

2 Corinthians 5:20 (Charles Stanley) 51189

Things New and Old: Volume 25, God Beseeching (5:20)

2 Cor. 5:20.

In the gospel "all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;" and this is true in its fullest sense, even a new creation, as may be seen in the preceding verses. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new, and all things are of God." The purpose of God in sending His Son was not to judge and condemn men for their sins—He was in Christ, not imputing their sins unto them. He will send Him to judge, for all judgment is committed unto Him. "He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Yes, that same event, which no man can deny, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead, gives assurance to all believers of their justification, and to all others of their judgment.

If we trace the path of the sent One from heaven—yes, from the stable at Bethlehem to the cross, outside the gate of Jerusalem—we never find Him imputing the trespasses, or sins, of men to them. What a sight! God manifest in the flesh—not imputing, but on His holy path to bear their sins on the cross. He could say to the sinner at Sychar's well, "Give me to drink." He found His joy in her salvation! Fount of eternal love. Far more welcome to His heart were the tears of that woman in the city, which was a sinner, than all that the cold-hearted Pharisee could set upon his table. Deeper joy to Him to say unto her, "Thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." But is it not too late for a dying thief to look to Him, in the very agony of death? Must not his sins be imputed to him, and he be judged to everlasting woe? No, he looked, and lived. His dying eyes were opened to see the Son of God in the very act of making reconciliation. Did Jesus turn a deaf ear, and say, Too late? No, as He bare the sins of the dying thief, He said, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Oh, how tender the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Yes, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Thus, whilst the reconciliation by the death of Jesus revealed the righteousness of God, it also manifested the love of God, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

How utterly contrary is all this to man's thought of God! From the moment man listened to the lie of Satan, he has been afraid of God. He still, with all his fig-leaf apron-making, hides from God in fear; however he tries to cover himself with his own works, he is still conscious of his nakedness, and afraid of God.

But God does not leave man in his fear and nakedness. He might have done, as He has left; the fallen angels. Yes, he might have left us to everlasting darkness; but God so loved. Do ponder this fact—God is love. It is not that He will so love us if we deserve His love, or if we love Him. You cannot love a person you do not know. You must know Him as revealed in Christ. Then you will love Him, because He first loved us. No person finds so much difficulty in believing the gospel of the grace of God, as those who have spent years of oft-repeated prayers for God to have mercy on them. A sort of thought that if they can only move the heart of God to love them, they may hope to be saved at last. This is terrible darkness. Suppose a child has left her home, and her parents are entreating her to return, assuring her of their unchanged love, and, instead of returning, she sends hundreds of letters, begging for mercy, and to be allowed to return.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though Christ did beseech by us, we pray in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Have you ever thought of this—God beseeching you to be reconciled to Himself? Surely this is now altogether different from the time when the Jew, shut out by the veil from the presence of God, must stand at a distance afar off, crying for mercy, or the mercy-seat. The veil is now rent—yea, the very ground on which God now beseeches is this—"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

Has not God thus shown even more than mercy in perfect righteousness? He now beseeches sinners to be reconciled to Him. Thus to spend years after this in praying God to have mercy, is spending years of doubt and unbelief. Yea, it seems very much like saying God has not shown mercy. Is it not saying Christ has died in vain, and you want God to do something else to show mercy to you? If God gave His Son to be made sin, a sin-offering for us; if God is glorified by that death, and has proved His acceptance of the atonement for our sins by raising up Jesus from the dead—and further declares to you, "that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things;" after all this, are we still to go on praying in unbelief?

Do you say, How am I to know that I am reconciled? Why God beseeches you to be. If you believe Him, clearly you are reconciled, and justified from all things. He says it is so; what further evidence can you require? Would you approve of that erring child saying, I cannot believe my parent; he beseeches me to be reconciled; he assures me of forgiveness, such forgiveness as to remember my sins no more; but I do not believe him? Would not this be insult added to injury, no matter how many letters she wrote, begging for the mercy which she would not receive? Nay, would not each of such letters be an insult to a parent's heart? Oh, beloved reader, will you continue thus to treat God? Not a single thing has to be done—"It is finished." The very work of expiation on the cross is done—Jesus has been made a sin-offering; God has raised Him from the dead. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Do you say, When shall I come to God who thus beseeches? "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Will you still reject? Would you like to remember those words, "Come now," when for over too late in everlasting woe? You must come now, and be reconciled, or hear that terrible word, "Depart." We beseech you, then, in Christ's stead, come now. Why doubt? Why delay? Why reject such wondrous love? Oh, come to the arms of Jesus; He says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." Do you say, Is it

not a proper thing for me to do, to continue crying for mercy? Did not blind Bartimaeus cry for mercy? True, he did; but when Jesus commanded him to be called unto Him, did he then continue at a distance crying for mercy? No; "casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus." Oh, we beseech you in Christ's stead, cast away the garment you have been making so long, come at once to Jesus—come now. Did Jesus command him to continue crying for mercy? Oh, hearken to His precious words, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" How simple and confiding the reply—"Lord, that I may receive my sight." "And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." No delay, no vain repetition of prayer. "And immediately he received his sight." What was the effect? "And followed Jesus in the way."

Have you ever really felt your need of mercy? Do you feel it now? Then "be of good comfort, rise, he calleth thee." God grant you may come now—receive your sight, cast away your old self-righteousness, and from this day follow Jesus in the way. C. S.

"The secret of peace within, and of power without, is being only and wholly occupied with good."

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