

The Death Of Jesus Christ.

Text: 2 Cor 5:14-21

1) Christ died for our reconciliation

Suggested Hymns:

2) Christ died for our renewal

66, 620, 61, 71, 54

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, *¹⁴ For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*

¹⁶ Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

¹⁸ Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The death of Christ remains a deep mystery to the unbeliever. He thinks that he has the answer. If we ask Pontius Pilate why Christ died, the Roman governor would answer, *"Officially, because He rose up against established authority."* Caiaphas would say, *"Legally, because He was a blasphemer."* And Judas Iscariot would shriek at us, *"No, no; I am all past lying now. It is my fault. I sold Him for thirty pieces of silver."* People of our day

may explain the death of Christ as one of life's unfortunate things that are bound to happen.

But that does not answer the great questions nor solve the mystery of Christ's death. And as we stand under Christ's cross today, do we not meet a hopeless confusion of contradictory answers when we ask why Christ died?

If the manner of His death is beyond our comprehension, if we cannot understand how the Prince of Life could die, shall we ever understand the reason and purpose of this most astounding event in all history?

Praise be to God, who gave His Son also revealed to us why He died, and He did so in language so plain that even a child can understand. Let us, then, on this day of Christ's death, hear from God's own revelation the answer to the question, *Why did Christ Die?* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Christ Died For Our Reconciliation

Christ did not die because He could not prevent it. All power was given to Him in heaven and in earth. Disease, deformity, death itself, vanished at His Word. Even the forces of nature obeyed Him.

The Persian king Xerxes believed himself to be master of the sea and ordered his men to whip the waves which had washed away the two bridges over which his armies were to pass to attack Greece. He said: "This punishment your master is giving you, you evil sea, because you have offended him." It was a ridiculous performance, of course.

But when Christ said to the raging sea, "*Peace! Be still!*" *there was at once a great calm.*¹ When Jesus towns-people had wanted to put Him to death in Nazareth, "*He passed through the midst of them and went His way.*"² Christ died of His own free will. No power on earth could have nailed Him to the cross if He had not died willingly for us, more particularly, for our reconciliation with God.

A reconciliation presupposes a division. There was a great division between God and man, a breach only too real and wide, made by sin. Let nobody make light of sin, as though it was a trivial matter to be dismissed with a wave of the hand. The word "sin" may be avoided in some supposedly polite circles, but that does not make it less a fact.

“The deadliest sin is the consciousness of no sin,” says Thomas Carlyle. Our text portrays all the world as trespassers lacking all righteousness before God. The psalmist, too, concisely and emphatically proclaims that sin is universal, as we read in Psalm 14:3, ³ *They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.*

The greatest saints have lamented their utter sinfulness. Gangsters, murderers and the like, try to excuse their sin, yes, even justify it, and resent the righteous punishment, exclaiming, *“What did I do to deserve this?”* But in the consciousness of his guilt, Paul cries out in Romans 7:24, ²⁴ *O wretched man that I am!* and Luther said, *“Oh, my sin, my sin, my sin!”*

Sin, furthermore, is dreadful in its consequences. As the thunder inevitably follows the lightning, sin strikes home with an unflinching certainty and a terrifying impact. It is a thousand times easier to abrogate the law of gravity than the Ten Commandments.

Sin starts wars, fills prisons, digs graves, and is the cause of all the ills to which human flesh is heir. Worse, sin estranges man from his Maker. Isaiah says, *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God.”*³

All recorded history tells also of the efforts that people have put forth everywhere to effect a reconciliation, to bridge the gulf between themselves and God. In making this attempt, they have run the whole scale from alms to atonement by human sacrifice, but all in vain. Scripture says in Psalm 49:7-8, ⁷ *None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him --* ⁸ *For the redemption of their souls is costly.*

But in His omniscience and mercy God has devised a way of escape. *“All things are of God,”* says the apostle in our text, including the plan of man’s reconciliation, for he continues, *“who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ.”*

In Ephesians 2:14-16, the Apostle expresses this truth with these words, ¹⁴ *For [Christ] Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,* ¹⁵ *having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,* ¹⁶ *and that He might*

reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

That Christ died for our sins is stated in our text in the strongest possible terms. In Isaiah 53:6 we read, *And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all* and in Romans 5:6 we read that *Christ died for the ungodly*. In our text we are told, *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us*.

We can understand that in death people of exalted rank are reduced to the level of ordinary mortals. Their former regal power is of no use to them.

When the former Austrian emperors at their death were entombed in the imperial burial vaults in the Capuchin Church in Vienna, a monk would first enter the tomb and close the door behind him. A master of ceremonies led the funeral procession down to the vault and knocked hard on the door with his staff.

The monk inside asked, *“Who is there?”* The dignitary before the door intoned pompously: *“His Highness, Francis Joseph I, emperor of Austria, king of Hungary, king of Bohemia, commander in chief,”* etc. The monk answered: *“I know him not.”* He knocked again, less authoritatively. *“Who is there?”* *“The emperor.”* *“I know him not.”* He knocked a third time, softly, humbly. *“Who is there?”* *“It is Brother Francis.”* *“Let him enter.”* The door to the vault was opened.

But see how Christ, the King of kings, was willing to die as all other men, how in His death He was numbered with the transgressors, yes, how He was made to be sin,— where is the person that can describe that degradation?

And yet it is this deep humiliation which alone could accomplish our reconciliation. The death of God’s own Son is our victorious death, for *“one died for all”* as our text says. *“God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself,”* and now no longer *“imputes their trespasses to them.”* Who is he that now condemns? The answer is in Romans 8:1, ¹ *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

2. Christ Died For Our Renewal

But Christ had still another purpose in view when He died. He died also for our renewal.

Relatives sometimes make good an embezzlement committed by one of their relatives in order to clear the family name. But they disown him and are no longer concerned about his welfare.

Christ paid our debt not to leave us to our fate but to lift us out of the mire of sin, to make better men and women and children of us, to change us into new creatures, conformed more and more, as time passes, to His own blessed image.

He has a large, new program in mind for those whom He reconciled. We read in our text that *all things have become new*. As Zacchaeus became a thoroughly changed man after Christ had brought salvation to his house, so Christ brings about in us a change of mind, heart, attitudes, beliefs, and habits, more revolutionary than when a bandit becomes a law-abiding citizen.

Nor are we left in ignorance as to the manner in which this change is to be effected in us. It is not by character, determination, and persistence, but by the **“Word of Reconciliation,”** the Gospel, which the apostle and other preachers are to proclaim as **“ambassadors for Christ.”** Through faith the believer is **“in Christ”**; and if he is **“in Christ,”** he **“is a new creature.”**

Christianity is not a theory. We are to give evidence daily of the renewal in ourselves at which it aims, and for which Christ died. Having been made **“the righteousness of God in Him,”** we are certainly from that moment on to have no further **“pleasure in unrighteousness.”**⁴

What we formerly counted gain, we must now regard as loss, as we read in Philippians 3:7. We must say with Paul in our text, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away.”** In the new strength that Christ gives us, we must begin to abhor and flee sin as one flees a deadly plague.

As our text says, **“if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”**

We must declare ourselves to be dead to sin, as did Augustine, who, when after his conversion the woman with whom he had lived in sin tried to draw him back into the morass, calling after him on the street, **“O Augustine, it is I,”** without turning to look at her answered, **“But it is not I.”**

Moreover, while we are breaking with the past, it is not to be done in the fashion of the serpent, which sheds its skin once a year but remains the same venomous reptile it has always been.

No; having put off the old man, we are to be renewed in the spirit of our mind and put on the new man. We read in Ephesians 4:22-24, *put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,*²³ *and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,*²⁴ *and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

This means that because Jesus *died for all, ... those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*

We are to live “for Him,” reflecting Jesus in a life consecrated to Him. “In Him” we are to be new, Christ-like creatures, spending ourselves for Him, not holy wax effigies of Him, to be put away under glass. Christ should be the Centre of all our thinking and the End of all our living.

Having been reconciled to God by the death of Jesus Christ, we must say with the author of the hymn “Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness, My Beauty Are, My Glorious Dress.” Henceforth I have but one passion, Christ.

But note that this renewal is only the beginning and token of the change which will take place when, after this life, our souls and bodies are united, when we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, in that renewal which we call glorification and which is the ultimate purpose for which Christ died.

May all those people who do not yet know Christ, hear the Gospel and believing, be reconciled to God through Christ.

May we all who already know Christ now love Him, love Him to live for Him, love Him to live with Him, always and forevermore. May God grant it through His Spirit! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Mark 4:39

² Luke 4:30

³ Isaiah 59:2

⁴ 2 Thessalonians 2:12