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Sermon Study for Good Friday

2 Cor. 5:14-21

Over against the calumnies of his opponents and the misunderstandings of his beloved Corinthians, Paul defends in chaps. 1—7 of his Second Letter to the Corinthians the sincerity of his purpose and the genuineness and glory of his apostolic calling. As the prophets of the Old Testament had been called mad fellows, 2 Kings 9:11; Jer. 29:26 f.; as Christ had been similarly stigmatized, Mark 3:21, 22; John 7:20, so, in order to disparage Paul's person and message, his opponents had charged him with being a madman, out of his senses, a visionary and deceiver. In v. 13 Paul had assured his readers that, if he and Timothy, carried away by the power of the Gospel they proclaimed, might have seemed beside themselves, might have seemed overzealous, this was due only to their anxious desire to do full justice to God's will and calling. If, on the other hand, they had been sober, "of sound understanding" (Meyer), "keeping their wits" (Lenski), "sober-minded" (*Exp. Gr. Test.*), then they served only the interests of the Christian congregation. Their God and their fellow-Christians were at all times uppermost in their minds in all their activities. Their own person was studiously relegated into the background. An example worthy of emulation for every pastor.

And now Paul goes on to uncover the hidden well-spring of his and Timothy's pastoral activities. Their love toward God and their fellow-men, manifested in their every word and deed, was but the natural fruit of their having come to know the all-powerful and overwhelming love Christ had manifested for them. In one of the most sublime passages written by his eloquent pen, Paul sings a hymn of praise to the grand work in which the Father and the Son shared, the reconciliation of sinners to God, sinners, chief among whom Paul confessed to be, 1 Tim. 1:13.

For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that, if one died for all, then were all dead, v. 14. The apostle proves his statement of v. 13. It cannot be otherwise, for it is not a natural interest in our work, not self-glory nor pride or vain ambition that impels us to our duty. It is something far stronger, the love of Christ, that constrains us. The apostle evidently has Christ's love to mankind in mind, not Paul's love to Christ. That is in keeping with his consistent usage of the expressions, "the love of Christ" and "the love of God," the genitive invariably being the subjective genitive, Christ's or God's love. It is also in keeping with the context in which Paul brings out Christ's infinite love toward mankind, which Paul and Timothy have also experienced.

This love of Christ constraineth us. *Συνέχειν* means to hold

together, to hold fast, to hold in one's grip. Jesus was held in the grip of anguish at the thought of the sufferings awaiting Him, Luke 12:35. The word is used of persons in the clutches of sickness and pain, Mark 4:24; Luke 4:38; Acts 28:8; in the grasp of conflicting thoughts, Phil. 1:23. Paul and his fellow-worker were held fast, held captives, in the grip of the love of Christ. Compare the similar thought expressed by the apostle 1 Cor. 9:19-23. The power of the Gospel which reveals this heavenly love holds Paul in its grip, holds him captive, will not let him go. For him to live is Christ, Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20. And if his flesh rebels, he brings it into subjection to Christ's Gospel, 1 Cor. 9:27; and if his reason objects, he brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. 10:5. The love of Christ which has apprehended him, Phil. 3:12, has changed his entire life, Phil. 3:1-14, and holds him, the former rebel and bloody opponent of Christ, fast in its loving embrace. Oh, blessed apprehension, blessed captivity, to be held close by the love of Christ!

"Because we thus judge," Paul uses the aorist participle, which is best translated: Having come to the judgment. *Kρίνειν* is here used in the sense of pronouncing a final judgment, or verdict, after having carefully looked into the matter, separated the specious arguments and allegations from the actual facts. His judgment is "that, if one died, then they all died." "That," *ὅτι*, is best regarded as the recitative particle, introducing a statement like our quotes. We place the quotes and omit the "that." "If" is omitted in the most and best manuscripts. Paul's final verdict is very brief, but its very briefness makes it the more emphatic. "One died for all; then were all dead." There can be no doubt who that one is. The apostle has only One in mind, the same whose love has completely taken possession of him. He is the One among thousand, Job 33:23; his own and only Christ; the God-man. This One *died*. The aorist states a historic fact, undeniable, irrefutable: Christ died. His death on the cross was a real death, the separation of body and soul; the body was laid in Joseph's grave, the soulless, dead body of the Son of God. The soul returned to its Creator in heaven, the disembodied soul of the God-man. There is no fact better established than the actual death of Christ, a fact accepted by friend and foe, by the Roman judge and by the Roman soldiers, who would be held responsible if they had permitted a living Jesus to be returned to His friends after having been condemned to death by the Roman government, Matt. 27:50, 57-66; Mark 15:37-47; Luke 23:46-56; John 19:30-42.

Christ died. Death is the wages of sin, Rom. 6:23, paid out to such as have disobeyed the Law of God. It is the penalty threatened by the holy God to transgressors of His commandments,

Gen. 2:17, and inflicted by His outraged justice upon all doers of iniquity, Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 5:12; 6:21. This wage of sin was paid out to Christ. Why? Why did the Holy One suffer the penalty provided for the unholy? The apostle at once tells us, "He died *for all*." Before inquiring into the meaning of the preposition, let us determine what is meant by "all." In his commentary Calvin simply ignores the "all." All he has to say on this passage he states in two sentences: "We must carefully note here the purpose that Christ has died for us, so that we might die unto ourselves. We must note also the explanation that for us to die is to live unto Christ; or if you prefer it more fully, to renounce ourselves so that we live unto Christ." Calvin substitutes "Christ has died for us" for the clear words of Paul, "Christ died for *all*." He changes the clear words "all have died" into a sentence stating something altogether different: "so that we might die unto ourselves." He adds "unto ourselves" and changes the past fact into a purpose to be accomplished in the future. That is doing violence to God's Word. What Paul says is clear — Christ died for all. The article is purposely omitted, since the absence of the article forcibly brings out the qualitative force of "all." It designates all as all, it stresses the "altness" of all. Any one included in the word "all" is included in the fact that Christ died for *all*.

Now, what is the meaning of the preposition "for," ὑπέρ? The literal meaning is "over." It has been the general custom to deny on linguistic grounds the possibility of translating ὑπέρ "instead of," "in the place of." Yet during the last decades hundreds of papyri and ostraca have been found which clearly prove not only the possibility but the actual use of the preposition in this sense. Robertson, in his *Grammar*, lists a number of passages from classic literature and from the New Testament which demand this rendering. Bauer, in the second edition of Preuschen's *Woerterbuch*, lists Philem. 13 and our passage as examples for the New Testament usage of ὑπέρ in the sense of substitution, or vicarious action, so commonly found in the papyri. Without entering into detail here, let us state that there is no reason to depart from the old Lutheran interpretation which holds that ὑπέρ in our passage denotes a vicarious death, particularly since the context makes this interpretation imperative, as we shall see.

From the statement "One died for all" Paul draws the conclusion: "Then were all dead." The rendering of the Authorized Version is not accurate. The writer uses the same verb and the same tense in the second clause as in the first. Christ died for all, therefore, consequently, all died. The apostle states two historical facts, both lying in the past already in his day. There was a time when One died, and as a consequence all died at the same time

that One died. The wages of sin were paid out to all. All suffered the penalty of their wrong-doings, death, and that only because the One died for, in the stead of, all. The death of this One was a vicarious, substitutionary death, a death involving the death of all for whom He died. We note that, while in the first clause "all" is used without the article, the second clause inserts the article, He died for the all, pointing back to the all-comprehensive term "all" in the first clause. The same "all" for whom Christ died, the same all died as a consequence of His death. This death is therefore not a death merely on behalf of all, the exact manner in which it benefits all being unexpressed. The death of the One is not like the death of Arnold of Winkelried, who grasped the spears of a number of enemy soldiers, creating a breach in the seemingly impenetrable phalanx into which his comrades poured to gain the victory. They had not died when Arnold died. Nor is the death of the One who died for all merely an example, a lesson for all that death may be conquered by any one who bravely meets it or that any one who had led a virtuous life may calmly face death, knowing that he will not perish forever. No, here was the death of One in whose death all men died. Every man, woman, and child, from Adam to the last-born in time, *died* when Christ died. At that moment God actually paid out the last penny of sin's wages to every one for whom, as whose Substitute, Christ died. In the sight of God all men have suffered the penalty of their sin, death, with all that death involves. Full satisfaction for my sin, for your sin, was rendered to the outraged justice of God because you died and I died when the One died for all.

Is, then, sin, after all, a small matter? May we continue to live in sin since we have already paid the penalty for our sin? Perish the thought! Just the opposite is true.

And that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them and rose again, v. 15. Note again the "all," here again used without the article to stress the real nature of the term, its all-inclusiveness. The purpose which Christ had in mind when He died for all, when He and in Him all men suffered the full penalty for their sin, was not to earn permission for all to lead a life of sin and go unpunished. Paul continues, "And that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them and rose again." "That" is out of place. A new sentence begins. Note again the expressive use of the anarthrous "all." Three times he distinctly states the universality of redemption through the vicarious death of Christ. This time he very effectively repeats the statement in order to introduce the purpose of His dying. *They which live*, the living ones. The article before

the adjective points to a class, and this class is identical with those "all" for whom Christ died and who all are dead, have suffered the penalty of sin, in order that, while they are living ones, while they have life and breath, they may live not unto themselves. Their own selves are not to be the center of their thoughts, round which all their desires and hopes and activities revolve. Their lives, as long as they continue, are to be Christ-centered. Christ, the One who died for them, and this Christ alone, it is for whom they are to live, to whom they are to consecrate every breath, to whose loving service they are to surrender themselves, all their faculties, all their possessions, their body and soul. That is the purpose for which Christ died in their stead, so that in His death they all died. His purpose was not only that the *believers* should so live. His purpose goes much farther. His aim was to have all men, all that are living, to live no more for themselves but unto Him, their Savior. As He actually died for all and thus freed all from the penalty of death, so he died for all and rose again to sanctify all mankind, to bring them all to saving faith and enable them all to walk in holiness and good works. Cp. Ezek. 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4. The argument that "for" in v. 14 and 15a could not be taken in the sense of vicarious death, because in v. 15b the "for us" is governed by the two participles dying and risen, is not convincing. There is no reason why "for us," "instead of us," must be connected with risen. We translate, "Who died in our stead and rose again," or, following the exact wording of the Greek text, "Who for us died and rose again." The "rose again" adds another fact to the "died for us," proving the efficacy of His death.

From the fact and the purpose of the vicarious death the apostle draws a conclusion, introducing it with "wherefore." *Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more*, v. 6. The natural construction of this sentence, which has found so many different interpretations, is to combine "after the flesh" with "know" and "have known" and translate "to know, to have known, in a fleshly manner." The position of "no one" and "Christ" makes this translation imperative and emphasizes the objects of fleshly knowledge. To connect "after the flesh" with Christ and find here a proof that Paul met with Christ while He lived on earth would force us to connect the prepositional phrase with "no one" in the first clause. And Paul certainly does not mean to say that since his conversion he knew no one living his life on earth. There had been a time, however, when his knowledge of Christ was a fleshly knowledge, a knowledge such as he describes in 1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:7a. Cp. Acts 9:1-4; 26:9 ff.; 1 Cor. 15:8, 9; 1 Tim. 1:13. That state had

changed. He had known; the perfect here denotes a past state which has definitely ended. Cp. the use of the three perfects in 2 Tim. 4:7. Now he knows Christ no longer in the manner of the flesh but in the manner of the spirit as his God and Savior. In like manner Paul and his associates have learned to view their fellow-men, all mankind. Carnal mind makes riches, honor, position, wisdom, perhaps also outward integrity, the criterion of its judgment of the value of man. In this fleshly manner Paul no longer knows any one. He looks at his fellow-men with the eyes of Christ. Cp. Matt. 11:25-28; 1 Cor. 1:20-28. He has an altogether different way of judging and evaluating man. He sees in his fellow-men such as had been like himself redeemed in order that, like himself, they might live, and live not to themselves but in the service and to the glory of their blessed Redeemer. This change of his viewpoint is the direct consequence and outflow of the glorious fact that he knows Christ as one who had died for all. This knowledge has changed his whole being, his whole manner of thinking, of establishing values.

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are new, v.17. From the fact that the knowledge of Christ had wrought so marvelous a change in him the apostle draws another conclusion. He generalizes his statement in v.16. He is not the only one that has experienced the power of Christ to revolutionize completely the life of man. This selfsame Christ exercises the very same power and influence in every one whom He has apprehended and drawn unto Himself in everlasting love. Note again the universality of Christ's work. In vv.14 and 15 the three "all" proved the universality of His redemption, and here "any man" emphasizes the universality of Christ's willingness and power to change utterly those who have become His own through faith. Any man, as long as he is in Christ, is a new creature. Christ does not change the nature only of a certain class. His power is all-comprehensive. The self-righteous Pharisee as well as the sin-loving publican; the infant in the cradle as well as the mature man in the fulness of his strength or the old man standing on the brink of the grave; the man in the slums and in the gutter as well as he whose virtues and accomplishments are lauded to the skies,—all are included by the apostle in that brief word "any." In Christ, having come to Him in faith, every one of them will become a *new creature*.

Paul uses two very significant words. The Greek word *καινός*; denotes something "unprecedented, novel, unheard of." (Thayer, *Lexicon*.) Cp. on this usage Mark 1:27; Acts 17:19; Rev. 2:17. The creations of modern science, changing coal into perfume and

oil and foodstuffs, the telephone, the radio, indeed seem miracles performed by the mind of man, new creations. Yet they are actually not creations in the true sense of the term. They are merely new combinations of elements, forces, and powers, new applications of the laws inherent in the realm of created things ready to be put into the service of man. But once a man is in Christ, he has, in the fullest sense of the term, become a new creature. Joining oneself to Christ is not like joining a society for ethical culture or improvement, which may effect a certain change in one's views or manners. In joining oneself to Christ, that miracle whose very possibility was doubted by Nicodemus, is actually accomplished—man is born again. He becomes something that he was not before, something that could not have been produced by rearranging his natural powers, aptitudes, or habits.

Old things have passed away. The old nature, the old loves, fleshly valuations, doubts and questionings of one's reason, all have gone, passed away, perished. The aorist denotes the actual fact. You have become new not only in a few things but in all things; new life, new affections, new values, new outlooks, new hopes, new comforts, essentially different from anything before experienced, have been created in a man who had been spiritually dead. Unheard of, unexpected, unsuspected as this change has been, it is nevertheless a blessed fact. This new creation is not one existing merely in the fancy, or imagination, of the believer, only to vanish in the course of time and leave him in gloom and despair. It is the direct outflow of the death of Jesus. (Note the two "so that" connecting vv. 17 and 16 with v. 15.) This is the thought now carried out in detail by the apostle.

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, v. 18. Paul places the article before "all," the article pointing back and limiting "all things" to those just mentioned, all the new things. To make all things new requires power such as only God possesses.—The apostle goes on to show what was necessary in order to make all things new. God is described as one who "hath reconciled us to Himself." The aorist participle is constative. "The 'constative aorist' just *treats* the act as a single whole, entirely irrespective of the parts or time involved." (Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 832.) The word *καταλλάσσω* "signifies 1) to exchange and 2) to reconcile, i. e., to reestablish friendly relations, no matter on which side the antagonism exists." (*Exp. Gr. Test.*) The original relation between God and man, one of mutual love, had been disrupted by the fall of man, who had of his own free will joined himself to Satan and become God's enemy, yet blamed God for his fall, Gen. 3:1-13. This enmity toward God is inherent in man from his conception. Gen. 8:21; Ps. 51; Rom. 8:7; John 3:5, 6.

Man's sin changed also the attitude of God to man. In language that ought to preclude the possibility of misunderstanding, Scripture tells us that man, the sinner, is an object of God's anger and wrath, Ps. 90:7, the Hebrew word for wrath denoting fury, rage; Gesenius-Buhl: *Wut.* Cp. Rom. 1:18; 2:5, 8, 9; Eph. 2:1, etc. Scripture tells us that God hates not only sin, but the sinner also, Ps. 5:5; 11:5; Hos. 9:15. Paul calls the selfsame Jews whom God loved in accordance with His eternal decree of election objects of God's hatred, because, and as long as, they refuse to accept the Gospel, Rom. 11:28. In the same sense Paul calls all men objects of God's enmity before they were reconciled, Rom. 5:10. Of course, while man's fury, rage, hatred, is sinful whenever directed against man, God's hatred, enmity, rage, fury, is as holy and sinless as God Himself. This is the mystery which man will never understand, that God so loves the selfsame man He hates that He gives His own Son into death in order that He may love those whose enemy He was and, because man was a sinner, had to be. O mystery of love divine!

Paul says that God "reconciled us unto Himself." That was the only way in which a reconciliation between God and man could ever be effected. Man indeed was the offender, the sole cause of the mutual enmity. Man should have made the effort to establish a reconciliation. Man, however, had neither the inclination, Rom. 8:7, nor the power, Ps. 49:7, 8, to reestablish the relation of peace and harmony once existing between God and man. Therefore the God of grace and mercy past understanding has done what was man's duty but what man could not and would not undertake. God Himself has changed the relation of mutual enmity to one of peace and love as far as His relation to man is concerned. He reconciled us, says Paul. He still is thinking of himself and Timothy, as he is still demonstrating why the love of Christ constrains them. What he says of himself and his coworker he will presently generalize.

God reconciled "by Jesus Christ," the anointed Savior. The reconciliation of man is God's work, a demonstration of God's great love toward His enemies. At the same time it is the glorious manifestation of the marvelous love of Jesus Christ, without whom there would have been no reconciliation, who was willing to carry out God's plan with all it involved. For that purpose Christ died for all, vv. 14, 15, to bear the punishment which the punitive justice of God demanded and to procure that righteousness for man without which the mandatory justice of God could not be satisfied. This latter thought is brought out in the following verses. But before he expands this thought, the apostle adds another proof for the unsurpassable love of God and Christ which constrains him

and his fellow-preachers. God has not only reconciled mankind, He has also given to them the ministry of reconciliation, that ministry, that glorious service of telling others of the reconciliation which God had brought about for themselves and for all the world, "the ministry which is devoted to reconciliation, which is the means of reconciliation for men, inasmuch as through this ministry reconciliation is preached to them and they are brought unto faith on the *ἡσπότηριον* [propitiation], Jesus, which faith is the *causa apprehendens* of the reconciliation, Rom. 3:25; compare *διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης*, 2 Cor. 3:9." (Meyer.)

The two statements of v. 18 are explained in greater detail vv. 19-21: "reconciled us" in 19 a, "hath given," etc., in 19 b-21. The construction of ἦν and the three participles has been variously explained.* We prefer the construction suggested in *Expositors' Greek Testament*. "The A. V. 'God was in Christ, reconciling,' etc., is not accurate; ἦν goes with both *καταλλάσσω* and *θέμενος*." The second participle, "not imputing," etc., independent of ἦν, merely describes more fully the mode of the reconciliation. Both activities of God in Christ, the reconciliation and the non-imputation, are placed into the past by the imperfect ἦν. The imperfect and the two present participles denote durative action, both activities running contemporaneously; or if one prefers, the second participle is the descriptive participle, with greater emphasis on the description than on the duration. The aorist *καταλλάξας* in v. 18 was constative. In v. 19 Paul purposely uses a different tense, the periphrastic imperfect, which brings out very clearly that the reconciliation was not a work of a moment. It was a far more difficult work to redeem man than to create him. God in Christ was reconciling the world unto Himself in an activity which began at the moment of Christ's conception in the womb of Mary and extended through all those years of humiliation and poverty, of persecution and shame, of pain and torment, of degradation and the agony of hell on the cross, and was not completed until Christ cried "It is finished." That was the price paid by the Son of God in order that He might make the reconciliation of the world unto God possible, 1 Cor. 6:20; Rom. 5:6-8. Such love manifested by Christ constrained the apostle, v. 14.

God in Christ was reconciling *the world*. The reconciliation that has taken place is an all-comprehensive one, embracing the world. In restricting the reconciliation to the elect and interpreting

* For a full discussion of the various possibilities of construction and the proof that none of the various constructions permits us to understand this passage of the subjective reconciliation through faith, see "Objective Justification," Dr. Theo. Engelder, *CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, Vol. IV, 1933, p. 564 ff., 664 ff.

"the world" as including only the believers faithful to the end, Calvinism exactly reverses the meaning of this word. If Calvinism would exclude the elect from God's reconciliation, it might point to passages where quite evidently the elect are excluded, where evidently only unbelievers are spoken of; e. g., John 17:14, 16, 25; 2 Cor. 7:10, etc. But, as already Calov observes, the word is not once used of the sum total of the elect. Whenever *κόσμος*, is used of man, it designates either the wicked, the unbelievers, or mankind as such, the aggregate of human beings. The latter sense obtains in our passage. The whole world, believers and unbelievers, were reconciled by God in Christ. It is not dogmatic bias when the Lutheran Church insists on universal reconciliation. The clear words and the Biblical usage of the term *κόσμος* compel such an interpretation.

"Not imputing." This word was used by the LXX in translating such Old Testament passages as Gen. 15:6; Ps. 32:2; 106:31, which speak of imputed righteousness and non-imputation of sin, the very subject treated by Paul in our passage. The Greek and the Hebrew words denote a reckoning, putting one's account on either the credit or the debit side; to impute. God did not impute "their trespasses." "Their" points back to "the world," the latter designating mankind in its totality, while the two pronouns refer to all the individuals making up the world. "Trespasses"; the original denotes a falling beside, a lapse, a deviation. The term is not used to minimize the wickedness of sin or to imply that only minor faults, momentary lapses, sins of weakness, were not imputed. In Rom. 5:13-20 the term (there rendered offense) is used interchangeably with sin and disobedience, and Paul states that one lapse of one man caused death to rule, v. 17, and judgment to come upon all men unto damnation, v. 18. The word includes every lapse from righteousness, from the slightest evil thought to the most heinous crime.

And now we are told that God was "not imputing their trespasses unto them." The present participle "not imputing" describes the non-imputation as contemporaneous with the reconciliation and therefore, like the latter, an act of God lying in the past. There was a time, already in the day of the apostle lying in the past, when the sins of all individuals that had lived, were living, and shall live on earth were not imputed to them. In other words, not one sin, great or small, ever committed by any man was laid to his charge, counted against him, written on the debit side of his account with God. How that was made possible was already indicated by the words "in Christ" in the first clause and will be further elucidated in v. 21. Non-imputation of sins actually committed, of sins that are *their* sins, is only a different expression for

forgiveness, or remission, of sins. God forgave, remitted, sin committed by man by not placing these sins on the sinners' account. Looking at the account of man, God saw nothing to rouse His anger. The debit side was blank. There were no longer any debts charged against man, and therefore there was no longer any occasion for wrath and hatred against man on the part of God. The mutual hatred and enmity existing between God and man had ceased, as far as God was concerned. Though man still is and remains God's enemy until he has been made a new creature, v. 17, God has become his Friend. God is at peace with the world, with every individual.

And hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation, v. 19. We connect this participle with the words "God was in Christ, reconciling." For the imperfect with the aorist participle, see Luke 23:19. *δέμενος*, having placed for Himself, for the execution of His purpose (cp. on this usage 1 Thess. 5:9; 1 Tim. 1:12), into our hands, in our possession, in our charge (cp. on this usage of *ἐν* 1 Pet. 5:2) the Word of Reconciliation. The ministry of reconciliation is here defined as a ministry of the Word, the Word of Reconciliation, the Gospel. That is folly and foolishness to the unbelieving world, yet it is the only means, the only power given to the messengers of Christ, to carry out their ministry. And they need no more. For this is the word of a reconciliation wrought by the great God Himself, and He who has given to His preachers this Word stands behind this Word with all the omnipotence of His grace and love. Read 1 Cor. 1.2. Paul and his fellow-preachers had experienced the power of this Word, and far from being dissatisfied with having been equipped with no greater power, the apostle glories in this gift and forges from its possession an unanswerable argument for the dignity of his ministry. This becomes even more apparent as he continues.

Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God, v. 20. "Now, then." Since God has committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation, v. 19, cp. 18 c, therefore we are ambassadors for Christ. The verb *προσβέβω* occurs in the New Testament only here and in Eph. 6:20. It means to be old and, since important offices were usually entrusted to older people, to be an elder, specifically an ambassador, a person commissioned by a ruler or a government as official representative in a foreign country. In Eph. 6:20 Paul calls himself an ambassador for, *ὑπέρ*, the Gospel. There the preposition evidently cannot be understood in the vicarious sense. Paul is not an ambassador in the stead, but in the interest, in the service of, the Gospel. Yet that does not warrant us to take the preposition in our passage in the same

sense as in Eph. 6:20. The situation is an altogether different one. In Eph. 6 it is an object; in our verse, a person for whom the apostle is an ambassador. Paul is an ambassador for Christ, for the Gospel; but Paul's relation to the two is different. In both cases it is "over" *ὑπέρ*, in the one case standing "over" the Gospel, protecting and serving the interests of the Gospel; in the other case, standing "over" Christ, so that people see not Christ, but only the ambassador, who is sent, not merely in the service and interest of his government but as its representative. In the person of his ambassador the President appears before the governing powers of the other countries. The ambassador takes the President's place. An insult to him in his ambassadorial office is resented by the President as a personal affront to himself and the country he represents. In this sense Paul is the ambassador for Christ. He is Christ's representative on earth, serving not only on His behalf, in His interest, but in His place as preacher of the Gospel. That this is the sense of "for" is also evident from the explanatory clause added by Paul, "as though God did beseech you by us." Note the interchange of "God" and "Christ." Because God in Christ committed to Paul and his fellow-preachers the Word of Reconciliation, they are Christ's ambassadors. Being Christ's ambassadors, God beseeches. God beseeches *through* them. When they speak, they speak not only on behalf, in the interest of, God, but as men *through* whom God speaks, as men who speak in the place of God, as His representatives. Hearing them, you hear God. Although one sees and hears only them, as ambassadors they stand "over" Christ, spokesmen of Him who invisibly stands behind them, whose cause they have made their own, even as, and just because, He made their cause His own. So they ask, beg, plead, beseech, in Christ's stead, again *ὑπέρ*. "Be ye reconciled to God." In this entire verse Paul does not state whom he and his associates are addressing. That plea describes their message wherever they go as the ambassadors for Christ, who has commissioned them, Matt. 28:19, 20, and particularly Paul, Acts 9:15; 26:14-18. Note the passive aorist, Be ye once for all reconciled. Men can do nothing to effect the reconciliation, nor need they. The reconciliation, the forgiveness of their sins, is an established fact, and God beseeches them to enter into that state of peace which God has created; to accept the non-imputation of their trespasses, the forgiveness of their sins, which God has provided in Christ and proclaims through His ambassadors; to cease their enmity toward God and so make the reconciliation which on the part of God took place at Christ's death on Calvary a mutual one. The plea of the ambassadors is clothed in the form of a command. Cp. Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; Matt. 11:28; Luke 14:17. It is an expression of the

good and gracious will of God, whose firm and earnest will it is that all men come into the peace prepared by Him. And this plea is efficacious. It appropriates to man, the sinner, the enemy of God, that very reconciliation, that very forgiveness, which it offers to them and commands them to receive. Only if man continues his enmity and refuses to be reconciled, will this sincere and efficacious plea be rendered ineffective. Strange, mysterious power of man to reject the mystery of love divine and what it offers!

For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, v. 21. The connection between v. 20 and 21 is well determined by Calov: "The apostle states the reason why they ought to return into favor with God and explains in what manner and why God does not impute their sins to the world nor will impute them to the believers, because He has made Christ to be sin for us and in our stead by imputing our sin to Him who knew no sin." "The one not knowing sin." The μή does not, in distinction to οὐ, stress a subjective knowledge, as, e. g., the *Expositor's Greek Testament* refers it to "God's knowledge of this fact" (Christ's sinlessness). In the New Testament μή is the usual negative with participles. There is no need to ask who this One not knowing sin is. There is but One. The apostle does not mean to say that Christ never had been conscious of sin, which might admit the possibility of His having committed an unknown fault, cp. Ps. 19:12, nor that Christ had no knowledge whatsoever concerning sin. In the Sermon on the Mount He explains with greatest clarity that Law whereby is the knowledge of sin, Rom. 3:20. Speaking through His prophets and apostles and during His lifetime speaking Himself, He paints the clearest picture ever presented to man of sin, its source and origin, its true nature, its wickedness, its dire consequences. Christ knew all about sin. And yet He knew not sin. The word *know* is here used, as so frequently in Holy Scripture, of a *nosse cum affectu et effectu*, a knowing affectionately and effectively. Christ and sin never entered into a relation of personal friendship and affection. Much as sin tried to win Him over, there was no responsive chord in His heart answering to the lure and temptation of sin. Christ was and ever remained that bitter, irreconcilable enemy of sin promised in Gen. 3:15. He was from eternity the holy, sinless God. When He was conceived a true human being, Mary's Son, He was that Holy Thing, Luke 1:35. Throughout His life He remained the One who knew not sin, Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:19. Him the Lord made sin. Already in the Old Testament the sin-offering was invariably called ἡμάρτια, *sin*, translated in the LXX usually περί ἁμαρτίας, but in several passages by the simple ἁμαρτία, *sin*;

cp. Lev. 5:12; 6:25. In eating the sin-offering, the priests became bearers of the iniquities of the congregation for the purpose of making atonement for them before the Lord, Lev. 10:17. The reason for this strange terminology and obligation lies in the fact that the sin of guilty man was transferred to the sacrificial animal by the symbolic laying on of hands, Lev. 1:4; 3:2; 4:4; 16:21, 22. In this manner the sacrifice was made sin, and the priests eating the sin-offering ate, as it were, the sin of the people, made them their own, became bearers of other men's sins, responsible for their atonement.

In Christ these types were literally fulfilled. The Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, Is. 53:6. So completely did God make the sins of mankind Christ's own that He numbered His Son, the obedient, righteous Servant, Is. 53:9 b, 11 b, with the transgressors, v. 12, Mark 15:28; that God looked upon His well-beloved Son as *sin*, seeing in Him no longer the spotless God-man, seeing only the sin of the world, sin which He hated and on account of which the fierceness of God's wrath and anger centered upon Him, who, being made sin was made a curse, Gal. 3:13, whom He forsook, Ps. 22:1, turning Him over to the torments of hell and the diabolic fury of Satan. And Christ, knowing no sin, willingly submitted to the will of the Father, since God's will is Christ's will. He willingly suffered Himself to be made sin, He felt the sin of the world, the guilt and burden of it as if it were His own. He prayed already in the word of prophecy, Ps. 40:12-15; He came to Jordan to be baptized with the baptism of repentance and remission of sin, Matt. 3:13-15; Mark 1:4. He bore the penalty of man's sin, Is. 53:3-5, though it oppressed and afflicted Him, v. 7, though it wrung from His agonized heart that anguished cry, Ps. 22:1; Mark 15:34.

All this "for us," ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, standing over us. God took our guilt and placed it on His own Son, who as the Mediator of reconciliation lovingly, protectingly, stood over, ὑπὲρ, us. All the wrath and punishment and damnation fell upon the Christ, who knew no sin, but who for love of mankind was with His own consent made sin for us, in our place. In the original "for us" stands in the center. On the one side Christ, the Son of God, knowing no sin; on the other side the God-man made sin. In the very center, connecting the two and explaining the seemingly irreconcilable facts, "FOR US," the very heart of Christianity.

Paul does not end by stating that Christ was made sin. He shows the blessed result of this strange act of God and ends in a climactic outburst of triumphant joy. Again we marvel at the skill with which the writer has formulated the sentence. "We" at the beginning, "Him" at the end. What a contrast! Sinful we,

sinless He; we, the unholy, He the only holy God! Yet the words in the center connect us with Him and Him with us. We are made the righteousness of God in Him. In the same manner as He was made sin, our sins being imputed to Him, laid on Him, reckoned to His account by the Lord, in the same manner in which, and at the same time when all this occurred we were made righteousness. Our sins, having been laid on Him, were no longer being imputed to us. His righteousness, which He who knew no sin and fulfilled all righteousness by His obedience unto death had procured for us, was counted our righteousness.

That is the glorious message which Paul and Timothy proclaim to all the world. Note that v. 21 furnishes the motive for the plea "Be ye reconciled." This plea is directed to such as have not yet accepted the reconciliation, to unbelieving mankind. And they are simply told that all that is necessary for the reconciliation on the part of God has been done long ago. Paul here includes himself and his fellow-preachers with the great mass of mankind and, pointing to the cross on Calvary, tells all the world: There God has made Christ to be sin for us, for you and for me, that we, you and I, might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We have accepted that reconciliation. Oh, be ye also reconciled!

As our lesson opens with the love of Christ toward us, so it ends with our righteousness in Him, Him alone. Why should not every sinner accept the reconciliation, so complete, so cheering, so transporting, accomplished by Him? Why should not the love of this Jesus constrain every man to love Him who died for all and henceforth to live no longer unto himself but unto Him who died for him and rose again?

This text teaches us to understand the Mystery of Calvary as far as this is possible for finite mind. From various angles this mystery may be presented to the congregation. *Paul Revealing to Us the Hidden Wisdom of Christ's Suffering.* 1) In Christ all died, v. 14. 2) By Christ God has reconciled the world unto Himself, vv. 18-21. 3) In Christ all things are become new, vv. 15-17.—*The Love of Christ Constraineth Us:* 1) To be reconciled unto God. Christ has redeemed us from the guilt, v. 21, and penalty of sin, v. 14. Therefore God no longer imputes sin but is reconciled to the world, v. 19. This is proclaimed through the Gospel, vv. 19 b, 20, 21. Let us not despise its plea. Let us know Christ as our Savior, v. 16 b, and be reconciled to God, v. 20 b. 2) To live unto Christ. In Christ we are new creatures, v. 17, created by God through Jesus Christ, who by His Gospel brought us to faith, v. 18. Therefore let us heed the admonition vv. 15, 16 a.—*The Over-*

whelming Love of Christ. 1) It has freed us from sin's guilt, vv. 19-21, offering us this freedom in the Gospel, vv. 19 b, 20. 2) It has redeemed us from sin's penalty, v. 14. 3) It has delivered us from sin's power, vv. 15-17, offering us this deliverance in the Gospel, v. 18.—*Christ Is All in All.* 1) In Him we have been reconciled. 2) In Him God has established the Word of Reconciliation. 3) In Him we have been renewed.—*Calvary's Message:* 1) God is reconciled, therefore be ye reconciled. 2) Christ died for you, therefore live unto Him.

The pastor might preach a series of seven Lenten sermons on this text. 1) V. 14, *The Miraculous Death of Christ.* He died for all. We all have died. 2) V. 15, *The Purpose of Christ's Death.* We should live not unto ourselves. We should live unto Him. 3) V. 16, *True Knowledge of Christ.* Its nature, v. 16 b. Its effect, v. 16 a. 4) V. 17, *A Christian Is a New Creature.* That is a glorious fact. That is possible only through Christ. 5) Vv. 18, 19, *God Reconciled the World unto Himself.* That is an actual reconciliation. That is a universal reconciliation. 6) Vv. 19 b, 20, *God has Committed unto Man the Word of Reconciliation.* That is a glorious fact. Let us heed His plea. 7) Good Friday. V. 21, *The Vicarious Atonement.* Christ was made sin for us. We are made righteousness in Him.

THEO. LAETSCH

Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

Palm Sunday

Luke 19:29-40

Today begins Holy Week in memory of the last days of Christ in the state of humiliation. The holy writers record every detail in the life of our Savior during these last days.

Momentous days! They bring us ever nearer to the great day of the all-atoning sacrifice and to the day of triumphant victory over devil, death, and hell. Today's text brings to our attention in a forceful manner that our Savior is not an ordinary man; that His going to Golgotha is not forced upon Him. He is the God-man who of His own free will lays down His life for our salvation.

Behold Our King!

1. *He is the King of Power* 2. *He is the King of Grace*

1

Vv. 29-31. The omniscient King commands, and everybody must obey. He knows where the colt is tied, vv. 32-34. His word is enough to make the owners yield. From afar He causes the strangers to obey. The owner's question (v. 33) shows that nothing