

The Acceptable Time

II Corinthians 5:17- 6:2

1/ 29/ 06

Intro

This week has been filled with news of changes that are happening in the Middle East. The leadership of the Palestinian government will be vastly changed by these events. I believe this is an event of last days significance.

These are trying days on the world scene and it's very important for us to understand that we have the "light of hope" within us. God has made a way for any who come to Him to have a hope that is built on the rock of heaven, not the shifting sand of the world.

These verses contain some of the greatest insights in scripture into the difference between the life we are offered in Christ and that of the world.

These are insights into the new life that we have in Christ Jesus.

I. In Christ, Be Made New

A. The key is – in Christ

- It's very important to see those two important words, "in Christ." That's the all-important key to being made new.

Illus – There are so many self-help books available "at a bookstore near you." The problem is that they are all self-help books.

John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

- We are "in Christ Jesus" is a phrase used many times in scriptures and captures a wonderful truth about who we are "in Christ."
- Jesus said that we must be "born again." Paul says also in Ephesians that we are His workmanship.

Ephesians 2:10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

B. Old things pass away

- The day in which Paul lived looked bleak and discouraging. Yet Paul found hope in walking by faith, rather than by sight.
- Many are rightly concerned about where we are headed in our modern era.

Isaiah 43:18-19, "Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert."

- Jesus encouraged the disciples by telling them to believe in Him and to look forward to heaven.

Ephesians 4:22-24, "that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of

deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

- “New things have come,” writes Paul, we have been renewed in the in the spirit of our mind.

II. Be Reconciled to God

A. God is the initiator

- There is a great chasm between man and God that was created by our own doing.
- But it is so important to see that God is the one doing something about it, He is the One who reaches out to us. He is the One who invites us into a relationship with Him.

Ephesians 1:3-4, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.”

Ephesians 2:4-6, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,”

B. Not counting trespasses against us

- God made reconciliation possible by removing the sin that was against us. He uses the “trespasses” here which shows a very pointed definition of what sin is.
- Instead of counting our trespasses against us, He counted them against Christ.

Illus- In marriage, we reconcile when each person is finally able to take responsibility for his/her part in the breakdown of the relationship. But in God, He takes responsibility for our part.

- **Verse 21** is one of the most important verses in the bible because it very clearly demonstrates how salvation was made possible.
- **Both parts of the verse are equally important,**
 - That He made who knew no sin to become sin...
 - That we might become the righteousness of God *in Him*.

Isaiah 53:4-6 “Surely our griefs He Himself bore...”

Philippians 3:9, “and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,”

C. We are to be the responder

- This is the correct order of things, though the opposite of what many people seem to believe.

Illus – Many people seem to believe that they can get God to respond to them. They believe that God is always angry and so they must appease Him.

Some go to church, not really wanting to, but thinking that God is appeased.

I John 4:19, “We love Him because He first love us.”

- We choose Him because He first chose us,
- We worship Him because He filled us with the Holy Spirit.
- We give to Him because He first gave to us.

III. Be a Reconciler

A. God gave us this ministry

- Only God can do the work of reconciliation, but He gives us the privilege of introducing Christ.

Illus - We are called ambassadors for Christ, and like the word suggests, we are to carry His message to those who need to hear it.

Isaiah 52:7, “How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation,”

- Verse 19 – God has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

- Because God is still in the business of changing lives.

Illus – Poor self image is a universal problem, even for “blustering people who try to make out that they are self-sufficient.” The reason is because they feel an alienation, an estrangement from God. **And God is the One who invites us to come and be made whole. If we could be convinced how much we are loved, it would change us forever. – He loves us with an unchanging love.**

Ephesians 2:18-20, “for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,”

B. God is entreating through us

- This is one of the most amazing verses in the bible, from my perspective. It says that God is “entreating” through us. It means that God is “beseeching” us, or deeply asking people to be reconciled.

Illus – I was asked to speak to a fellow once who had many questions and a few doubts about whether he could be saved. This was a key verse in getting him to see.

Ezekiel 18:31-32, “Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in

the death of anyone who dies,” declares the Lord God. “Therefore, repent and live.”

- Paul says that God is entreating through us, we are to carry that message rather than the hell-fire damnation message that was the way of so many churches over the years.
- Jesus gave a parable about a man who was giving a dinner, but those invited made many excuses...

Luke 14:23, And the master said to the slave, “Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.”

C. Now is the acceptable time

- Verse 6:1 is amazing because there it says that God allows us to work together with Him.
- Paul then goes on to say, “Now is the acceptable time, this is the day of salvation.

Illus – Some people have the idea that they will put off getting things right with God, that they will wait until later, after they’ve had more time to drift in their own ways.

- We need to be ready. Now is the acceptable time, we don’t know what is going to happen next in our lives, we need to be ready.

Psalm 118:22-24, “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

Conclusion

The message that God gave then is still the message we need today – be reconciled to God. Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation. Don’t wait any longer, be reconciled to God today.