

Sermon Notes, June 11, 2017 The Christian Lifestyle: Biblical Peacemaking, 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

In our series, we're keenly aware of the importance of the vertical relationship we have with God. We're going to look at horizontal relationships in light of where our vertical relationship should now be, if we have heard and submitted to the Word of God and are living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Let me say this explicitly. When you find yourself on those crooked paths, following the ways of the world, separated from your creator God, there will be collateral damage in regard to your relationship with others. There are lots of crooked paths we've looked at, and of those are sin against God, but in sinning against God, that vertical fracture creates a ripple effect across the horizontal relationships we have that creates stress, fallout, brokenness, betrayal, bitterness, resentment, frustration, anger, and rage.

God rights the vertical relationship. How? All of our sin, past, present, and future, and all of our guilt driven out by the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ so we can gladly and wholeheartedly say that for those of us who are in Christ there is no condemnation. "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for what the law could not do, weak as it was in the flesh, God did by sending his Son." There's no "but" to that sentence. He came and got me. He came and sought me. He saved me. If I responded to that wooing, I responded by the gift of faith he gave me. Even the faith to believe in his grace was given to me by God, so, standing here today, I have nothing to boast in but him. Nothing. I have nothing to point to but him. God did this. God rescued me. God saved me.

He has righted the vertical relationship, yet I still have issues horizontally. How do we address that and engage that? 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 tells us. If you have come to Christ, you and I have been raised now and walk in the newness of life, so my behavior now is compelled, controlled by, motivated by not just duty but by the love of Jesus Christ and the love of God made manifest for me in him. 2 Corinthians 5 creates a rhythm we are going to live in: We are controlled and compelled by Christ. We regard no one from a worldly point of view, because we know all have died and that when Christ died those of us who are in Christ died with him, so now, as we look, we see with spiritual eyes on the world around us.

In John 13, Jesus makes a challenging statement: "They will know we are his disciples by the way we love one another." It's provocative. We live in a culture filled with people who love to tear other people down. Here's what insidious. A lot of that actually seeps into the church. We tend to attack people quickly, to be disappointed quickly, to grow frustrated quickly, and we have the tendency to wound others quickly when we feel like there has been injustice, whether there *has* been injustice or not. Then we like to sit back and nurse our hurts and oftentimes make sure others pay. We don't tend to be gracious, despite the fact we're the recipients of an unmeasured amount of grace. This provocative statement, that the world, those *outside* the church of Jesus Christ, would know we are *inside* of Jesus Christ by how we interact with one another, namely, our love for one another.

It's not that we love each other perfectly, or that we don't hurt each other, but here's what happens. God puts a good weight on his people to work toward reconciliation whenever we have sinned against others or harmed others, whether we know we did or not. God begins to put a good weight (not a heavy weight) on his children to pursue peace whenever there's conflict, whenever there's a falling out, to make things right, to own all we can for the sake of his name and the good of the relationship. In fact, Romans 12:18 says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." God has already given us the example of what he would have done, which is initiate and forgive, engage and reconcile.

Those of us who have been forgiven, how consistently do we walk in gratitude for the grace we've been shown by the King of glory? Not as often as we should. We're quick to forget, quick to presume upon the Lord for his grace and forgiveness. We're already aware of the sinful tendency of people, including myself. But, as Christ followers, we need to look inside our hearts, see where we have sinned against others, and then to seek out reconciliation and make amends for what we can own. "If it is possible, as much as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." That means we're seeking out amends. We're seeking reconciliation. Here's something that will help.

These are the "Seven A's of Confession and Apology" by Peacemakers.

1. Address everyone involved.
2. Avoid if, but, and maybe.
3. Admit specifically.
4. Acknowledge the hurt.
5. Accept the consequences.
6. Alter your behavior.
7. Ask for forgiveness.

Now, the big question... What if they say no? Here's what you do. Are you ready? You pray for them, you ask God to bless them and you move on. "When it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." You have owned your sin before God and you have owned your sin before them. There's nothing more you can do except pray and continue to pursue the transforming work of grace in your own heart, in your own life, to learn from your sin and move forward into what the Lord has for you, praying that, in time, God will grant to them the ability to forgive.