

Good Friday - 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

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[0 : 00] Well, good evening, Providence Baptist Church. Our text this evening is going to be 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 17 through 21.

! 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 17 through 21. Why do we call it good?

I know many of you could probably answer that quite thoroughly. But at least acknowledge at face value this is kind of a strange name for such a day.

It is a day where we remember the death, the excruciating death, as a matter of fact, of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was led captive.

He was mocked. He was stripped naked, shamed, beaten, nailed to a cross, through his feet and his hands, spat upon.

[1 : 14] And all of this occurred in an illegal trial with unjust officials whom he created. Jew and Gentile alike rejected their creator and nailed him to his creation, the tree.

And so there is a really real question here about what on earth is good about that. And relatedly, why would Christ come to die anyways?

Well, to answer these questions, we will look at 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17 through 21. Paul writes, Therefore, Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This evening we are going to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the same reason. This evening we are going to see at least three reasons why Christ came to die. These same reasons will also help us why it is that we call this day good, and rightly so, because it is truly good.

[3 : 19] There are more than these three reasons, to be sure, that are just as important. But our text today draws us to these three, and so we will follow.

And a quick but important note, I'm not going to go word by word through this passage as would be my normal practice, nor am I necessarily tracing the argument Paul is making through 2 Corinthians.

Rather, as a day of remembrance, this good Friday, I want our minds to be drawn to the goodness of Christ's death, with the goal of honoring God and edifying the body.

Three reasons Christ came to die on this good day. Number one, to create the world anew. To create the world anew.

Look back at verse 17. Paul writes, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, look, the new has come.

[4 : 27] Since Genesis 3, due to Adam's sin, the world is cursed by God. Thorns, thistles, tough ground, unproductive ground, weeds, all these kinds of things pop up after the fall.

If you've ever cut your hand out on a farm or working in your yard, you can thank Adam. And likewise, God punishes humanity directly.

To Eve, he says, You will bring forth children in pain, and your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. To Adam, he says, You will work in pain.

You will sweat. And you will die. And of course, because Adam and Eve sinned, all of their offspring are born as sinners as well.

And this is why King David, many years later, many generations later, could say truly and rightly in Psalm 51 5, Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

[5 : 40] He's not saying mom was a bad person who got around. He's saying, I was conceived as a sinner. This reality that David understands is made more explicit and more universal throughout the Bible.

Just one example is Romans 3, 23. Paul writes, For all have sinned, that's everyone, every individual, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

And so we get these chilling words from Paul in Romans 5, 12. He says, Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, talking about Adam, just as sin came into the world through Adam, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.

sinned. And so you don't even need a Bible necessarily to know this. The world around us is broken, and we ourselves are broken.

Nothing is as it should be. But God, but God, as Paul says, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

[7 : 08] By grace, you have been saved. Ephesians 2, 4. This is why Paul can say in 2 Corinthians 5, 17, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

To be in Christ, or to be with Christ, is to be made new. It is to come alive. This happens when one has repented of their sins and confesses Jesus as Lord.

That confession is made public by baptism, and biblically, when a person decides they are team Jesus, they publicly pronounce that through baptism. And likewise, the church in turn baptizes them as a public recognition that this person belongs.

This is one of us. This person is a Christian, a new creature. And hence, Romans 6, 4, Paul says, So if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

If any person is to be saved and made alive, Christ had to die. The only way dead men live is if death itself is overtaken.

[8 : 46] If the cursed world and the broken man are made new, this can only be because they have died and been reborn, remade. And so you can see why this is so good.

Christ is reversing the curse of Genesis 3. He is removing the guilt and the punishment of Genesis 3.

And we Christians here and now, as James says in James 1.18, are a kind of first fruits of his creatures. That is to say that in God creating the new heavens and the new earth, he actually starts right here, right now, by creating anew his people.

And so, brothers and sisters, you and I are the beginning of the new heavens and the new earth by the grace of God right now. The second reason we see that Christ came to die is that Christ died to reconcile us to God the Father, to reconcile the world to the Father.

So look back at verse 18. We'll read again. Paul writes, all this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

[10 : 19] That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. Now, we could rightly talk a lot about the mission of the church from this passage.

We could talk about our responsibility as ambassadors, the need to be peacemakers, to preach the gospel of reconciliation. reconciliation. But again, today, we want to focus on why Christ died and the goodness of that horrific event, the actual content of the gospel.

And so, in doing that, we see a glaring key word in these few verses. It is reconciliation. It appears five times in this passage, twice as a noun, three times as a verb.

And this term indicates a change of relationship. In sin, we were enemies of God. It is not an exaggeration to say we hated God.

[11 : 35] Capital H. So, how would a creature who hates God be reconciled to God? Why would he? He hates him. But this is one of the things that makes Christianity unique from all other religions.

Man does not reconcile himself to God. He cannot. But as Paul has made plain, God reconciles us to himself.

Read verse 18 again. God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself. God did that. You and I did not do that.

God and God alone did that through Christ. It is only after God reconciles us through Christ that Paul commands us to be reconciled to God in verse 20.

So, Christ's death is not merely enabling our heart change. It is not merely making us alive. As good and great as that is, the gospel is even more.

[12:45] God is reestablishing his relationship with us. Through Christ, the reconciliation that God brings changes our relationship such that we're no longer enemies.

We're friends of God, as James 2 says. We're adopted sons and daughters, as Ephesians 1 says. We get to call him father.

We who are enemies call him father. We're now described as the bride of Christ in Revelation 19. So, talk about a turn of events from enemies to bride. And what is it that God does through Christ to bring this about?

Well, in the words of the prophet Isaiah 53, verse 10, God crushed Jesus. He has put him to grief.

[13:51] And so, it is through Christ's death on this Good Friday, so many years ago, that God reconciled us to himself. Paul makes this connection explicit in Romans 5, verse 10.

He says, for while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son. Much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

The cross is horrific. Christ's death is horrific. That God the son died and died in the manner he did, at the same time, it is so good.

It is so good, because in saving us through the death of the son, we will walk with God in the streets of the new Jerusalem. In the many gardens of the new earth, we will know God, we will feel his breath on our face, as Adam and Eve once did before the fall.

If you're cold toward the Lord right now, relish in that. That is amazing. That is astounding. And third and finally, Christ died to make us the righteousness of God.

[15:13] He died to make us the righteousness of God. Verse 21. Paul says, for our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God makes the world anew, he reconciles us to himself, and he makes us the righteousness of God for his glory. That's why he died.

But one question I've kind of skipped around is this, why does Christ's death accomplish this? We don't normally think of death as a productive, fruitful, life-giving thing.

I mean, it's death. So why is Christ's death so effective at bringing about these massive changes?

Well, verse 21, the Father made the Son to be sin.

That is to say, the sin that God must punish, that we are guilty of, Christ bore that on our behalf. Paul says, for our sake.

[16:26] And this is what theologians have called the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement, absolutely fundamental to the faith. Without this doctrine, there is no gospel.

Penal, meaning penalty, substitutionary, meaning substitute, atonement, meaning satisfying the wrath of God's justice towards sinners.

sinners. And so, in short, penal substitutionary atonement is just a fancy way to say that Christ died in your place for your sin to uphold the justice and mercy of God.

And Christ is the only one who could satisfy the wrath of God as the spotless Lamb of God. The entire Old Testament sacrificial system prefigures Christ in this way.

This is why when you read Leviticus, you see over and over again the importance that a lamb or a calf or whatever the animal is being sacrificed must be spotless, without blemish, perfect.

[17:37] This is why 1 Peter 1:19 speaks of, quote, the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

He's referencing the Levitical law. All of this is why Christ's death is efficacious in pardoning our guilt because his death actually deals with our sin once and for all.

It is finished. And so you can see in verse 20, for us, the sinner, by becoming sin, though he knew no sin, in other words, he is righteous so that we might become the righteousness of God.

He is both the sin offering and the bearer of the punishment for sin. Meanwhile, we, the actual sinners, the ones responsible for this mess, are made the righteousness of God.

In the eyes of God, by the grace of God, we are seen as spotless lambs, as righteous. Paul says it this way in Colossians 1:21.

[18:52] He says, And you, who were once alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he is now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, that is, as righteous.

the record of wrongs that we have committed are wiped out. We no longer carry the guilt of Adam, but the crown of being in Christ by grace.

What love is that? Who is like that? And so, friends, I've said it before, and I'll say it again.

Behold your God. In closing, we actually just sang this hymn a moment ago. I didn't know we'd be doing that. Very glad we did.

But I just want to read these words from the hymn, his robes for mine. And my prayer is that you'll set your mind on the truths of these words, that these will always be on your soul and mind and heart every day of the year.

[20 : 05] But especially as we anticipate this Sunday, Easter Sunday, I think it is appropriate to, perhaps more than normal, draw our minds to these specific truths.

And so, I'm going to read the first verse and last verse of his robes for mine. The hymn writer says, his robes for mine, a wonderful exchange.

Clothed in my sin, Christ suffered neath God's rage. Draped in his righteousness, I'm justified. In Christ, I live, for in my place, he died.

His robes for mine, such anguish none can know. Christ, God's beloved, condemned as though his foe. He, as though I, accursed and left alone.

I, as though he, embraced and welcomed home. Let's pray. Let's pray.