christ? Are you telling others about His love? And are you an agent of God's grace in your relationships? Start today—make peace. — by Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God has a purpose and plan for your life  
When from your sin He has given release;  
You're an ambassador for Jesus Christ—  
Go and tell others of His perfect peace.  
—Hess

**When we experience peace with God,  
we can share His peace with others.**

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**John Henry Jowett** has the following devotional on 2Cor 5:14-21:

**HERE is a new constraint!** “The love of Christ constrains me.” The love of Christ carries me along like a crowd. I am taken up in its mighty movement and swept along the appointed road! Or it arrests me, and makes me its willing prisoner. It lays a strong hand upon me, and I have no option but to go. A gracious “necessity is laid upon me.” I must!

**And here is a new world.** “Old things are passed away.” The man who is the prisoner of the Lord’s love will find himself in new and wonderful scenery. Everything will wear a new face—God, man, self, the garden, the sky, the sea! We shall look at all things through love-eyes, and it is amazing in what new light a great love will set familiar things! Commonplaces become beautiful when looked at through the lens of Christian love. When we “walk in love” our eyes are anointed with “the eye-salve” of grace.

**And here is a new service.** “We are ambassadors ... for Christ.” When we see our Lord through love-eyes, and then our brother, we shall yearn to serve our brother in Christ. We shall intensely long to tell the love-story of the Lord our Saviour. What we have seen, with confidence we tell.

**2 Corinthians 5:19 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. ([NASB: Lockman](#))**

**Greek:** [os hoti theos en \(3SIAI\) en Christo kosmon katallasson \(PAPMSN\) eauto, me logizomenos \(PMPMSN\) autois ta paraptomata auton, kai themenos \(AMPMSN\) en hemin ton logon tes katallages.](#)

**Amplified:** It was God [personally present] in Christ, reconciling and restoring the world to favor with Himself, not counting up and holding against [men] their trespasses [but canceling them], and committing to us the message of reconciliation (of the restoration to favor). ([Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** a ministry whose message is that God, through Christ, was reconciling the world to himself, not debiting their sins against them, and has given us the story of this reconciliation to tell. ([Westminster Press](#))

**ESV:** that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ([ESV](#))

**HCSB:** that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us. ([Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study notes available online free](#))

**KJV:** 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.

**NEB:** What I mean is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, no longer holding men's misdeeds against them, and that he has entrusted us with the message of reconciliation. ([New English Bible - Oxford Press](#))

**NET:** In other words, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's trespasses against them, and he has given us the message of reconciliation. ([NET Bible](#))

**MH:** Its essence is this: God was present in Christ and operative through him when he was reconciling humankind to himself, no longer debiting people's offenses to their account. And the obligation and privilege of declaring this message of reconciliation God has entrusted to our care. (Murray Harris' expanded paraphrase of 2Corinthians).

**NLT:** For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** God was in Christ personally reconciling the world to himself - not counting their sins against them - and has commissioned us with the message of reconciliation. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Weymouth:** We are to tell how God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not charging men's transgressions to their account, and that He has entrusted to us the Message of this reconciliation.

**Wuest:** namely, that absolute deity in Christ was reconciling the world [of sinners] to himself, not putting down

on the liability side of their ledger their trespasses, and lodged in us the story of the reconciliation.

**Young's Literal:** how that God was in Christ -- a world reconciling to Himself, not reckoning to them their trespasses; and having put in us the word of the 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: os hoti theos en (3SIAI) en Christo kosmon katallasson (PAPMSN) heauto, me logizomenos (PMPMSN) autois ta paraptomata auton, kai themenos (AMPMSN) en hemin ton logon tes katallages:**

- **God:** Mt 1:23 Jn 14:10,11,20 17:23 1Ti 3:16
- **reconciling:** Ro 3:24, 25, 26 11:15 1Jn 2:1,2 4:10
- **not:** Ps 32:1,2 Isa 43:25 44:22 Ro 4:6-8
- **word:** 2Co 5:18
- [2 Corinthians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [See also "shorter version" of commentary](#) on 2 Corinthians 5:19

The **ESV Study Bible** outlines 2Cor 5:18-20...

- (1) the basis of Paul's apostolic ministry of the new **covenant** (Paul's own reconciliation to God through Christ)
- (2) its **consequence** (his ministry and message of reconciliation to the world for Christ)
- (3) its essential **content** (the forgiveness of sins by virtue of Christ's death) and
- (4) its **call** (on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God). ambassadors for Christ.

**Namely that (os hoti)** is more literally "as that" or "how that" and has been the source of some discussion among able commentators. The interested reader is directed to more technical commentaries for discussion of this topic. Suffice it to say, that in view of the fact that what follows in this passage reiterates and explains the previous passage, most conservative writers (and translations) render it with words like "that is" ("in other words" - NET, "namely") which explains that "God is bringing the world back into forgiven relationship with Himself, and He is doing this by means of a '**word**' entrusted to the apostles." (Barnett)

**Barnett** after discussing the various possible interpretations writes that...Whatever the case, however, the point of the verse is clear enough: God is bringing the world back into forgiven relationship with himself, and he is doing this by means of a "word" entrusted to the apostles. (Ibid)

**God** - As in 2Co 5:18 God is again the subject of two supernatural acts (1) reconciling the world to Himself and (2) not counting their trespasses against them. Stated another way, God is the "Initiator" of reconciliation in behalf of those who are His enemies. This is indeed amazing lovingkindness and grace! Even in the Garden of Eden God demonstrates this persistent, pursuing grace in which He takes a personal interest to restore the broken relationship with sinful mankind.

**God was in Christ** - In this case the **NAS** rendering is felt by most writers to be somewhat less likely for it emphasizes the incarnation of Christ whereas the context of this passage focuses more on the the death of Christ (2Cor 5:14, 15, 2Co 5:21) (Albeit, atonement wrought by Christ's death is of course the ultimate reason for the Incarnation so they are related.)

Most commentators favor that Paul meant to convey the sense of the translations...

- **In Christ** God was reconciling the world to Himself. (NIV)
- **in Christ** God was reconciling the world to Himself (NET)
- God, **through Christ**, was reconciling the world to Himself (Barclay)
- **in Christ**, God was reconciling the world to Himself (Holman - HCSB)
- **in Christ** God was reconciling the world to Himself (ESV)

In other words these translations emphasize the idea of '**in Christ**' depicting Christ as the instrument of the reconciliation (cp the closely related doctrine justification in Ro 3:24-+). "**In Christ**" is also analogous to Paul's preceding description of '**through Christ**' (2Cor 5:18). Finally note that in context Paul had just used the phrase "**in Christ**" in 2Cor 5:17. In summary, it was **in** and **through** Christ's death and resurrection that God accomplished the reconciliation of the world to Himself. The fact that Paul goes on to describe that the debts of trespasses are no longer counted against them is a truth that is more compatible with emphasis on Christ's death (which wrought payment of the penalty for sin) rather than His incarnation.

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned he stood;  
Sealed my pardon with his blood:  
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!  
--Philipp Paul Bliss

In a parallel passage in Romans **Paul** reminds us that

while we were enemies we were reconciled to God **through** (His death was the "instrument" or instrumental cause) the death of His Son (Ro 5:10-+).

**David Guzik** has some interesting thoughts on **God...in Christ** writing that...

Through all the terrors of the Cross, God the Father was working **in** and **with** God the Son, reconciling the world to Himself. The Father and the Son worked together on the Cross. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself is all the more amazing when understood in light of what happened on the Cross. At some point before Jesus died, before the veil was torn in two, before Jesus cried out "**It is Finished**", an awesome spiritual transaction took place. The Father lay upon the Son all the guilt and wrath our sin deserved, and Jesus bore it in Himself perfectly (2Co 5:21-+), totally satisfying the wrath of God for us.

As horrible as the physical suffering of Jesus was, this spiritual suffering - the act of being judged for sin in our place - was what Jesus really dreaded about the cross; this was the cup - the cup of God's righteous wrath - that He trembled at drinking (Lk 22:39-40, 41-42, 43-44, 45-46; Ps 75:8; Isa 51:17; Jer 25:15). On the Cross, Jesus became, as it were, an enemy of God, Who was judged and forced to drink the cup of the Father's fury, so we would not have to drink that cup.

Yet, at the same time, Paul makes it clear that God was **in Christ** reconciling the world to Himself. They were working together. Though Jesus was being treated as if He were an enemy of God, He was not. Even as Jesus was being punished as if He were a sinner, He was performing the most holy service unto God the Father ever offered. This is why Isaiah can say, Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him (Isa 53:10). In and of itself, the suffering of the Son did not please the Father. But as it accomplished the work of reconciling the world to Himself, it was completely pleasing to God the Father.

**Robertson** rightly comments

We may not dare to probe too far into this mystery of Christ's suffering on the Cross, but this fact throws some light on the tragic cry of Jesus just before he died: 'My God, My God, why didst thou forsake me?'

In that cry (Mt 27:46 and Mk 15:34), Jesus expresses both His partnership with God the Father (My God) and the agonizing feeling of receiving the wrath of God that we deserved. (Enduring Word)

**Hughes** explains that "God has confronted us with our transgressions but has taken the initiative **in Christ** to resolve the problem they have created. God has let go of the pain of our willful rebellion and does not count our trespasses against us. But it remains for us to accept that we have done wrong, to repent of it, and to accept God's offer of friendship. Not all will do so; some will defiantly continue to snub God. ([Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians. The New International Commentary on the New Testament](#))

**Christ** (5547) (**Christos** from **chrío** = to anoint, rub with oil, consecrate to an office) is the Anointed One, the Messiah, where **Christos** is the Greek equivalent of the transliterated Hebrew word **Messiah** (**mashiach/masiyah**).

**Reconciling** (2644) (**katallasso** - see discussion in previous verse). This verb is in the imperfect tense which generally conveys the idea of incomplete action. In this case it is not that the foundation or basis for reconciling men was incomplete for the work of Christ was a once for all time event which paid the price of redemption in full. What is in a sense "incomplete" is that sinful man has to receive God's offer of reconciliation to "seal the deal" so to speak. **Alfred Plummer** phrases it this way "God did all that on His side is necessary for their being reconciled to Him; but not all men do what is necessary on their side." ([2 Corinthians 5:18 International Critical Commentary](#))

**World** (2889) (**kosmos** related to the verb **kosmeo** = to order or adorn, to put in order [Mt 25:7 = "trimmed"], to adorn literally [1Ti 2:9], to adorn figuratively [Titus 2:9-+]) means essentially something that is well-arranged, that which has order or something arranged harmoniously. In the present context **kosmos** refers most likely to mankind in general (humanity, the inhabitants of the world, the sum total of all created beings above the level of the animals - and especially those who receive Christ by grace through faith). However, some commentators (Barnett) interpret **kosmos** as the whole created order similar to Paul's description of reconciliation in Col 1:19, 20-+.

As **Puritan Thomas Watson** wrote...Christ's blood has value enough to redeem the whole world, but the virtue of it is applied only to such as believe.

In Romans 5 **Paul** explains that...

as through the one man's (Adam's) disobedience **the many** (everyone descended from Adam) were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One (Christ Jesus) **the many** (those in "the world" who by faith receive God's gracious offer of reconciliation) will be made righteous (justified, declared righteous) (Ro 5:19-+).

The use of **kosmos** or **world** corresponds to the "**all**" who are mentioned three times in the preceding context...

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one (Christ) died for**all** (cp "**the world**"), therefore **all** died (all who believed in Him); and He died for**all**, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. (2Co 5:14, 15+)

**Denney** beautifully explains the need and the consequence of **reconciliation** writing that "Reconciliation' in the New Testament sense is not something which we accomplish when we lay aside our enmity to God; it is something which God accomplished when in the death of Christ he put away everything that on his side meant estrangement."

**R Kent Hughes** adds that "The **ministry of reconciliation** is not telling people to make peace with God, but telling them that God has made peace with the world. "At bottom, the gospel is not good advice, but good news" (**Denney**)...We are not called to make peace with God—that is God's work! The method of reconciliation is reckoning, God "not counting their trespasses against them" (2Co 5:19, which will be explained in 2Co 5:21). There is a reckoning of sins. But they are reckoned not to the sinner but to Christ. ([2 Corinthians Power in Weakness - Preaching the Word - Crossway Books](#))

I hear the words of love,  
I gaze upon the blood,  
I see the mighty sacrifice,  
And I have peace with God.  
--Horatius Bonar.

**Not counting their trespasses against them** - Paul does not say by "overlooking their trespasses" for as **Hughes** has explained God's "mercy cannot be vindicated by injustice." Not counting trespasses is one result of reconciliation. Not imputing their trespasses, not putting them on their "account." Yes, the trespasses are imputed, however not to the sinner but to Christ, the sinner's substitutionary sufficient Sacrifice. The Son of Man came not to condemn the world but to save the world. The idea is that God's reconciliation of sinful men (who receive the reconciliation by grace through faith) results in the canceling of the debt they owe God because of their trespasses. Not counting one's trespasses is also a picture of God's **forgiveness** (which pictures His removal of our sins away - see **aphesis** and **aphiemi**).

**David Guzik** asks why has God not counted their trespasses against them...(Is it) because God has gone soft, and given mankind a "Get Out of Hell Free" card? Not at all. Instead, it is because our trespasses were imputed to Jesus. The justice our sin demanded is satisfied, not excused.(Ibid)

In Colossians **Paul** explains what happened to the sinner's debt for trespassing against a holy God...

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. (Col 2:13-+, Col 2:14-+).

**As Puritan Thomas Brooke once said:** Christ hath crossed out the black lines of our sin with the red lines of his own blood.

**Not counting** - Not reckoning. Not imputing. Not placing on one's account. The flip side of not reckoning is that He was forgiving or pardoning their trespasses against Him. Stated another way the means of reconciliation is the forgiveness of sins. Only by having the guilt of sin forgiven can sinners be reconciled to God, since it is sin that separates sinners eternally from Him. Note that in this passage we see that reconciliation is based on imputation. In other words because the demands of God's Law have been fully met on the Cross, sinners can be reconciled to God through Christ.

As **Spurgeon** once said...You and your sins must separate or you and your God will never come together

As **James Denney** said...Atonement is not something contrived, as it were, behind the Father's back; it is the Father's way of making it possible for the sinful to have fellowship with him.



**Wiersbe** observes that...There is a lovely illustration of this truth in the little letter Paul wrote to his friend Philemon. Philemon's slave, Onesimus, stole from his master and then fled to Rome. Because of his crimes, he could have been crucified. But in the providence of God, Onesimus met Paul and was converted. Paul wrote the Letter to Philemon to encourage his friend to forgive Onesimus and receive him home. "Receive him as myself," wrote Paul (Philemon 1:17); "if he... oweth thee aught, put that on mine account" (Philemon 1:18). Paul was willing to pay the bill (imputation) so that Onesimus and Philemon could be reconciled. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary - New Testament. 1989. Victor](#))

**Counting** (3049) (**logizomai** from **lógos** = reason, word, account) means to reckon, compute, calculate, to take into account, to deliberate, and to weigh. **Logizomai** refers to a process of careful study or reasoning which results in the arriving at a conclusion. **Logizomai** conveys the idea of calculating or estimating. **Logizomai** is related to our English term **logic** (which deals with the methods of valid thinking, reveals how to draw proper conclusions from premises and is a prerequisite of all thought). **Logizomai** was a term frequently used in the business community of Paul's day and meant to impute (put to one's account) or credit to one's account.

Paul uses the **present tense** to indicate that because of the work of Christ to reconcile man to God, the Father continually does not impute or reckon our sins to our "spiritual account." (cp Ro 4:8-+ cp Ps 32:1, 2-+) Christ's death on the Cross paid the believing sinner's debt in full and forever! Hallelujah!

**A T Robertson**...What Jesus did (his death for us) stands to our credit (Ro 8:32+) if we make our peace with God. This is our task, "the word of reconciliation," that we may receive "the righteousness of God" and be adopted into the family of God. ([2 Corinthians 5:18 Word Pictures in the NT](#))

**Their trespasses against them** - Paul is NOT teaching universal salvation, that all men are saved through the work of Christ! This truth obviously applies only to believers ("them"). It should be a continual source of great joy and gratitude and love, all of which should motivate us to lay aside the old ways of the flesh and continually seek to walk in the Spirit.

**MacDonald** adds that...God has provided a way by which men's trespasses might not be imputed to them, but while that way is available to all, it is effective only in those who are in Christ. The trespasses of unsaved men are definitely reckoned to them, but the moment these men trust the Lord Jesus as Savior, they are reckoned righteous in Him, and their sins are blotted out. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Trespasses** (3900) (**paraptoma** from **para** = aside + **pipto** = fall) is literally a falling aside or beside, to stumble on something (so as to lose footing) and in its figurative ethical use (which is the only way it is used in the NT) describes a "false step", a violation of moral standards or a deviation from living according to what has been revealed as the right way to live. **Paraptoma** is a false step out of the appointed way, a trespass on forbidden ground, a stepping out of line of true conduct, a deviation from truth and uprightness. **Paraptoma** describes what a person has done in transgressing the will and law of God by some false step or failure. **Paraptoma** conveys the idea of a false step and so is translated **atransgression** (*transgress* in English means to go beyond or overstep a limit or boundary and is from Latin *trans-* across + *gradi* = to step). **Vine** writes that **paraptoma** is..."a lapse from uprightness, a sin, a moral trespass, misdeed," and is translated "transgression" in Ro 11:11 (note), of the sin and "downfall" of Israel in their refusal to acknowledge God's claims and His Christ (Messiah), which led to the offer of salvation to Gentiles. ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

It should be noted that there is a subtle distinction between **sin** and **transgression** -- The idea behind **transgression** is that we have crossed a line, challenging God's boundaries. The idea behind **sin** is that we have missed a mark, God's standard that calls for perfection, every time!

**Vincent** has this note on **paraptoma** writing that...In classical Greek the verb (**parapipto**) is often used of intentional falling, as of throwing one's self upon an enemy; and this is the prevailing sense in biblical Greek, indicating reckless and willful sin (see 1Chr 5:25; 10:13; 2Chr 26:18; 29:6, 19; Ezek. 14:13; 18:26). It does not, therefore, imply palliation or excuse. It is a conscious violation of right, involving guilt, and occurs therefore, in connection with the mention of forgiveness (see Ro 4:25-+; Ro 5:16-+, Col 2:13-+, Eph 2:1-+, Eph 2:5-+). Unlike **parabasis** (transgression), which contemplates merely the objective violation of law, it carries the thought of sin as affecting the sinner, and hence is found associated with expressions which indicate the consequences and the remedy of sin (see Ro 4:25-+, Ro 5:15-+ Ro 5:17-+; Ep 2:1-+) (Vincent, M. R. Word Studies in the New Testament).

**Committed to us** - Literally having put or placed in us. Having deposited in us (as if picturing the word of reconciliation as a sacred treasure!) "Lodged in us" (Vincent). The idea is that God entrusted or commissioned them (cp Gal 2:7, 1Ti 1:12). He has put the message in their mouths as it were. While **"us"** in context refers primarily to Paul and his fellow ambassadors, this charge is applicable to all believers.

**Alford** adds that the idea is not "merely 'committed to us,' but 'laid upon us,' as our office and charge, and, besides, 'empowered us for,' 'put in our souls by His Spirit. ([2 Corinthians 5 Commentary](#))

As **A C Gaebele** says...Having reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ, He has also given to us the **ministry of reconciliation**. Having brought us into this blessed position through grace, He calls us to make it known to others and lead others to Him. What we have received we are to use in our ministry. And every reconciled one is called into this service to exercise the ministry of reconciliation and be a soul-winner. ([2 Corinthians 5 Commentary](#))

**Hughes** writes that ...This divine act of depositing implies two things: firstly, that those who minister have themselves been made recipients of the grace of reconciliation, and, secondly, that they are under obligation to proclaim that grace to the world (cf. Ro 1:14, 15+, Ro 1:16+; 1Co 9:16). ([Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians. The New International Commentary on the New Testament](#))

**The word of reconciliation** - The message of reconciliation. This phrase is essentially a synonym for the **Gospel** as in Eph 1:13+ (**message** [logos] **of the truth**), Col 1:5+ (**the word** [logos] **of truth, the gospel**), 1Co 1:18 (**the word** [logos] **of the cross**), 2Co 6:7 (**the word** [logos] **of truth**), 2Ti 2:15+ (**the word** [logos] **of truth**), Acts 13:26 (**the message** [logos] **of this salvation**), Acts 15:7 (**the word** [logos] **of the Gospel**), Mt 13:19 (**the word** [word] **of the kingdom**). This is tantamount to the "gospel of the glory of Christ" (2Co 4:4+). In context this "word" is specifically given as a command in the 2Co 5:20 as **'be reconciled** (aorist imperative) **to God.**" This word is spoken by men to other men but ultimately is a word from God to men through His human ambassadors.

What is the message committed to us, His ambassadors, to speak to a lost world? The message is that God has taken the initiative to end our hostility toward Him by charging our sins to the account of Christ, making peace with us through the blood of His Cross.

**Word** ([3056](#)) (**logos** from **légō** = to speak with words; English = logic, logical) means something said and describes a communication whereby the mind finds expression in words. In the Greek mind and as used by secular and philosophical Greek writers, **lógos** did not mean merely the name of an object but was an expression of the thought behind that object's name. **Hughes** adds that...

in Greek thought **logos** indicates what is true and trustworthy as opposed to the term **"myth"** (**muthos**) which is descriptive of what is fictitious and spurious. Socrates, for example, declares that a particular story is *"no fictitious myth but a true logos"*. Hence the term **"logos"** carries with it, like a kind of overtone, the implication of truth and genuineness, and is accordingly peculiarly appropriate as a synonym for the Gospel, which is **"the word of truth"**. (Ibid)

**Reconciliation** ([2643](#)) (**katallage** see previous verse) describes the change from a state of enmity between persons to one of friendship, specifically the Gospel is God's call to man to be restored to a state of harmony and friendship with Himself through faith in Christ's atoning work on the Cross.

Grace first inscribed my name  
In God's eternal book;  
'Twas grace that gave me to the Lamb,  
Who all my sorrows took.  
Philip Doddridge

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**Reconciled Through Death** - It is said that years ago in a western city a husband and wife became estranged and chose to separate. They moved away and lived in different parts of the country. The husband happened to return to the city on a matter of business and went out to the cemetery to the grave of their only son. He was standing by the grave in fond reminiscence when he heard a step behind him. Turning, he saw his estranged wife. The initial impulse of both was to turn away. But they had a common hearted interest in that grave, and instead of turning away they clasped hands over the grave of their son and were reconciled. They were reconciled by death! Our personal reconciliation took nothing less than the death of God's Son; but his death and its effects went far beyond any human death. (Clarence E. Macartney, Macartney's Illustrations quoted by R K Hughes)

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**Warren Wiersbe** reminds us that...

Jesus Christ died to make reconciliation **possible**. You and I must live to make the message of reconciliation **personal**. God has "given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2Co 5:18). We are His ambassadors of peace (2Co 5:20). Our feet should be shod "with the preparation of the Gospel of peace" (Ep 6:15). "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Mt 5:9).

A missionary was preaching in the village market, and some of the people were laughing at him because he was not a very handsome man. He took it for a time, and then he said to the crowd, "It is true that I do not have beautiful hair, for I am almost bald. Nor do I have beautiful teeth, for they are really not mine; they were

made by the dentist. I do not have a beautiful face, nor can I afford to wear beautiful clothes. But this I know: I have beautiful feet!" And he quoted the verse from Isaiah: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace" (Isa. 52:7). Do you have beautiful feet? ([Wiersbe, W. Bible Exposition Commentary - New Testament. 1989. Victor](#))

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**Illustration** - Elizabeth Barrett was a Victorian-era poet whose father violently objected to her marriage to fellow poet Robert Browning. For ten years, Elizabeth wrote to her parents, asking them to reconcile with her. She never got a response. But finally, Elizabeth got a box in the mail. She opened it to find all of the letters she had written to her parents, not one of which had been opened. Her father never knew the depth of her love and her desire to be reconciled. God has written the world a letter telling people of His love for them and His desire to have them reconciled to Him. It's our duty to open this letter, the Word of God, and help lost people understand how far God has gone to bring them back to Himself. Otherwise, if the message of His letter never gets through to those who need it the most, there will be no reconciliation. Let's make sure we are fulfilling our duty as ambassadors who have a great message to tell. (Evans, A. T. Totally Saved).

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**Being An Ambassador** - After visiting a homeless shelter, a group of teenagers couldn't wait to express what they had experienced. Excitedly, they wrote about their visits with men and women of all ages who were poor and destitute.

One teen wrote: "I talked with a Vietnam vet and told him that in heaven he would have a new body. I was able to reassure him in his faith."

Another said, "A guy named Michael showed me that even though he was living in a homeless shelter, having faith made all the difference."

Still another wrote: "I talked with a man who had almost stopped believing in God. I tried to [encourage him in his faith]."

While desiring to share God's message of reconciliation, these teens were surprised to find that some of the people already knew God. By cutting through the discomfort of their differences, the kids discovered people who needed the reassurance that God still cared for them. The teens' roles changed from sharing the good news to guiding their new friends toward a deeper faith.

Being "ambassadors for Christ" (2Co 5:20) opens doors of opportunity both to share the gospel and to strengthen the struggling. Seek out someone today who needs encouragement or "the word of reconciliation" (2Co 5:19).— by Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, use us as Your instruments  
Of truth and love and care,  
And may we bring encouragement  
As Your good news we share.  
—Sper

**A word of encouragement can make the difference  
between giving up and going on.**

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**The Father's Love** - In his autobiography, a well-known TV personality describes the time when he asked, "If God the Father is so all-loving, why didn't He come down and go to Calvary?" That comment reveals how little he understood the love of a good earthly father and the depth of love revealed in the Trinity.

Consider the love an earthly father has for his son. In Genesis 22, we read that God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. We can only imagine the agony in his heart as he and the boy climbed the mountain. Surely Abraham must have wished he could take Isaac's place.

As a father and grandfather myself, I would choose to die in place of my offspring, if given the choice.

Our love as earthly fathers is but a faint reflection of our heavenly Father's love for His Son and for us. Because of the close relationship between the Father and the Son, Jesus could say, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). And the Bible tells us that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2Corinthians 5:19). Without a doubt, therefore, the Father did share His Son's pain at Calvary.

How wonderful to know that we have a loving Father in heaven! Because Jesus died for us, we can be forgiven and personally experience the Father's love. by Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Died He for me, who caused His pain?  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?  
—Wesley

**The Father's love knows no limit.**