

THE WHOLE GOSPEL IN ONE VERSE

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20-21 • TV143B

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2 Corinthians 5: 20-21

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

I’m reading for my text today from the book of **2 Corinthians, the fifth chapter verses 20 and 21**, in which the apostle Paul wrote: *“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”*

Now, the title of this message is: **“THE WHOLE GOSPEL IN A SINGLE VERSE OF SCRIPTURE.”**

Let’s go back to the beginning of **verse 20**. Are you looking at your Bible, **2 Corinthians 5:20**? Paul says: *“We are ambassadors for Christ.”*

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Now, the apostle is speaking I know of himself and of other apostles. These were special men, ordained, anointed, and called of our Master, given special credentials and special signs and special powers.

He's not only speaking of himself and the other apostles; he is speaking also of every true God-called minister of the Gospel, every true God-called, God-sent minister of the Gospel, is an ambassador for Jesus Christ.

We come to you in His blessed name. We get our authority from Him, our gifts from Him, and our message from Him. We preach His Gospel. We represent the Master and we come to you in His name for His glory. We are ambassadors for Christ.

We do not come and we are not sent to draw up terms of peace; that's not in our power, the terms of peace have already been drawn up by the blessed God. We come bearing His Gospel of peace. We are not sent to draw up terms of peace.

No man can set forth a way for you to get into the kingdom of God according to his own plan. He didn't come to draw up terms of peace; he was sent to declare the Gospel of peace. Then, we are not sent to argue with men about the Word of God or improve the Word of God. We are sent to preach the Word of God. We are not sent to prove it, we are not sent to debate it or to argue; we are sent to preach what is already written. Just read: *"Thus saith the Lord."*

That's what the prophets of old did; that's what the apostles did, they came saying, *"Israel, hear the Word of the Lord,"* not hear my word, not hear what I think about the Word, and not hear what I think the Word ought to say, but you listen to the Word of God; this is what God says."

Then my friends, we are not sent to entertain, we are not sent to organize, we are not sent to promote; we are sent to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He said, *"Go ye, into all the world and preach the Gospel, (just preach it, and proclaim the Word of God)."*

"We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ." That's our calling and that's our mission; *"we are ambassadors of Jesus Christ."* Those are our credentials; *"we are ambassadors of Jesus Christ,"* (His messenger boys).

Secondly: Paul said; now watch this: *"we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us."* God beseeches you by us!

My friend, men who are called of God to preach the Gospel have a special anointing and they go forth with full power and full credentials from God almighty to this extent; now listen: Christ said, *"he that heareth you, heareth me and he that heareth me heareth him that sent me."*

Our Master told His disciples one day: *"when you go into a city and preach the Gospel and they won't hear you, when you leave that city, you shake the dust off of your feet as a testimony against them. You shall be witnesses unto me both in Samaria, Judea, and to the uttermost parts of the earth."* You are my witnesses and men will hear the Gospel from a man.

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Angels are not now preaching the Gospel; one time they did. One time the angels came down here and appeared to the shepherds on the hillside and they said: *“unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.”*

That’s not their ministry now and not their message now; it’s our message. *“We have this treasure in earthen vessels.”* It is God’s treasure, its God’s glory, and it is God’s Gospel.

The Scripture tells us what the preacher of the Gospel is; he is a man who is sent from God, *“There was a man sent from God whose name was John”* and he came preaching Christ.

So, Paul says: *“We are ambassadors of Jesus Christ, as though God did beseech you by us”* and I repeat: if you hear the Gospel, you are not going to hear it from an angel, you are going to hear it from a man.

That’s the way that God has ordained it: *“by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”* That is what Paul said in **1 Corinthians 1**;

“The preaching of the cross is to them who are perishing, foolishness, (it is sheer nonsense) but to us who are being saved it is the power of God unto salvation: for it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

Now, look at the next line: He said: *“We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God (Himself) did beseech you by us; be ye reconciled to God.”* That’s our message; *“be ye reconciled to God.”*

Lay down your arms of rebellion, surrender, submit to Christ and bow to His Lordship. Bow and submit to the royal claims of King Jesus; that’s our message: be reconciled to God; bow down sinner, down sinner at the feet of Jesus Christ: *“kiss the Son lest he be angry.”*

This is the message of our ministry; this is the object of our ministry that men might be brought to the feet of Christ for that’s where they find mercy. Go through the Scripture; go through the Scripture and you will find those who found mercy were found at His feet.

Mary was seating at his feet and our Lord commended her. He said: *“She hath chosen the good part.”* The harlot, in the home of Simon the Pharisee was sitting upon the uppermost seat of the place of recognition and the harlot was at His feet, kissing His feet, bathing them with tears and drying them with the hair of her head.

The leper came and fell at His feet and said: *“Lord; if you will, you can make me whole.”* Thomas fell at His feet and cried: *“my Lord and my God.”* That’s where the mercies of God are, at the feet of Christ because *“the Lord saveth such as be of a humble spirit and a contrite heart.”*

That’s what we are saying: *“Be reconciled to God.”* Lay down your arms of rebellion. Lay down your weapons of warfare. Bow down at the feet of Jesus Christ.

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Reconciliation: *“be reconciled to God”* reconciliation takes two directions. If you will look back at **verse 19** it says, *“To wit (or namely); God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.”*

Now; Paul tells us in **Ephesians 2** that *“we were children of wrath.”* In the **Psalm 7**, *God’s angry with the wicked.”* That’s what the Bible says: *“God is angry with the wicked. God hateth the workers of iniquity.”* The wrath and judgment of God has been upon men ever since the fall because of sin.

God must be reconciled. There has to be peace in heaven. There has got to be peace toward men. Jesus Christ came down here and removed the cause of that enmity, the cause of that wrath; He removed sin.

He died for the sins of all believers. He died for the sins of all God’s elect. He died for the sins of all who receive Christ. He died for the sins of all His sheep and because He died for us, there is peace from heaven, there is good will toward men.

God is not angry, God is not at wrath; God loves men in Christ. In Christ God is able to love men. God’s justice is satisfied, His law is honored, and He is enabled by the death of His Son and the sacrifice of His Son and His Son honoring the law to love men in Christ. God is reconciled.

Do you see that two-fold reconciliation?

First of all: God is reconciled: *“God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself”*

Now then; Paul comes in at **verse 20** and says: *“You be reconciled to God. You are still angry with God. You are still mad with God.” “The carnal (natural) mind is enmity against God; it’s not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”*

We have to have a new heart that doesn’t hate God but loves Him. We have to have a new spirit that doesn’t rebel against God but submits to God. We have to have a new mind to think good thoughts of the Lord God, to love Him, to believe Him, and to trust Him.

I will give you a picture of that; Saul of Tarsus was on his way to Damascus, hating Christ, despising Christ. He was religious to the core, zealous to the core, but hating Christ.

Now, Christ didn’t hate him; he was a chosen vessel to Christ. Christ said: *“I loved him, I was his Surety, and was giving himself for him.”* He was at peace with Saul.

Saul wasn’t at peace with Christ. He wasn’t at peace with God. He had enmity and hatred and anguish in His heart.

God met him on that road. In the person of Christ, He revealed himself to him and broke down that rebellion and took away that enmity. On that road to Damascus by a work of the Holy Spirit, through the revelation of Jesus Christ, Saul of Tarsus was reconciled to God.

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That's what I come preaching. I am saying: *"As an ambassador of Jesus Christ, as though God himself did beseech you by us; be ye reconciled to God."*

The enmity in your heart must be blotted out. The weapons of warfare must be laid down, your fists unclenched, your hand with palm upward, open to God. Your sword, hilt (handle) first, surrendered to the Almighty God; *"be reconciled."*

Now, watch the next verse, *"for"* and here's the Gospel in a single verse, *"for"* and here's the foundation for Christianity: *"other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Christ the Lord."*

Here's the rock on which our hope is built, *"for."* Here's the only hope of a sinner: *"Christ in you the hope of glory."* Here's the greatest miracle that God ever performed. Here's the greatest transaction that heaven and hell ever witnessed; here it is: The Gospel of grace in a single verse: *"For he hath made him (who knew no sin) to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."*

What's he saying here? He is saying that the living God, the God of all ages, the God of all creation, the God of all holiness and truth hath on purpose made His Son, the son of His love, His well-beloved, only begotten son, to actually be sin for you and me!

His Son, who knew no sin, not only did no sin, but knew no sin; *"God made him to be sin for you and me that we might be made the righteousness, (the immaculate holiness, the infinite righteousness, immutable righteousness) of God in Jesus Christ."*

That's phenomenal! If I can make good on that and if you can hear it, God will do something for us today. Let's look at each word individually:

"He," that's the Heavenly Father. When a man takes a hard look at the Gospel which he should take, a hard look, a good, strong look; I'm not trying to push you into anything. I'm not trying with soft music and lovely words to persuade you to do anything.

I want you to take a good hard look at yourself and a good hard look at the Bible and a good hard look at your sins and a good hard look at death, judgment, and hell and a good hard look at the Gospel.

Then you do with it what you will; that's between you and God; that's between you and almighty God. But, any man who has ever taken a good hard look at the Gospel has got to be impressed, first of all, with the Father's work and redemption.

"Salvation is of the Lord. It pleased God to make you his people (if you are his people). It pleased God that in Christ should all fullness dwell." That is God's business. Nobody had anything to do with that but God.

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Everything is in Christ and God put it there. Hope is in Christ and God put it there. Mercy is in Christ; God put it there. Grace is in Christ and God put it there. Life is in Christ; God put it there.

I will tell you something else: God put him on that cross too. A man didn't do it. They were the second causes. *"Him being delivered by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God; you with wicked hands have crucified and slain."*

But, *"You did what God determined before to be done, for it pleased God to bruise him. It pleased God to reveal his Son in us: for God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son and whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

"When the fullness of the time was come; God sent his son into the world, made of a woman, made under the law." Our Lord Jesus said: *"I'm come to do not my will but the will of him that sent me and this is the will of him that sent me that all of which he hath given me I will lose nothing but raise it up again at the last day."*

If you take a good hard look at the Gospel, the first thing you will be impressed with is the fact that the Gospel is God's plan, it's God's purpose, it's God's program, it's God's scheme to redeem fallen men. God planned it, God purposed it, God executed it, God applied, God sustains it, and God will perfect it.

At the cross I see His sovereignty: *"whom he foreknew he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. Whom he predestinated he called, whom he called he justified. Whom he justified he glorified: What shall we say to these things?"*

I will tell you what I say: *"If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things? Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."* God purposed it and God planned it.

I see something else in the cross: I see God's love, the Father's love! The Lord Jesus Christ didn't come down here to get God in the notion of saving us or loving us. He loved us and sent His Son: *"Herein is love, not that we love God; he loved us and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sin."*

I see God's justice: *"He spared not his own Son."* God loved His holiness and law so much that *"he spared not his own Son."* The law of God is important to the Lord God.

He can't save a sinner without that law being honored. His justice is important; He can't save a sinner without that justice being satisfied.

I see the wisdom of God. Where else can *"righteousness and mercy meet together?"* Where else can *"truth and love kiss"* one another except at the cross?

I see mercy: *"But God. We were children of wrath, even as others, but God. We walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince and power of the air, but God: we fulfilled the*

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desires of our mind and of the flesh, but God who is rich in mercy for his great love, wherewith, he loved us, even when we were dead in sin and quickened us together with Christ.”

At the cross you see the Father pouring out his wrath as if He had no love upon His Son. You see Him punishing sin as if he were not the tender Father: *“my God, why has thou forsaken me?”*

You see Him pardoning sin as though He were not the just Judge. You see Him forgiving sin as though he were not the righteous Father. Oh my friend; what a mystery and yet *“he, (God) hath made him (Christ) to be sin for us.”*

Well, let’s look at this Him; who is Jesus Christ? Our Lord asked his disciples, *“What are they saying out there? Whom do men say that I the son of man am?”*

One of them said: *“Well, some say that you are a great prophet (another says that you are a great preacher and another say that you are a great healer); or you are John the Baptist.”* He said, *Whom do you say that I am?”* The apostles said, *“We know who you are. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

Who is this man Jesus Christ? He is Immanuel and God with us, *“Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace?”*

Angels, who is this Jesus Christ? He is Christ the Lord: *“unto you is born in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.”* Simeon; who is this Jesus Christ? *“Lord; now let thy servant depart in peace; I have seen thy salvation.”*

Peter, who is this man Jesus Christ? *“Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God.”* Thomas; what do you say: *“my Lord and my God?”* John; what do you say; *“in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and all things were made by him; without him was not anything made that was made?”*

Let the demons speak. Let those who dwell in hell, speak. *“We know who you are, (they said); we know who you are; you are the holy one of God.”*

These demons knew more than the preachers knew. These demons knew more than the rulers knew. These demons knew more than the religionist’s knew; *“we know who you are; you are the holy one of God. Have you come to torment us before our time?”*

Let the Father speak: *“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”* You better listen to Him. Listen to the Father again: *“Thy throne O God is forever.”* *“He (the Father) hath made him, (the Son), to be sin.”*

This is one of the greatest mysteries of the Word of God. *“He who knew no sin was made sin.”* I don’t understand that; I can’t explain it. Anybody who says he can doesn’t know what he is talking about.

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I cannot explain how Jesus Christ the holy God clothed himself in human flesh and walked on this earth and you don't either, the God-man. That's the reason they picked up stones to stone Him. He said: "*Now wait a minute; many good works have I done among you, for which of them do you stone me?*"

They said: "*We are not stoning you for doing good works; we are stoning you because you are a man and you say that you are God.*" I understand why they were confused. Any man apart from Holy Spirit revelation can be confused about that.

The man who has Holy Spirit revelation takes it by faith, God in human flesh, God in human flesh. I can't explain why the holy Son of God can "*be tempted in all points as we are,*" can you?

How can God be tempted to fall? How can God be tempted to sin? How can the holy, immaculate, Son of God be tempted to rebel against Himself? How can God break His own law? Don't try to explain it, just believe it. God says it.

I can't explain how Christ could actually bear in His body and in His soul all my sin. Who is this in the Garden weeping tears? Who is this in the Garden that is sweating great drops of blood from the pores of his body?

Who is this in the Garden agonizing and talking about dying under the load of sin, dying under this terrible, terrible, burden of sin? Well, this is God. You can't explain that; that's the miracle and the mystery of God's salvation.

I can't explain how God can forsake God on a cross. Martin Luther once closed his Bible and hit his desk and walked off and said: "God forsaking God; how can this be?" No man can understand this.

I'm not asking you to understand it; I am asking you to believe it because God said it. "*He hath made him to be sin.*"

I can't explain how He could die; you tell me. I'm going to find out in heaven: "*I see through a glass darkly; I preach in part, I know in part: But, when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away* (then I am going to understand this)."

I can't explain how Christ could die. I can't explain how He could be buried in His own body and lie in the tomb three days. He rose by the power of God. These things are beyond my understanding but not beyond my faith.

These things are called the "*mysteries of God.*" This is what the living God has revealed in His Word and called it the Gospel. "*Christ who knew no sin, (the holy, immutable, infinite, Son of God, the Creator Himself, became a man) he was tested in all points as I am, yet without sin.*"

God made Jesus Christ to be sin for me; God imputed unto Him all my sin and He did it for us:

"Why should my Saviour

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**To Calvary go?
Why should he love me so?**

**His love sent my Saviour
To die in my stead
And why should he love me so?**

**Meekly, to Calvary's cross
He was led
Why should he love me so?"**

"God hath made him to be sin for us (me)." Paul said: "I am the chief of sinners. I was a blasphemer; I was injurious; I was a persecutor and yet I obtained mercy. Even so Father, it seemed good in thy sight." That's the only answer I can give for that.

You see, I don't have all the answers but I have a glorious Gospel; I have a glorious Gospel and I call on men to hear it. It is God's Gospel. If I could understand it, it wouldn't be God's because a man can't comprehend God.

It's as mysterious as God. It's profound as God. It's as effectual as God. It's as true as God. It is God's Gospel, the Gospel of His glory, *"that no flesh should glory in his presence."*

I am going to give you something here. If you find that hard to believe, you are really going to have trouble with this: He, God the Father, hath sovereignly made Him to be sin who knew no sin, made Him be sin for us, in our place and stead.

He bore all of our shame, sorrow, filth and guilt in order that we might be made the righteousness of God. Now brother; listen to me: I'm not talking about this little church standard; that's not the righteousness I am talking about here.

"That we might be made, (not pretty good, not better men, not moral creatures), the righteousness of God, (just like God, just like God's holiness, as pure as God's holiness, as holy as God's holiness, as righteous as God's holiness, that I might be actually made the holiness of God in him, in Christ). "With his spotless garments on, I am as holy as God's Son."

I know that there is an imparting righteousness. I know that there is a righteousness imparted to us by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit by the new birth, by repentance and by faith, in which we walk in light, in which we obey God, in which we love our neighbors, in which we love God, in which we are new creatures in Christ Jesus. That's a righteousness which grows; a progressive sanctification. That's not what he is talking about here, He is talking about that righteousness of God, *"without which, no man will see the Lord."*

That holiness: *"Who shall stand in his presence, he that hath clean hands, (clean, not pretty clean, and clean and a pure heart, not pretty good, pure as God)?"*

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How good does a man have to be to stand in God's presence? He has to be as good as Jesus Christ. How perfect does a man have to be to enter the holy, awesome, infinite, presence of God? He has to be as good as God.

"Two can't walk together except they be agreed." In Christ, we have been made by God, *"the righteousness of God."*

In Adam I fell, I died; I was polluted within and without. In Adam there was imputed to me a guilt by original sin and imparted to me an evil nature *"but in Christ I am made alive."*

In Christ I am pardoned, in Christ I am forgiven, in Christ I am washed, in Christ I am cleansed, and in Christ I have before the Father a perfect, spotless, holy, immutable, unchangeable, infinite righteousness. It is my friend, the very righteousness of God Himself.

That's the Gospel in a single verse how that God according to His sovereign pleasure, actually made Him, the eternal Son of God, *"to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ!"*