

The Way of Peace

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: 2 Corinthians 5:17-19

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My text for the message today will be taken from the book of 2 Corinthians. I would like for you to take your Bibles and open them with me to 2 Corinthians chapter five. And I am going to be reading verses 17, 18 and 19. Now I am hoping that in the message I can go on through verse 21, but at least we will try to deal with verses 17, 18 and 19 of 2 Corinthians chapter five.

Now here is the subject: "The Way of Peace, the Way of Peace."

I don't know of a greater subject that can be declared or a greater text than the text I have this morning. The way of peace, 2 Corinthians five verse 17.

Listen to the Word of God. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, a new creation. Old things are passed away. Behold all things become new. And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation which is, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not charging, not imputing their sins unto them. He laid them on Christ. He imputed them to his son and Christ bore them in his body on the tree. But not imputing, not charging our sins unto us. And he hath sent us to preach the Word of reconciliation, the way of peace."

Now I want us to look at these words carefully from this text and ask the Spirit of God to do what John wrote in 1 John five. This is my prayer. "Lord, give us understanding that we may know him that is true and that we are in him that is true even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and this is eternal life." That is my prayer. "Lord, give us understanding that we may know thee, the true and living God and Jesus Christ thy Son."

Now look at verse 17 and let's go just verse by verse...word by word almost, phrase by phrase. It says here, "If any man be in Christ." Now how is one in Christ? How are we in Christ? Well, first three things. First of all we are in Christ by the will of God. We are in Christ by the will and purpose of God. 2 Corinthians 1:30. Listen to this. "Of God are you in Christ Jesus." So if any man be in Christ—and I ask the question, how is one in Christ—this Scripture says of God are you in Christ, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption that as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

So of God are you in Christ Jesus.

And then Paul writing to the Church at Ephesus in Ephesians 1:3 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, in Christ.” Here is what we are asking now. How is one in Christ? “God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ according as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.”

So how is a man in Christ? He is in Christ by the will of God, by the purpose of God and by an act of God. And then, secondly, how are we in Christ? We are in Christ by faith.

Paul, writing to the Galatian Church says this in Galatians three. “You are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

How are we in Christ? By an act of God, by the will of God and by faith. We are baptized into Christ. We put on Christ.

And then, thirdly, we are in Christ—now watch this carefully—we are in Christ through a spiritual union brought about and accomplished by the Spirit of God, by the divine power of the Holy Spirit. Christ is the head of the Church. You know that. And we are the body. So a head and a body is one person. They are in union. The head is Christ and the body is his Church. And he is the vine and we are the branches. The branches are part of the vine. The body is a part of the head. They are in union. So that is how we are in Christ, by a spiritual union.

In Christ by the will of God, in Christ by faith, in Christ by divine spiritual union brought about by the Holy Spirit. So if any man be in Christ, in Christ...All right.

Look at the next line. If he is in Christ he is a new creature, a new creature. Now this word actually is creation. “If any man be in Christ he is a new creation.” This believer in Christ has a new nature. He is a new person that did not exist before. Now we are born of the flesh. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. But when we are born of the Spirit we are a new person, a new creation.

“Put off the old man,” Paul said, “And put on the new man, listen, which is created by God in his image and in his righteousness.” The new man, new person. “If any man be in Christ he is a new creation.”

Ephesians 2:8. You are familiar with this Scripture. “For by grace are you saved through faith. And that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. It is not of works lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” If any man be in Christ by the will of God, in Christ through faith, in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, he is a new person. He is not the old man made over. He is not the old man reformed. He is not the old man with a leaf turned over. He is a new person, a new creation in Christ Jesus.

And here is the two fold proof that he is a new person, a two fold proof. Now listen to it. If any man be in Christ—this is verse 17—you have it right there in your Bible. If any man is in Christ Jesus he is a new creature. Old things are passed away. All things become new. This new creation, the old things are passed away and all things become new.

Now, what are these old things that pass away? When a man...when God reveals the Lord Jesus to a person's heart, when God by his grace reconciles a sinner to himself and he engrafts him—that is the word—engrafted into Christ, engrafts him into the vine, Christ Jesus, he makes him a new person, a new creature. And the old things pass away, old things.

Now here are some of them. First of all the old family. He is no longer a son of Adam. He is a son of God. He is no longer considered in Adam. He is a child of God. He is an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. The old family is gone. He has a new father. God is his father. He is in God's family. He is in God's kingdom. He is no longer regarded in the old Adam.

Secondly, the old curse of the law is passed away. That's right. If any man continue not in everything written in the book of the law he is under a curse. But now listen to the Scripture. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us. And there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." The curse is gone. Old things pass away. The old family, the old curse.

I had a friend write me just this week and he said, "I am worried about the judgment." This man is 80 years old. "I am worried about the judgment." He said, "I just don't know how I am going to fare in the judgment."

Well, I am going to tell you something. If you are a child of God you are not going to face the judgment. The judgment is over. It is passed away. Christ was judged for us. Paid the penalty, put it away. There is therefore now no judgment to them who are in Christ Jesus. The old family is gone. The old Adam is gone. The old condemnation is gone. The old righteousness is gone. That righteousness of works and law and good deeds, it is gone.

Philippians 3:9 Paul said, "Oh, that I may win Christ and be found in him not having my own righteousness which is of the law, old self righteousness, but having the righteousness of Christ through the faithfulness of Christ which is by the grace of God." That is our new righteousness. The old works and righteousness is gone.

And then the old stony heart has been removed and the old walk and the old talk and the old ways and the old companions and the old pride and the old arrogance. If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new person. He is a new creation. And old things are passed away, passed away, gone. And listen. And all things become new.

Every believer can say with John Newton, "I am not what I ought to be and I am not what I want to be, but I am not what I expect to be one of these days. I am going to be like Christ. But by God's grace I am not what I used to be. I am not the old man. I am a new creation in Christ Jesus. And the old things are passed away and all things become new."

Now what are the new things? All things become new. Well listen. What are the new things? I can answer that most effectively by inviting you to turn to Ezekiel 36. In Ezekiel 36 the Lord talks about the new covenant in Christ Jesus. He talks about it in Ezekiel 36 and in Hebrews 10. "I will make a new covenant with them, put my spirit in them, give them a new heart. Their sins I will remember no more. I will be their God. They will be my people."

Now listen to what he says he will do. "I will do this," God said. "This is new. All things become new. I will do this," God said.

Now listen, Ezekiel 36:24. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you. And you will be clean from all your filthiness, clean, clean, from all your filthiness, from your sins, from your idols. I am going to make you clean." He said, "Thou your sins be as scarlet they will be white as snow. Though they be double dyed like crimson they will be like wool."

The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. We have a new record that is pure and white, not a blemish, not a spot because the blood of Christ has put away all our sins. That's right. The believer has got a new record. Nothing written against him.

All right, secondly God says, "I will sprinkle clean water on you. Be clean from all your filthiness and all your iniquity and all your sins." And then he said, "A new heart I will give you. I will take that stony heart out of you and give you a new heart."

You see, salvation is a heart work. Salvation is not just getting religion. Salvation is not just a decision. Salvation is not just a moral commitment. Salvation is a heart work. The heart is changed. God says, "I will take the stony heart out and give you a heart of flesh."

You see, it is a heart work. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.

Listen to these Scriptures having to do with the heart.

"As a man thinketh in his heart so is he."

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

"It is not what a man puts in his mouth," Christ said. "It is what comes out of his heart, for out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, iniquities, adulteries, thefts, blasphemy."

That's what comes from the heart. We need a new heart, not just a new start. We need a new heart. We don't need a new slate. We need a new heart. God said, "My son, give me your heart." He said, "My son, keep your heart. Out of it are the issues of life."

And when one by God's grace...if a person by God's grace has a new heart he is a new person, a new creature. And these old things pass away. He loses his taste for these old things and all things become new.

Now listen to this. He says, "I will sprinkle clean water on you. You will be clean from all your filthiness, all your idols, all your iniquities. I will take that old heart, stony heart out and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you, my Spirit. I will put my Spirit within you and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, in my judgments, in my commandments and in my Word. I will put my Spirit in you, in you."

Paul said, "God revealed his Son in me. God shed abroad his love in my heart."

"I will put my Spirit in you."

Who is my Spirit? It is the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit of God by which we are born again, by which we learn the gospel, by which we are taught, comforted, led, by whom we are filled. My statutes, he said...I put my Spirit in you. This new man, this new creature and you will walk in my statutes and in my commandments and in my judgment. That is the Word of God.

The Word of God is a children's bread. The Word of God is the children's foundation of faith. The Word of God is the green pastures and the still waters into which...by which we are led. The Word of God.

You see, when a person is quickened, when God first comes in quickening awakening grace, when God first, the Holy Spirit first...the wind blows where it listeth. You hear the sound thereof. When it first comes and a man is quickened awakened, he is quickened by the Word of God.

"Of his own will begat he us with the Word of God." He is quickened by the Word of God.

And when a person believes the gospel it is through hearing the Word of God. Scripture says whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed. And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? That's right. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. And when a person is saved and united to Christ the Word of God becomes his bread. The Word of God becomes his instruction. The Word of God becomes his inspiration. The Word of God becomes his comfort. The Word of God is precious to the believer. That's right. God says, "I'll cleanse you of all your filthiness from your idols. I'll take the stony heart out and give you a heart of flesh." He said, "I'll put my spirit within you and you will walk in my Word." That's right.

David in Psalm 119 says, “Wherewith all shall a man cleanse his way? By taking heed to the Word of God.”

Psalm 119:11, “Thy Word, oh God, have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.”

Psalm 119:24, “Lord, thy Word is my delight and my counselor.”

Yes, sir. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature and I am bold to say any person who is a new creature in Christ Jesus born of God, redeemed by his grace, has a new record. His record is clean, no judgment, no condemnation. He has a new heart. He loves Christ. He loves his kingdom. He has a new spirit, a new attitude, principles, a new nature, a new walk, a new talk, a new life. He has a new guide. He has a new rule of life. It is the Word of God. He believes the Word of God without question. A man in whom the Spirit of God dwells loves the Word of God because the Holy Spirit is the author of the Word of God. If the author of the Word of God lives in you, you will love what he writes. That’s right. And when you read the Word to a believer, he rejoices. And when you preach the Word to a believer he believes it. And when you teach the Word to a believer he receives it. He doesn’t argue.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature. Old things pass away and all things become new.”

Now look at the next verse, 18. And all things are of God. All these new things are of God. They are all of God. They all come from God. A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. All things pertaining to salvation, to eternal life are of God because he is the author and finisher of our faith.

The disciples one day said to our Lord, “Lord, who can be saved? Who can be saved?”

And the master said, “With men that is impossible. All things are of God in salvation. With men it is impossible.” But with God all things are possible and all things are of God. Now watch this, verse 18, “Who hath reconciled us to himself.” God has reconciled us to himself.

My friends, what does it mean to be reconciled?

Well, first of all, it means to be friends again. You use that all the time. I become reconciled to this person. That means you are friends again. And we are friends with God again. Did you know that the world hates God? The world is enmity, the natural man is enmity. And God is angry with the wicked. That is what Scripture says. God is angry with the wicked. He that believeth not on the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him. But when we are reconciled we are friends again. We are restored to sonship. We lost...in Adam we lost our sonship. We became enemies and Christ restored us. Now are we sons of God. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be

called the sons of God. That is what reconciled means, restored to sonship, all sins forgiven, eternal life is our possession. That is what it means to be reconciled, to be friends again with God, to be a son of God. Sins forgiven, eternal life in us.

Well, who reconciled us? Well, God did. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. All things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself. God is the reconciler. God is the reconciled. And God is the reconciliation. He did it all. All things are of God who himself hath reconciled us.

That is what Abraham said to Isaac when they were walking up the mountain and Isaac said, "Father, here is the wood. Here is the fire. Where is the lamb?"

And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide himself the Lamb."

God is the Lamb. God provided the Lamb. And God is the one to whom the offering, the sin offering was made. So God...all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself.

How did he do it? By Jesus Christ. That's how he did it, by Jesus Christ.

This is so important. You listen to me. Colossians 1:19. "It pleased the Father that in Jesus Christ should all fulness dwell, all the fulness of the godhead bodily, all grace, all mercy, all life, all truth, all righteousness, all wisdom, all sanctification, all power, all that you can know of God is in Christ. It pleased God. It pleased the Father that in Jesus Christ all fulness dwelled."

Now listen. "And having made peace," this is the way of peace, "by the blood of his cross, by Christ, to reconcile all things to himself whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. By Christ. By the blood of his cross, by Christ he hath reconciled us to himself. And you," Colossians 1:22, "And you, Gentiles, sinners, sons of Adam, who were alienated from God, that's right. Enemies, enemies it says here. Enemies of God in your mind by your wicked works. Yet now hath he reconciled you in the body of his death by the blood of his cross to present you holy, unblameable, unprovable in his sight."

What is it to be reconciled to God? It is to be holy, unblameable, unprovable, perfect in his sight.

Who reconciled us? All things are of God who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ.

How did he reconcile us? By the blood of his cross, by the cross of Jesus Christ. He made peace through the blood of his cross.

1 John 5:11 says, "This is the record. God hath given us eternal life and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, he that believes on the Son, he that is in a spiritual union with the Son, he hath eternal life. And he that hath not the Son hath not life."

Oh, my friends, all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by the Lord Jesus Christ has given to us this ministry of reconciliation.

That is what I am doing right now. I am preaching this reconciliation. I am preaching this way of peace. I am declaring unto you the way that God can be just and justify sinners.

We have a commission. "As my Father sent me, even so send I you." We have a charge. "Preach the gospel to every creature." And we have a promise. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

So what is the message? Here it is in verse 19, that God was in Christ. Almighty God was in Christ reconciling the world, not just the Jews, not just any single nation, but the world, all who will believe, any nation, any kindred, any tribe, not imputing their sins to them. He laid them on Christ.

Now then as an ambassador of Christ I beseech you as though God did speak to you through me, be ye reconciled to God. Bow down and worship the Son. Kiss the Son. Be reconciled to God for he, God, hath made him, Christ to be sin for us who knew no sin—he knew no sin—that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. The way of peace is the way of the cross.

If you want this message, you write to us. Send two dollars. We will mail it to you. Until next week at this same time may God bless you everyone.