

Ambassadors for Christ

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Preacher: Raymond Noel

[0 : 00] 5. The passage that I was asked to consider this morning was read to you by Geki, and it begins at verse 11 of 2 Corinthians 5, which begins with the word sins.

Since then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade you. When you start a sentence with sins, obviously we need to look at what was the sins about.

The key to understanding the sins, the word sins in this verse, actually lies in the previous 10 verses. If you will turn with me to your Bibles, to 2 Corinthians 5, beginning at verse 1, down to verse 10.

Verse 10 says, For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one of us may receive what is due to us, for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

So that's the reason why he's embarking on verse 11, which some of you in your Bibles would have a subtitle entitled, The Ministry of Reconciliation.

[1 : 31] The Apostle Paul had been speaking a little earlier about the priority that the Corinthian Christians should have in their lives.

Although they all were looking forward to their heavenly destination, which God has guaranteed, yet while on earth, the Apostle Paul urges the Corinthian Christians that they should make it their first ambition and goal to please God.

Because God had chosen them for salvation wholly out of His grace and mercy. So this is the response that Paul is telling the Corinthians that they should have.

They had been saved by grace and mercy and therefore they should turn their lives around and use it to please God. He reminds them to be mindful that their desire to please God must have a serious commitment.

a serious diligence and priority. It wasn't enough for Paul that they were lukewarm Christians.

[3 : 04] A lukewarm Christian who was happy to be saved from the fires of hell and nothing more. That's not the standard Paul was imposing upon the Corinthians.

Hence the stark reminder that they will be accountable in verse 10. If you haven't marked it in your Bible, please mark it.

Verse 10. There is accountability. I'll read that verse again in verse 10. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

All. Including elders, ordinary church members, pastors. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one of us may receive what is due for us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

This morning's message, passage, is a bit like a sandwich. At the top of it, the top slice of bread, is verse 10 of chapter 5.

[4 : 25] And the bottom of the sandwich is actually in chapter 6, which was read to us by Geki. We, as God's workers, we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.

Paul reminds them, the grace of God bestowed upon them, the Corinthian Christians, was not for mine, mine. There was a purpose.

Paul starts off in verse 11 with the words, Since then, we know what it is to fear the Lord.

We try to persuade others. We are, what we are, is plain to God. And I hope it is plain to your conscience. We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than what is unseen, all the way down to verse 15.

Now, we need to look a little bit about the city of Corinth. It's not your ordinary city or village, Greek city. See, the prevailing thought in Greek culture was they were into knowledge and philosophies.

[5 : 59] Now, Paul, in his earlier writing, told them, I'm not coming to you with philosophy and wisdom coupled with skilled oratory.

I've just got a message of Christ crucified for you. So, Paul was just telling them the truth and the bare truth. No bunga bunga.

And his wisdom revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. He had to remind the Corinthian Christians that he was in himself nobody.

He was not trying to impress anybody. He even had to tell them in 1 Corinthians that he was preaching to them voluntarily, no gaji.

But because he had a duty imposed on him by the Holy Spirit, even though he was a free man, he treated himself like a slave to God.

[7 : 05] So, you can see that Paul took his duty or what was entrusted to him as an important and heavy responsibility.

Now, with those thoughts at the back of his mind, Paul gives his reason for working hard at continuously preaching the gospel because he is conscious that all of us will appear before the judgment seat, including Paul, to receive what is due for us for things we have done.

Paul was acutely aware of the ministry given to him by virtue of being saved by grace.

So, Paul writes to the Corinthian church with a very, very clear picture of where he stands in his duty.

He is aware that he has no wisdom of his own, no special oratory skills as a motivation for his preaching.

[8 : 21] He says, what I am preaching to you is God's wisdom, God's great plan of reconciliation between himself and a sinful world.

Now, Paul is bringing to their mind God's great plan. It's not Paul's special mission. It's God's great plan where Paul is playing a part.

This idea that God was reconciling a fallen world to himself must have sounded crazy to the Corinthians.

They must have thought he was Gila because they had plenty of temples in Corinth. Twelve temples. It's a big business city.

So, they know all about gods. And their gods, the Greek gods, were far away, high, remote, and distant. But Paul was telling them about a God that is coming looking for them to reconcile them to himself.

[9 : 34] An initiative by God. It must have struck the Corinthians as something new. But then it was a very, very big gesture by God.

Paul understood God's great plan to save all who repent. And God's plan to save all who repent continues to this day.

It continues in Kuching. It continues in Burma. It continues in Laos, in Hanoi, in Pakistan, where this church supports and partners with missionaries.

It's not an idea that Paul invented. Paul also took great pains to explain that when he preached, he wasn't looking for name for himself.

But he was zealous for God's glory. He was a Rajin for God's glory. It didn't matter to him if others thought he was mad.

[10 : 46] As long as God was glorified. What single-mindedness exhibited by Paul? What single-mindedness?

He was, he understood God's reconciliation plan. He was committed to it. He didn't care what people thought about it. He went on with it. Now, another driving motivation for Paul was his understanding of the depth of Christ's love for sinners.

In fact, in 1 Timothy, Paul described himself as the worst of sinners. So he knew.

Paul knew. The thought of Christ dying for him was a sustaining and profound motivation to Paul to preach the gospel.

people. And at verse 15, let's go on to verse 15. And he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

[12 : 03] That's the Christians. Christ died for all. So Paul was emphasizing to the Corinthian church.

This is not mine, mine or a like idea. Christ died for you. Now you live for Christ.

Paul was also conscious that there was a time before his conversion he had sight but he was spiritually blind and those who are not saved and not saved from their sins have not repented and saved from their sins and be made a child of God.

Those who remain outside the kingdom of heaven they are spiritually blind and he's aware that he was once spiritually blind and he was once spiritually dead but Christ died for him and gave him life again and gave him sight again.

my brothers and sisters what about you? Are you moved to preach the gospel to those who are still ignorant of Christ?

[13 : 53] Don't you want don't you care that they should also have a chance to be relieved of the punishment for sin and to be saved because of the work done by Jesus Christ on the cross?

Or are you just content with your salvation your assured promise of heaven sudala? How are your prayers?

Are they faint and few occasional? Where is your labor in the great work of reconciliation that was started by God of which you are a part because he saved you?

And I remind you look back at verse 10 of chapter 5 you will be called to give an account are you being an ambassador for Christ?

Let's move on to verse 16 from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view though we once regarded Christ in this way we do so no longer therefore if anyone is in Christ the new creation has come the old is gone and the new is here Paul admits that before his conversion on the Damascus road if you remember that event in Acts chapter 22 where he was struck blind Paul had treated Jesus Christ as an ordinary person more than that actually as an enemy but upon his conversion he came to realize that the

[16 : 15] Jesus who died on the cross in Jerusalem was no ordinary person that Jesus was the son of God sent by God to complete the reconciliation between sinful men and God Jesus Christ was the savior of the world because God planned it that way so that every sinner who repents of his sin has a chance to become reconciled to a gracious God the account of sin is wiped out and the sinner restored to the position of being a child of God how do we view Jesus somebody who existed 2000 years ago a long time ago and far away yes

Christians in Kuching are entitled to enjoy the comforts of life nice car nice house but they are not to make these the priority of their lives it's a strong temptation the strong current of influence that Christians in Kuching in fact in the whole country face every day the values and norms of the social political economic forces impact Christians and non Christians alike and these are not gentle forces they are so pervasive whether it's friends Facebook internet television news feeds the demand for current political correctness is overpowering the competition in the office in business even within families oftentimes demand and drain all your strength at the end of the day sometimes some of you do use the expression

I hear from the younger generation they say flat back we got no more energy to resist the values and the influences of the world sometimes we consciously let go and allow ourselves to be defeated and we say it's easier to just go with the flow but Paul says you have been saved so your first priority is to please God and God's big major business is reconciliation bringing sinners to himself what you doing it's hard it's hard and sometimes you almost feel yourself being torn to pieces in different directions while you're trying to go forward

Paul's reminder in verses 16 and 17 of our passage this morning comes at an apt time for you and me he too before his conversion viewed Jesus Christ as an ordinary person but if you are saved then the Bible calls you to live in Christ's presence in God's spiritual presence not only the renewal must be in name the renewal must be in our heart in our nature in our concerns and in our priorities and the top priority for a child of God is to please his heavenly father let's move on all this verse 18 all this is from

God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ not counting people's sins against them he has committed to us the message of reconciliation God is the prime mover of the reconciliation program we are the wheels that will do it we are the wheels that will do it all these changes that God does in our lives in all those who are reconciled to God is the work and initiative of God after that he commits to each one of us the ministry of reconciliation the whole church not just the pastor not just those who are in rural evangelism not just those who are in the missions committee wherever we go we are called to be ambassadors the duty to become ambassadors for

[22 : 30] Christ requires a few things if you are appointed ambassador for Malaysia to a foreign country you must have a detailed understanding of the history politics etc of this country and to defend this country against criticism that's your job as an ambassador for Malaysia the job description as an ambassador for Christ very similar are we clear about what we believe are we able to explain why we believe are we aware of God's reconciliation plan for the whole world including the people who work in your office the people who work with you in schools your neighbors your extended family or even your immediate family are we playing the role that has been given to us now you understand the background of what

Paul is trying to say you are Christ's not enough you are Christ's and therefore you are also Christ's ambassadors you've got to take the role entrusted to you seriously Christ's good name honor and his salvation gospel are in your hands to to promote to present and to persuade others to promote to promote to promote to present and to persuade others until

Christ returns to judge the world Jesus Christ expects you to represent him well advance his cause and his gospel in every corner of the world for how long when is Jesus Christ coming back you say wow I'm tired I've got a family to raise I've got assignments I haven't finished my car needs to go to the repair shop my garden is needing tending I don't have time but this is priority business you're an ambassador you've got priority on your time how long is this going to go on for

I have a clue for you turn with me to Matthew chapter 24 Matthew chapter 24 verse 14 Matthew chapter 24 verse 14 and this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come it's a lifelong job it's a lifelong job so brothers and sisters fellow believers unlike the country's ambassadors who are appointed for a term two years three years ambassadors for

Christ are appointed for life or until the end shall come whichever is earlier as the lawyers say after calling himself an ambassador Paul goes on to implore the Corinthian church to be reconciled to God he explains that God had placed the sins of those who are not yet repented on Jesus punished him to die on the cross and that Jesus rose again this gave a chance for sinners to obtain righteousness through Jesus' death death the way of salvation has not changed for two thousand years there's only one way to salvation no man has ever been saved by his good works the way the just have lived has always been the way of faith if you say you are child of

[28 : 18] God then Paul has a special message for you in 2nd Corinthians chapter 6 verse 1 addressing the Corinthian church as his co-workers he says 2nd Corinthians chapter 6 verse 1 as God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain to take something in vain is to take it and not fulfill the purpose God God has by his free grace saved the Christians in KEC don't take

God's grace in vain Paul's final reminder in verse 1 of chapter 6 underlines the urgency of the times the gospel needs to go out to the unsaved there may be one or two of you who are visiting us this morning or have questions about God's reconciliation plan with those who are not Christian those who have not yet been saved of their sins the Bible message is also for you there is a chance for you there is an opportunity for you this morning to be part of God's reconciliation plan don't volunteer to stand outside the plan wealth power position without

Jesus Christ is worth nothing it will still lead you to hell you have the charge from the apostle Paul the least of the apostles not to rest in the grace of your salvation but to go out that door and tell the world this morning as we heard our brother Leonard talk to you about this church's commitment to missions and its support for various missionary partners pastors we think of our friends in Bangkok our sister Genevieve Wong or Dr.

Lam Kong in the furthest ulu ulu part of Burma running a seminary producing pastors or partners in Sri Lanka or Pakistan or India or Kalimantan across the border they need ambassadors we can be ambassadors we can be part of God's reconciliation plan two ways your choice one we can go ourselves and some of you have gone and you know what it's like in the mission field second option you can send you can support those who are going if you can't go yourself Paul's exhortation to the Corinthian church his warning to them that they will be called to account his plea with them not to take the gospel grace in vain is valid today too it's been valid for 2,000 years and it will continue to be valid until Christ comes again so as you think about

God's plan and your role in it I ask you to consider are you willing to accept salvation and to carry out your ambassadorial role for Jesus and to be part of that of the greatest enterprise the most important enterprise on the face of the earth in all time bringing souls into reconciliation with God that is the most important business in the world not making money in the stock exchange the most

important business in the world now and it's urgent and it will go on until Christ comes again is being part of God's reconciliation plan being ambassadors for Christ shall we pray heavenly father your word has urged us that we should not accept and receive

[34 : 32] God's grace in vain you have enabled each of your children by the working of your Holy Spirit to stir their dead hearts to life your call and to respond to your call to repentance and to remove each from condemnation to salvation we pray this morning that the good news that Jesus Christ paid the price of sin by dying on the cross will be brought to the nations of the world by your children and the ministers of your word father we are like beggars who have been given the bread of life we pray that you will move our hearts to serve others who have not heard about our savior Jesus Christ remind us all all the days of our lives that we are indebted to your grace and earnestly and place in us an earnest desire to participate with missionaries all across the world for the glory of your name we pray this in Jesus name

Amen Amen