

(2 Corinthians 5:16-21, NIV84)

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 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. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

"What must I do to inherit eternal life?" That is a question that has been asked for countless generations. "What must I do...?"

When Jesus was asked that question, He replied to His questioner: "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" To which the man answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Then Jesus gave this response: "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live." That sounds pretty straightforward doesn't it? Just love the Lord with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself, and you're good to go [to heaven]. But do you see the problem this presents?

The fact is: you and I don't love the Lord with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. If we did we would never sin. And is any one of us under the impression that we love our neighbors as we love ourselves? Try this the next time you go shopping: you find an item you're looking for, but it's the last one on the shelf. What do you do? You snatch it up and think: "Whew, that was close, I got the last one!" Wouldn't it have been more loving to leave the last one, just in case your neighbor needed it?

But we will try to justify ourselves all day long. We will say: "Well, nobody's perfect!" And that's just the point: nobody is perfect, but perfection is what our God demands. The perfect demands of God's law ought to lead us give up all hope of earning eternal life by what we do. This is what Jesus wants us to understand.

Because we are helpless sinners, we need a Savior. Thank God, He sent Jesus to rebuild the relationship between God and mankind that sin destroyed. Because Jesus' perfect life (His righteousness) is credited (or imputed) to us, and His sacrificial death paid the debt of all our sins (or atoned for them), we are reconciled to God and heirs of eternal life. This is the gospel message we believe and are privileged to tell others about; there is

no greater way to show love for God or for our neighbor than that.

With you, ambassadors of Christ,  
Pastor Golm

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May 11

"Lord, Help Me Love You Back"

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. 2 Corinthians 5:19

The seminary professor had just finished expounding the above passage to his class. After a moment, a student raised his hand and questioned: "Do you mean that Christ saved even a man like Adolf Hitler?" Without hesitation, the professor replied: "Yes, Christ saved even a man like Adolf Hitler-but Hitler never accepted Christ's salvation."

The professor was merely repeating what the Holy Scriptures say in the passage quoted above: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing [charging] their trespasses unto them." We are dealing here with what theologians call "objective justification"-that is, the universal amnesty which Christ won for the whole human race, without exception.

There is no sinner in this world for whom the Savior has not died-or for whom forgiveness has not been purchased. Christ died for both of the criminals who were crucified with him-not just the one who accompanied him to paradise. What a comforting thought for the believing Christian who, having fallen into sin, is terrorized by the magnitude of his transgression. He knows that in heaven he has a reconciled God who is eager to accept him back into the fold.

True, the penitent sinner must believe and trust that the offered reconciliation is for him. But the glorious fact is that it is already there-there by the grace of God-there for the vilest sinner. Before we were born, God said: "I love you". All that remains for us is to say: "Thank you, Lord! Because of the love of Jesus Christ, Your Son, who gave His life for me, I love You back!" Is that what you and I are saying-and doing? May the theme-thought of our life, expressed or unexpressed always be:

Thee will I love, my Life, my Savior, Who art my best and truest Friend.  
Thee will I love and praise for ever, For never shall Thy kindness end;

Thee will I love With all my heart, Thou my Redeemer art.