

**Text: II Corinthians 5:14-18**

**Title: “Be the Bridge ... Convinced by the Cross”**

**SERMON BUMPER** – Let’s open our Bibles to II Corinthians 5:14. The Bible shows us that God has given us what is called the “ministry of reconciliation.” We are called to “be the bridge” that God uses to reconcile people who are far from Him. You may have never thought of the Christian life in those terms. It’s not just about you. Jesus said, “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.” By that He meant that a huge part of our discipleship is being part of what Christ is doing in drawing people like a fisherman draws in fish. So we’re camping in these verses in August to help us better understand our mission to share Jesus Christ with others.

**Read II Corinthians 5:14-21.**

**2 Corinthians 5:14 – For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.**

Paul is describing here what happens when the love of Christ becomes so real to us that it changes our lifestyle. Paul said that there was a point in time when he became convinced of something that changed the trajectory of his life. He came to understand what Jesus Christ did for sinners.

Our passion to share Jesus Christ ... to be the bridge that God uses to bring others to Himself ... is based upon some very convincing information. We have come to the conclusion based on biblical truth that something is terribly wrong. People are separated from God.

**2 Corinthians 5:19a - that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.**

In the beginning God created us without sin in a perfect world. Something happened that separated us from God. The first humans, Adam and Eve sinned against God. And their sinful tendencies passed down to all humans. We all sin and are separated from God. We are at odds with God. We are enemies of God. Ephesians 4:18 says that people without Christ are “darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God...”

Our sin keeps us from having a relationship with God now, and unless something changes, we will be separated from God for eternity in a place called hell. So Houston we have a problem.

Take out your worship folder and look on the back. If you were sitting down with a friend at school or over coffee or at lunch with a coworker you can just draw this on a napkin. I sketched this and you can see it on the screen.

### **DRAWING #1 – PEOPLE, SIN, GOD**

Obviously it doesn't have to be pretty. Turn it sideways if you need to. As you draw, fill in the words and Scripture references to remember. Use a pen, pencil, lipstick, crayon or whatever you have.

So we've established that people are separated from God by their sin. It's like a huge canyon between us and God. God isn't willing for us to be separated from Him. So He did something.

**2 Corinthians 5:19a - that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.**

In the event of Christ coming to this earth, God becoming Man, living a perfect life, dying as a sacrifice for our sins and being raised from the dead, God was reconciling the world (people) to Himself. To be reconciled means to reestablish a broken relationship. So add "Christ" to your drawing like this.

### **DRAWING #2 – PEOPLE, SIN, GOD, CHRIST**

**2 Corinthians 5:19a - that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.**

Specifically, God did something so our sins, which have separated us from Him, would not be counted against us. How did that happen? God did this "in Christ" ... in the event of Christ coming to be the Savior of the world.

**1 Timothy 2:5 - For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,**

It is by Christ alone that we may come to the Father.

**John 14:6 - Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**

**LAY CROSS ON THE PEDESTALS.** This was accomplished through the historical event of Christ dying on the cross. So sketch in a cross like this, and cross out sin. Through Christ's death and resurrection God made a bridge over the canyon created by our sin so we could come to Him.

**DRAWING #3 – PEOPLE, SIN, GOD, CHRIST, CROSS (with SIN crossed out)**

Now let me show you from II Corinthians 5 what God did for us in Christ. I want to show you this so you will be convinced like Paul was, so you will come to the conclusion that you must be the bridge God might use in reconciling others to Himself.

**DRAWING #4 – CHRIST ... DIED FOR US.** Jot those words on the cross.

**2 Corinthians 5:14b – One died for all, and therefore all died.**

Paul had reached a point where his whole opinion changed about Christ. As a Pharisee he would have known about Christ's death on the cross. He thought that Jesus was crucified because the Romans considered Him a criminal and the Jews considered Jesus as blasphemer because He claimed to be God. But one day while he was traveling to harass some Christ-followers Paul met Christ face to face and from that point he saw things entirely differently. From the moment Paul was saved it became clear to him that this Christ who died and rose again was not a dangerous messianic pretender who got what He deserved when He was crucified by the Romans. No, Jesus was the Son of God who, in His death, took God's curse that belonged on us for our sin. Christ's death was not for His own sins but instead He "died for all."

And the "all" for whom Christ died included Paul himself. And it includes you and me. No one is excluded from the guilt of sin and no one is excluded from the saving purposes of Christ on the cross. Christ died for us all because we are all dead in our sins ... every last one of us.

**Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

Back to II Corinthians 5, Paul says it this way in...

**2 Corinthians 5:21 - God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

There was such complete identification of the sinless Christ with the sin, the guilt and death of the sinner that it can be truly said, "God made Him ... to be sin for us."

Now the question is, "Why would God do it this way?" The answer is...

**DRAWING #5 - CHRIST ... CLAIMS US FOR GOD.**

**2 Corinthians 5:15 – And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.**

**Romans 6:6,11 - For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin ... In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

Christ's death was intended to bring about our death to self-centered living. We are now brought under the lordship of Jesus Christ. To put it another way...

**DRAWING #6 - CHRIST ... MAKES US NEW.**

**2 Corinthians 5:17 – Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**

You see, Paul is Exhibit #1 of this truth. His encounter with Christ changed the whole direction of his life. He was an outwardly religious man, but everything revolved around him. He was the center of his own universe. And though he didn't understand it at the time Paul was spiritually dead. Just as Christ died and rose again, so the old Paul died that day and the new Paul came alive in Christ. Christ became the center around which Paul's life revolved. Christ makes us new.

"If anyone is in Christ" ... it is for "anyone." This change happens for any who is born again ... who is "in Christ." That phrase sums up in two words the inexhaustible significance of our redemption. "In Christ" we are secure because He absorbed in His body all the wrath of God against our sin. "In Christ" we are accepted because the Son was perfectly pleasing to the Father. "In Christ" we have assurance of our future because He is our resurrection and our life forever. "In

Christ” all of the riches of God have been poured into our lives in the name of Christ.

“In Christ” we are raised to walk in a new life. The old has gone, the new has come. At the moment we are saved all things become new ... not new in *time* but new in *kind*. Yes, we still have problems. We don’t live happily ever-after. The full force of our new creation, our new life, will only be seen when Christ returns and our bodies are changed forever. But from now on Christ has made us new.

All of this makes it possible for us to be reconciled to God ... to be restored in a right relationship with God.

### **DRAWING #7 - CHRIST RECONCILES US.**

Again, the problem is that we need to be reconciled to God because we are separated from him because of our sins. It’s not that we have just had a little misunderstanding with God. This is a case of full-on mutiny and rebellion against God. Sin is the revolt of man against God. And this results in alienation and separation from God because of His holy wrath against our sin.

But our rebellion is more than matched by God’s affection for us in Christ which caused God to allow His beloved Son to become sin for us.

### **2 Corinthians 5:18a - All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ...**

“All this” ... Christ being substituted for us, Christ being identified with us, Christ laying claim to us and making us new ... all this is from God. All this is “from God.” We were the guilty ones. Rightfully we should be the ones responsible for making it up to God. He is the one offended, but in His love and grace God made up with us ... reconciled us to Himself. He took the initiative to come after us. Normally when reconciliation occurs in human relationships it comes by a third party, like a marriage counselor or a negotiator. But in this case the One being wronged initiated the action. So we’re back to where we started:

### **2 Corinthians 5:19a - that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.**

Reconciliation can’t happen by ignoring the offense. A holy God cannot just wink at our sin and say, “Oh, no big deal.” It required action. Through Christ God no

longer counted our sins against us; our sins were counted against Christ. This was made possible by the sacrifice of His Son.

**Romans 5:10 - For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!**

So God has done all the heavy lifting, but there is a step *we* need to take:

**2 Corinthians 5:20 - We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.**

Paul writes this letter knowing that it will be read to the church, but that also non-believers would hear it. Reconciliation with God is *available* to all, but it is not *automatic* for all. How are we reconciled to God? How is the relationship repaired and restored. Jesus said it this way:

**John 1:12 - Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—**

### **DRAWING #8 – BELIEVE & RECEIVE**

To believe is to take God at His Word and by faith walk across the bridge God has provided for us in Christ. To receive is what we do because we believe. We accept the gift by faith.

**ILLUSTRATION** – I have here a \$10 bill and I want someone to have it ... a free gift from me to whoever will receive it. Do you trust me that it isn't counterfeit? If anyone will take me at my word and reach out and take it, it's theirs. Now here's the difference between my gift of a \$10 bill and God's gift of eternal life. You'll go to Chicken E for lunch and that \$10 bill will be gone. You'll be full, but by this evening you'll be hungry again. God's free gift of eternal life in Christ is different. Your life will change forever ... forever. God remembers your sins no more. He doesn't count your sins against you anymore. Christ lays claim to your life so you no longer live for yourself but for Him. He is your Lord. He makes you new; from now on you are a new creation in Christ. And because of that you are right with God ... reconciled to God.