

STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-6:2

GOD'S URGENT APPEAL



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

DAVID MURRAY
JANUARY 30, 2022 (PM)

INTRODUCTION

There are many conflicts in the world right now. Ukraine v Russia, China v Taiwan, Israel v Palestine, North Sudan v South Sudan, North Korea v South Korea. Conflicts cause instability, uncertainty, and anxiety as well as the loss of life and limb. Great conflict means great cost.

When I was growing up there was a huge peace movement. Millions of people all over the world would gather for protests and demonstrations in the campaign against war and for peace. At the time, the greatest fear was nuclear war between the USA and Russia. That would have been a great conflict with a great cost. We can understand why the peace movement was so popular. Who wouldn't want to be part of preventing or solving such a great conflict with such a great cost.

That peace movement has faded as that risk has faded. Yet, the greatest ever conflict remains unresolved and I'm here to recruit peace campaigners. What greater purpose can there be than being part of a movement that resolves the world's greatest conflict? **What's the greatest conflict in the world and how can I help resolve it?**

BACKGROUND

Paul was in a conflict with spiritual enemies in Corinth who were seducing the Corinthians away from Paul and turning them against Paul. He therefore calls them to be reconciled not only to himself but to God, the latter being a far greater problem than the former.



How can we make peace?



1. GOD MAKES PEACE FOR US (18-19)

We are at war with God (and vice versa)

Look at the most frequent word in this passage? "Reconciled (18)...reconciliation (18)...reconciling (19)...reconciliation (19)...reconciled (20)." What does this 5x 'reconcile' tell us? It tells us about a serious conflict. The two parties are God and humanity and the cause of the conflict is sin. Human sin has made humanity hostile and opposed to God and has made God hostile and opposed to humanity (Rom. 1:18). It's a mutual (two-sided) hostility but the two sides are very different. God's war against us is just and justified, but our war against God is neither just nor justified. Like all conflicts, it results in distrust, disrespect, division, distance, debt, damage, and devastation, but this is on a greater scale than any other conflict.

God makes peace for us and with us

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself...that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them (18-19).

This peace is from God. The great change he had spoken of (16-17) was from God and was based upon reconciliation. No reconciliation, no transformation. The transformation and reconciliation were not partly or mainly from God, but fully from God. **All this is from God (17)** and brings **us to himself (18)**. He didn't commission a third party to make peace, but did it himself. The wronged party initiated peace, accomplished it, and offers it. We don't make peace with God, but God makes peace for us. We don't make peace with God but receive peace from God.

This peace required God to sacrifice his Son. God could not forget sin, overlook sin, minimize sin, or excuse sin. He had to deal with it and the only way he could deal with it was to punish it, which he did in Christ. Christ was the battlefield in which God fought with sin and totally defeated it so that he could forgive sins. God deals with his justified objective hostility through Christ and with our unjustified subjective hostility through the Spirit. God counted his Son as the most guilty sinner ever and focused all his hostility upon him like a magnifying glass focuses the sun to burn.

This peace results in reconciliation. God was able to reconcile sinners from all over the world to himself because he counted sins against Christ instead of **counting their trespasses against them (18-19)**, and because he counted Christ's righteousness as theirs (21). See the war zone becoming a peace zone.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Are you at war with God and is God at war with you? This is the greatest conflict with the greatest cost. Who do you think will win? Take the truce!

How many of your sins did God count as Christ's? This great exchange should cause a great embrace. Count your sins being transferred and count his perfections being transferred to you. Take the truce!

WE MAKE WAR
GOD MAKES PEACE



How can I join this peace movement?



2. GOD URGES PEACE THROUGH US (18-21)

God gave us the ministry of reconciliation (18),...by entrusting to us the message of reconciliation (19). Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (20).

Having made peace through Christ, God announces peace through Christians. He calls all Christians to be his ambassadors of world peace, to announce news of his peace to all, and plead with all to accept it. He does not assume that all the Corinthians have been reconciled to God. Neither does he assume that because they have been reconciled to God that they are reconciled to him or each other.

- We plead with authority not apology.
- We plead with passion, affection, and emotion, not cool, calm, and collected.
- We plead with full-time faithfulness not part-time carelessness.
- We plead with urgency not indifference.

Rev. Charles Simeon preached in Cambridge University church for fifty years and was greatly used of God to revive England and send many missionaries around the world. In his commentary, Kent Hughes described the famous silhouette national Gallery pictures of Rev. Charles Simeon preaching and quoted from his obituary:

And after having urged all his hearers to accept the proffered mercy, he reminded them that there were those present to whom he had preached Christ for more than thirty years, but they continued indifferent to the Saviour's love; and pursuing this train of expostulation for some time, he at length became quite overpowered by his feeling, and he sank down in the pulpit and burst into a flood of tears.

Charles Spurgeon used to say that'd once he had fired every gospel arrow, he would put himself in the bow and fire himself at his hearers. David Wilkerson ministered to gangs and wrote *The Cross and the Switchblade* about his spiritual burden for gang members and how God brought many of them to Christ. Look up *YouTube* for his sermon on spiritual anguish. It's the closest modern equivalent to the passion of this passage I've ever come across. It's the embodiment of the ministry of reconciliation.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Are you an ambassador for Christ. God makes peace with other hostile enemies through you. God has called you to the ministry of reconciliation. Who is he sending you to this week?

Are you pleading for Christ? We appeal, we implore, we urge, we plead for Christ on behalf of Christ. God has tied the success of the Gospel to the truth of the message and the temperature of the message.

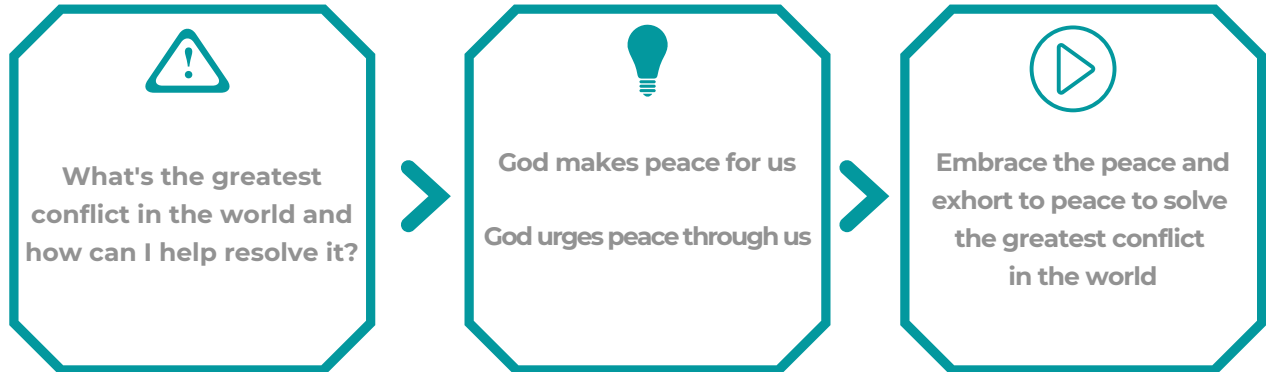
THE TEMPERATURE OF THE MESSAGE
AFFECTS THE TRUTH OF THE MESSAGE



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others stories



SUMMARY



PRAYER: God of holy hostility, thank you for making peace for us through Christ. Help me to embrace it with gratitude and exhort to it with passion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the signs of humanity's conflict with God?
2. What were/are the signs of your conflict with God?
3. How was the Son of God made sin without becoming a sinner?
4. Who do you know that is a good example of a pleader/persuader?
5. How important is emotion in evangelism?
6. How will you demonstrate that you are an ambassador for Christ?

First Byron Christian Reformed Church
8541 Byron Center Ave SW, Byron Center, MI 49315
Phone: (616) 878-9768
www.firstbyroncrc.org

Pastor David Murray
www.HeadHeartHand.org
www.thestorychanger.life

