

# The Ministry of Reconciliation

by Paris Reidhead

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life that is pleasing to God, and the consequences of sin, while also highlighting the rewards of believers and the love of Christ.*

**Duration:** 58:32

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, John 5:22, Romans 14:12, 2 Corinthians 5:10-12, Hebrews 9:27

**Topics:** "Reconciliation"

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## Description

The sermon transcript discusses the concept of judgment and the belief that everyone who is a Christian will appear before the Judgment Day of Christ. The speaker reflects on how the way sermons are delivered has changed over time, from simple preaching to now being done on television with full color and sound. The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing that following Christ is a choice that may come at a cost, even the loss of livelihood or family. The speaker also highlights the ministry of reconciliation and the responsibility Christians have to share the old story of God reconciling the world through Christ.

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## Transcript

Will you turn please to 2nd Corinthians and the 5th chapter. 2nd Corinthians chapter 5. I would like to begin reading with the 10th verse, according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that you may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance and not in heart. For whether we be beside ourselves it is to God, for whether we be sober it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead, 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.

Wherefore henceforth, no we, literally judge we, or perhaps we might even put it this way. Wherefore henceforth, we do not judge people as being valuable to us, though we have used Christ, yet now henceforth we aren't just using him anymore. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.

All things have passed away, behold all things are become new, and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to which that

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's dead, be ye reconciled to God, for he hath made him to be sin for us, he who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. The back please to the 10th verse.

The apostle is basing this entire argument, exhortation, message, on the fact that everyone who is a Christian, everyone who has been born of God, must, must, appear before the judgment seat of Christ. I remember some years ago, a situation arose, and a friend came to another friend, and his argument was this, well you have to eat, don't you? The man said no, I don't have to eat. Well your family has to live, don't they? And the reply was no, my family doesn't have to live.

Well how do you explain that? You have to eat, you have to. No, there have been many, said this person, that have made a decision to follow Christ, that cost them their living, and their family their lives. And you have to therefore recognize that this is a choice that a person is free, obligated to make.

And then this man turned to the one that was talking to him, and said, I don't have to eat, my family doesn't have to eat, I don't have to live, they don't have to live, but they and I must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That's one thing you can't avoid. You may make decisions that affect you in various ways, but there's one decision you cannot make, and that is to avoid appearing before the judgment seat of Christ.

That is if you are a Christian. Now if you are not a Christian, if you've not been born of God, I personally do not believe you will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. I think that the place where you will meet Jesus Christ, and you must, the only option that a person has is where and when he meets Christ.

Where and when he bows before Christ. You see the father told the son that if he would come into the world to redeem men, that every knee would bow, and every tongue would confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Now God is going to keep his promise to his son, but the way by which this is done, the time at which this is done, is your option.

In other words, you can choose to do it now, and live, or refuse to do it now, and be forced to do it later, and die. But do what you must. You find that described at the great white throne judgment in revelation.

When the wicked dead appear before the lamb seated upon the throne, when they see him, and isn't this a paradox, they will seek to flee from the wrath of the lamb. Can you imagine a lamb being wrathful? Well the lamb of God, in that day, will be wrathful. And those who come will, we are told, cry for the rocks, the mountains, to hide them from the face of the wrath of the lamb.

And if we learn also that those who appear thus at the great white throne, will find that their names are not written in the lamb's book of life. They will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, the thing they refuse to do in time. They will give him the homage and the honor that his father promised him.

But then they will go off, as he said, into the left hand, into that penitentiary that God has had to provide for the incorrigible and the unconvertible. That's another event. We're talking here about that event which is going, confronts believers, those that are in Christ.

And this is a, another time, I believe, another situation. This is that occasion when those that are in Christ, who've been pardoned, who've been forgiven, appear before the Lord Jesus Christ to receive a reward for

the deeds they've done in the body, since the time they were converted, since the time they were saved. There will be, at that time, a review of our lives.

Now, things have changed a lot since I first heard this scripture. Years ago, as a boy, when I heard pastors, seemed to me to be a lot of, a lot of noting, a lot of bookkeeping. But I know how it's going to be done now.

It's going to be done on television, say, full color and sound. Yeah, so that's the way it'll be. And when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, I think there will be a speeded-up playback of our lives, full color and sound.

And there it'll be. You say, well, I don't see how you get that. Well, I don't really either myself, so don't pin me in a corner on it.

But this is this instant replay that they had, that sort of makes me wonder that maybe that won't be the way it's done. But at any rate, it's to receive of the things we've done in the body, whether they be good or bad. Now, we've been talking about the price of sin in the life of a Christian.

Remember, we pointed out five things happen when a child of God sins. First, fellowship with God is broken. Secondly, God no longer uses us while that condition prevails.

The third thing is that prayer goes unanswered. The fourth, we are exposed to the attacks of Satan. And the fifth consequence is that we fall into the chastening hands of God.

But the sixth consequence is that we will meet it at the judgment seat of Christ. You mean to say I can hear someone expostulate that after the sin has been forgiven, it'll still be there to confront us at the judgment seat of Christ? Yes. Well, shall I say the effects of the sin will? Suppose, for instance, I had a spike in this hand and a hammer in this hand, and I were just to thoughtlessly punctuate what I'm doing by driving that spike into this pulpit, pulling it out, driving it in, pulling it out.

I could pull the spike out, but I can't pull the hole out. And that hole will remain, it'll be there. And so when you permit sin, I permit sin in my life, you and yours, it has these immediate five effects.

But the sixth effect is that that hole remains. For instance, imagine that the loom is weaving. The wharf is there, and the shuttle is going back and forth.

And sin would be the place where the string breaks in the shuttle and it goes back and forth, or the thread is knotted, and when the cloth is unwound, there will be the break in the weave. That will be extensive too, because that period of time that I, that you have permitted in our lives, attitudes and actions that grieve God, are there long extensions of this. Maybe in a moment of haste, a moment of anger, we have said something, but that life has been affected, perhaps even before the Lord.

We've repented on it and confessed it, and he's forgiven us, and we go on, but we haven't had an opportunity to rectify it with that person. And so it continues, and it moves on out, and it touches other lives through that person. When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, we are going to give an account of the deeds we've done in the body, whether they be good or bad.

And the purpose is going to be to determine rewards. Now the scripture is clear. God holds out rewards for believers.

Occasionally I hear people that are super pious, and they'll say something like this, well I don't think a Christian should work for reward. Well I don't think a Christian who says that is thinking very clearly, because God said that he would give a crown of righteousness. God doesn't give unnecessary gifts or hold up unnecessary motivation.

And when it says that Paul is saying henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will give not to me only, but to all them who love his appearing, then it seems to me that we ought to be honest enough with ourselves to say God holds out rewards, and there's very good reason for us wanting to have a reward. Oh I understand that someone says, well I don't think we should want a crown of righteousness so we can put it on our head and strut around heaven. Well I agree with you, if God and his grace doesn't take the strut out of us, I don't think we're going to have much of a chance of getting to heaven anyway.

We're not talking about the rewards for the purpose of nourishing our pride. We know what they do with crowns in the bible. It's clear when you read revelation what they do.

Remember they saw the lamb upon the throne and the elders came and they cast their crown before him. That's why you ought to want a crown, not to put it on and strut, but to have something to lay at the feet of the Lord Jesus, with which to say thank you Lord for saving my soul. And so the word makes it clear that you will, you must appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

I must, and I'll appear alone. I'll be responsible for my life and you for yours. No one can intercede for us because we will be before the righteous judge, the Lord Jesus Christ into whom, whose hands the father has committed all judgment.

And so the apostle reasoning from this event states to these believers, knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. Have you ever stopped to ponder that? What did he mean when he said knowing the terror of the Lord? I think dear friends there are going to be tears in heaven. Well in fact I know there are, because the bible says God's going to wipe away all tears.

And I believe that the reason there will be tears in heaven is because we will look into his eyes and see there what our lives might have been in comparison to that playback which shows us what our lives were. And when we see what our lives could have been as compared to what they were, I think we're going to start to weep. And probably would weep forever if it wasn't that God in his grace would wipe away our tears.

Just a few more days to be filled with praise and to tell the old old story. That's all. And then when twilight falls and my savior calls, I'll go to him in glory.

And to waste those few more days, not to live them to the full, not to find his will and plan and purpose. I believe this is that which caused the apostle to say, knowing the terror of the Lord. He's talking about the fact that when we stand before Jesus Christ, we're going to find that it was a whole lot more serious to him than it has been to us.

See God has a plan for your life. He has a plan that he made before he made the world. This is quite clear in 2nd Timothy chapter 1 and verses 8 and 9. Paul who's in prison is writing to the young man Timothy and he is saying, Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me as prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God who saved us and called us, not according to

our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, I like it, purpose for which he provided grace.

And you can just be sure of this, he only provides grace for his purpose. You make the purpose, you've got to find the grace. And he's not going to give you his grace, your purpose.

Purpose and grace, which was in Christ Jesus before the world began. Before God made the world, he made a plan for you. And I can hear something, oh I wish I'd heard that when I was, I was just a young man or woman.

I want to say something, please hear me. The God of the Bible is not the great I might have been, not the great I wished I were, or could have been. He's the great I am.

And his plan begins today. He's always in the now. And if you want God's plan for your life, you can't do anything about it by bathing yourself in remorse over wasted years.

He doesn't ask that. What he asks is that today, you understand that he has a plan. And that you embrace that plan, and you commit yourself to the fulfillment of that plan.

And you start in now. And he counts that plan as beginning now. He's able to make all the computer adjustments necessary to make it perfect from here on.

Now we know about that plan. We find it Paul writing to the church at Ephesus in the second chapter in the tenth verse says, that we are his workmanship created in Christ unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. That word before ordained is a very interesting word.

It comes from the marketplace, and it comes from the tailor shop. And literally it means, which he has before tailor made to fit you. Before ordained.

Cut to your size, in other words. Cut just for you. And God has put all of his wisdom in that plan.

And all of his love into that plan. And he's made all of his power available for it. But he wants you to want it.

You say, well if you'll just show me his plan for my life, I'll take it. I don't believe you. I know you too well.

You know yourself too well. He is not going to show you his plan for your life, but he is going to show you himself. He will show you himself.

And if he can convince you that he is wise enough and good enough to make a good and wise plan for your life, then you ought to accept the plan without even knowing what it is. Otherwise he's going to say, well show me the plan Lord. I'll initial it.

I'll approve it. What use is that? Are you wise enough to evaluate the plan? And to judge it whether it's good? God is asking you to accept the plan for your life without knowing what it is. To embrace it, to commit yourself to him from today on for the fulfillment of his plan for your life.

And it always begins where you are. And it always begins with you as you are. And so it is that we're not talking about something of the past.

The past is finished, we can't recall it. We're talking about something that's current, that's now, and something that's going to affect you in the days and weeks and months that lie ahead. Now there's

something else about this plan.

In Romans 12 too we are told that we should be transformed by the renewing of our mind. And we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Well that ought to satisfy you, that you can take his plan sight unseen, good, acceptable, perfect.

But what do you want from that? You can say father I want thy plan, thy will for my life. You know all there is in me, all there is of me, that plan for my life. And this is exactly what the apostle is talking about here.

We've lived here before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account as to whether or not we have desired God's will and plan for life. We've wanted it, we've made ourselves available to him for the fulfillment of it, and the perfecting. Then he proceeds to say further, that the law of Christ constrains him, Paul, to believe or to judge something that's extremely important.

The love, well what is this? This is that love which is manifest in the ministry of Christ, when he identified with his people, he took their sicknesses, he took, he identified with their needs, he became whipped, he worked, he toiled, he was tempted in all points like as we are without sin. And then he the just one manifested this love by reaching down in time and finding you and wrapping the hands of his love around you, and drawing you to himself, to be made what you were, and so that you could become what he is. That's the love of Christ.

The last verse indicates it. He, Christ, was made to be sin for us, he who knew no sin, and which might be made the righteousness of God in him. He became what you were, so that you become what he is.

He loved you. Now this love of Christ constrains us, forces us, impels us to judge things. And one of these things that we're impelled or forced to judge, is that if one died for all, or since one died for all, will that This is the testimony of the cross.

Christ died for our sins according to the scripture. The world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. We know that one died for all, but that's not all that we read of Christ.

That since one died for all, then were all for whom he died, dead with him, died with him. That's what we've been talking about night by night, our union with Christ in his death. We pointed out the other evening that Romans 5 has the testimony that Christ died for us.

Romans 6 declares that Christ died as us, or as you. And Romans 8 testifies that Christ wants to live in you. I repeat, Romans 5, Christ died for you.

Romans 6, Christ died as you. And Romans 8, Christ wishes to live in you. Well that's the testimony.

If one died for all, then we're all first dead in their sins, truly. Then we're all for whom he died, united to him in his death in such a way that since one died for all, then we're all for whom he died, dead with him. He's going right back to Romans 6, knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Christ.

Going back to Galatians 2:20, I am crucified with Christ. Now if it's true that you were dead in your trespasses and sins, and the only way that you could be saved was by Christ dying for you. And then since it is true that he not only died for you, that he died as you.

In dying as you, it is that you died with him. Do you see the strength of the apostle's argument? Since one died for all, then we're all for whom he died. Not only benefiting by his death, but joined with him in his death.

Not only did Christ die for you, but he died as you. In order that, or so that, they which live ought not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again. I don't know quite how to illustrate this.

I've heard of the experience of Russell Conwell, his Union General in the Civil War. He had a backman or a servant soldier that went back when the Confederate Army was charging their place. The General had fled without his ceremonial sword, without his personal possessions, and as he'd gone back, he'd been caught by the Confederate Army and crossed fire and had been killed.

And Russell Conwell felt from that time on that he had to live two lives. He had to live not only his life, but he had to live for that young man who had died for him. Out of love for him, concern for him.

I don't think that illustrates it. I really don't quite know how to illustrate it. It's, if one died for all, if Christ died for you, then you were worthy of death.

The only way you could be redeemed was by his death. He not only died for you, but he died as you. That in living you ought not live unto yourself, but you ought to live unto him who died for you, and rose again.

And that if you have the gift of life, it's not to be used as a personal possession, but it's to be lived as unto Christ. You're not your own. You've been bought with a price, and therefore you're to glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which is God.

Then the apostle proceeds to say in the 16th verse, wherefore from now on I'm not going to judge anyone after the flesh. I am not any longer going to use people for my own ends, my own aims, and my own purposes. I'm not going to think of people as tools to be used by me for anything, says the apostle.

I'm not going to judge them or evaluate them as to their use for me. Say why, I've even used Christ. But I think he did.

I think Saul of Tarsus actually used Jesus Christ as the whipping boy by which he was going to get public notice, and was going to by exterminating the church, get the publicity he needed, and create the image he was after, in order that he could become the chief priest and become a hero to Israel. And he was using Christ, and using Christian for his own political and personal ambition. And he says, I've used Christ after the flesh.

I've judged him as useful to me. Not any longer. No longer am I going to use people, no longer am I going to use circumstances.

He said this, this is finished now. I'm through with that. I'm a new creation.

Old things have passed away. I'm not going to use people anymore. I'm not going to think the way others think.

I, I'm going to begin to, I'm a new creation. I've, I've not only have I, Christ died for me, and, and I've died with Christ, and crucified with him. But now, I want Jesus Christ to live in me.

I want to be in every sense a new creature, a new creation. And I want my life to glorify him. And I want him to get the honor and the praise that he deserves.

I'm going to think in a new way. I'm going to have a totally new organization for my life. Entirely new purpose for my being.

I'm a new creature. If anybody is in Christ said Paul, on this basis of the judgment seat of Christ, and of the fact that he must appear there, and, and the cross where, where Christ died for him, and he died with Christ. The issue, said he, is that I'm going to live on an entirely new basis, an entirely new level.

I'm a new creation. Old things have passed away, and all things have become new. And I no longer can live as unto myself.

Then, said he, I've got to understand that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. Not imputing their trespasses unto them. And he hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation.

We've had an interesting thing happen in Washington, D.C. April is the month when in 1968, things have, as you recall, two years ago, Martin Luther King was killed, and there was a burning of Washington, and still large sections of the city are blackened ruins, where several blocks were burned out. During that time, a friend of mine in Washington, who serves and loves Christ, was riding in a taxi cab, an earnest Christian man. And as they were driving, this Negro taxi driver was taking him to his destination.

My friend said, driver, would you like to kill me? And the driver's eyes widened, and he turned around and said, man, what do you think? Well, he said, I understand that black people want to kill white people, and you're black, and I'm white, and I just want to know if you want to kill me. He said, you sure talk funny, well, he said, look at the smoke over there. Somebody's not just talking funny, they're acting funny, and I just thought I'd like to know who's driving me.

You got a gun up there, and you're going to turn and shoot me? He said, you know, a few months ago, that's what I wanted to do, to whitey. Well, he says, what's happened since then? Well, he said, we've got this driver down with our taxi company in the garage, and he's carrying that black book in his pocket all the time, and every once in a while, he opens it up, and he starts to talk to us about this fellow, Jesus, and I've been listening to him. I don't want the other fellows to know I'm listening, because they give them a hard time, Herb doesn't seem to care, and we're listening to him, and some of the things that that book's got in it makes sense.

So, what was that? He said, that's what's changed me. He said, I've changed the last two months. A couple of months ago, I'd really like to kill you, but my friend said, you mean to say you're a Christian? Oh, I wouldn't go that far.

I think maybe I'm about a half a Christian though. Why do you say half a Christian? Because when I read what a real one is, I don't think there are many of them around. He said, I think maybe I'm about a half a Christian, but the reason I don't want to kill you is because of what I read in that book about this fellow, Jesus.

My friend said, I'd like to meet that man. Any chance? Yeah, sure. Where do you go? Well, I'm going out here.

He said, I'll bring him there tomorrow. He'll come. So, my friend in due course had these two drivers from the taxi company come in.

And Herb started to talk with my friend Doug about Christ. He told how he'd been the head of a black mafia in Georgetown. He'd run the numbers racket, off-track betting.

He was Mr. Big in a area. You know, there's two things you can be, the goat of Dukeville or the Duke of Goatville, and he was the Duke of Goatville there, a little section in Georgetown. And he ran the rackets in the black community.

His wife was Christian. She'd been praying for him. She said, Herb, you don't stop.

I'm going to leave you. He didn't want that, so he quit and went to work in the Department of Commerce, and that didn't turn out well. And he got to reading his new testament with his wife, and he opened his heart to Jesus Christ.

And he decided the only way to make a living for his family was running a taxi and gave him more chance to talk with people. And so, they were sitting with my friend there in Washington, D.C., and as they were talking, Herb said, you know, Doug, you ought to meet John Staggers. John Staggers was assistant to Washington.

You ought to meet John Staggers. He ought to talk to you. Well, why don't you bring him? So, in due course, Herb Barksdale brought John Staggers, and Doug Cole and Herb and John talked.

John said, you know, I used to go to church. I don't go much anymore. It's such a big book.

It doesn't make much sense when you just pick it up and read it, and you don't know what you're reading. I'd like to find out, but I go to church, and they just talk about everything else. They don't get very deep in the book.

And John Doug says, John, I'll be glad to read with you. He said, why don't you and I just take at least an hour a week to read this book and talk about it and pray? So, when the two men are in Washington, they do. They may have to do it in the car early in the morning or late at night, but they get together for an hour a week.

John said, you know, it'd be good. I know some fellas that ought to talk, right? Doug said, well, why don't you come out here and have a breakfast and to bring some of them? So, I happened to be there and had a breakfast. There were about a dozen people, some of the black militarists from the city.

I could hear them in the inside of the room, and if they don't do so-and-so, we're going to burn this town down. Well, we got a taste of what it was. Nobody was too happy about that.

When they finished talking and saying what they had to say, then they'd stand and hold hands and pray around the table. But one who was in charge said, let's not just hold hands at arm's length. We've been at arm's length too long.

Let's just cross hands like this. We'll actually be closer together. So, they'd stand around the table and hold hands and pray.

Well, after a man's gotten up and said, we're going to burn down, and he stands there and prays, even if he hasn't done much praying, something happened. Soon that breakfast got so big they couldn't eat in the house. They got a restaurant, and I started attending then, and there'd be 75, and then 100, and 125.

You read a lot about Washington, D.C., but last summer, there wasn't one racial incident in Washington, D.C. Now, there were muggings and rapes and hold-ups, but there wasn't one racial incident. The only problem they had was when a girl was over in St. Prince George County from D.C., and she came across the line, and the Prince George's police followed her across the line, and he shouldn't have done that. He's out of his territory.

That was the only problem, the white police. Oh, there's still difficulties, but what had happened had been this. They'd been able to talk together.

They'd prayed together. It began to see some blue sky. Some help began to come.

Some things began to change, and whereas two years ago Washington, D.C. was an armed camp, I want you to know that we have seen the power of reconciliation in a most amazing way, a most amazing way, and most of the trouble. Now, people ask me, how are things in Washington? I say, well, they'll be not nearly as bad as most of the pictures try to make out, because I haven't been in a town anywhere in the United States. If there aren't some sections, I wouldn't want to walk at night alone.

Now, maybe you've got a town where that's not true, but I've never been. Well, that was the case, but I would submit to you that in having an opportunity for people to talk together, even to swear, sometimes it'd be there. Somebody'd get up, and there'd be a congressman, and a couple of judges, and some people sitting around, and this man'd get up, and he'd... Remember when Virgil Keel came in the first day? He got up and said, well, I'm a product of the federal government.

The federal government raised me. Thirty-four years old, and he'd been in prison about 18 years, from the time he was 14. He said, and he went on, and he told about what he'd seen and heard, and he was with Herb, and with John, with the others.

One day, later on, I was talking, heard listening to Virgil, and said, when I got out of prison, I decided I'd never go back to prison again. I was finished. Said, I came here to Washington, my home.

I knew if I was going to stay out of prison, I'd have to find somebody to follow, because I'd followed others, and ended up in jail every time. He said, I thought maybe I might follow Stokely. He said, I had sense enough to know that whoever I followed to keep me out of prison, had to be able to walk on the water.

He said, I looked at Stokely. He wasn't walking on the water. All I could see was bubbles.

He was on the bottom of the river, and he said, somebody said, Raph Brown. Raph was flashing so hard, I couldn't see him. He said, I met this Herb over here, and he told me about Jesus Christ, and I found the only ones ever been able to walk on the water was Jesus Christ.

And he said, I just decided to follow him, and I can't tell you what happened, but I can tell you I'm all new inside. And when they'd find a pocket of rebellion, and threat, and danger, Virgil walked down. They knew him.

He'd run rackets, and dope, and armed robbery, and everything. He'd come down, they'd say, Virgil, what do you think? And he'd start to talk, let them talk, and he'd end up telling them about Jesus Christ. Abraham Brady, who founded the Presidential Prayer Breakfast, died last May.

I went out to the service at Fort Christian Church, and there on the steps, greeting every guest who came to the memorial service was Virgil Keel, just released a few months before from federal prison. And I'll never forget when I saw Senator Stennis, who was right ahead of him, come up, and Virgil Keel, and tears were in Virgil's eye, and tears were in the Senator's eye. And they took a hold of each other's hands, and Senator put his arms to Virgil, we're going to miss you, we're going to miss you.

A ministry of reconciliation. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and has committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation. Now we need to understand, we need to realize, we need to see what Paul was talking about.

We're going to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. We were under the sentence of death. Christ died for us.

And if he died for us, then not only did he die for us, but he died as us, and we died with him. And we which live ought not live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and who rose again. And we ought to be new creations, new motives, new purposes, new dynamic, new power, new goals.

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and he's permitted unto us the ministry of reconciliation. Whether that's in your home, in your community, in the church, wherever it may be, God has committed to us, and given to us, the ministry of reconciliation. To which the God was in Christ, not alienating, not separating, not dividing, but reconciling the world unto himself.

Now as we face this last third of the 20th century, most of us here tonight won't see the year 2000. But we have a few more days to be filled with praise, and to tell the old, old story. What is the old, old story? It's that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.

And what are we to do? He's given to us, the ministry of reconciliation. I was in Boxford, Massachusetts, and the group asked me to meet with them and open the word, and then God let me do it. And I had told something about what happened in Washington, and the man was there, the father of one of the young men living in Boxford.

The man was from Buffalo. And he, when the time came for questions, he took after me. That's a pack of nonsense.

He said, I live in Buffalo, and I've got a shotgun at the front door, and a shotgun at the back door, and if anybody comes up on my land, I'm gonna shoot and ask questions. Uh, we talked a little while. I said, you want that really to become the rule, do you, in Buffalo? And every house becomes a fortress, and every man carries a gun.

Well, and he went on. I said, listen, you're an old man. You serve the city of Buffalo well.

You've had honored position there. Why don't you go back to Buffalo, and use that position, and use that leverage? Well, how will I do it? I said, just invite some of the people you know to come together for a breakfast. Invite them to come.

We pay the bill for a time or two. Let them come in, read the scripture, and talk, and then let each one say what he has to say, and then pray. Just let, just listen for a little while.

He said, I think if you'll do that, you'll find you can take your shotgun apart, and unload it. You can put it away again. You won't need to keep it by the front door.

I said, I challenge you to do it. Well, recently I was back at Boxford, and someone said, did you ever hear from him? I said, no, I never heard from him. He'd rather pride himself on being a pretty good shot with a shotgun, than to bend, and bow, and extend a hand in reconciliation.

I said, you see, he's not a Christian. He's not a Christian. Now, here we are, for the most part, a company of Christians.

We ought not to be like the world. We ought to be different. If we're in Christ, we're new creations.

Old things have passed away. What's the old thing? Keep the shotgun by your front door. Anybody comes on my land, I'll shoot.

That's the old adage. But God was in Christ, and he was buffeted, and he was bruised, and he was beaten, and he died, and he's given to us the ministry of reconciliation. And you as an individual would be, might be the instrument and the means of healing the alienation, and the strife, and the division in your church, in the home, in the community, in town.

If it could get enough people who cared, and enough people who shared, and enough people who decided that the love of Christ constrained them not to live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again, it might be that there could be a ministry of reconciliation in this alienated and terrorized world. And the hope lies with you. You're the only hope, people of God.

And God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, and he has committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation. What will it mean? Well, the two daughters of McKeeson, the governor of Louisiana, were one to Christ through Campus Crusade. And they wanted to have a something on the campus of Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge.

And so they got in touch with my friend Doug that I've mentioned, and said, couldn't you do something here? And a group of people went down to Louisiana State University and had a student prayer breakfast. Fourteen people went from Washington, D.C., fourteen businessmen, paid their own way, just so they could tell what Jesus Christ had done for them, and meet with little groups. Somebody said, you know, the head of the SDS is here.

He won't come. My friend Virgil Keel, I've already introduced you to, said, where is he? And he went over and he found Campbell, the head of the SDS. He said, well, tell me your head of the SDS students, you know, Democratic Society, the rebels, the militants.

He said, won't you come to meet? He said, I just got out of prison. I was here in Louisiana. He said, I'm with him.

He said, you are? Yeah. You're for real? So Campbell came. John Staggars, this black assistant to Mayor Washington, and Herb Barksdale, and Virgil Keel, and Phil Jordan, all these men gave their testimony of who Christ is, and what he'd meant, and Campbell was there.

Then later on, they had a little meeting afterwards, and people were getting up and testifying to what had happened to him. Then the SDS got up and said, I gotta get out of here. Let me out of here.

And he went out, and Virgil followed him, and he said, if I stay there, they're going to ruin my life. I've never heard such a thing. A few weeks ago, a letter came from Campbell, the head of the SDS.

He said, I don't know how to say it, but Jesus Christ has done something to me, and I'd like to spend my whole time talking with the folks on the campus. The daughters of Governor McKeithen got a luncheon set up for the staff or the group that had been there. The limousines came to get them and take them to the governor's mansion, and the first one out of the car was Virgil Keel.

That's normal. The first one to the door, when the door was open, it was by a trustee, and the trustee looked out, and he said, Virgil, what are you doing here? They'd been in prison together. He said, I came to have lunch with the governor.

They sat down away, and one of the butlers came in, and he almost dropped to himself. Virgil, what are you doing? Oh, excuse me, Governor. He said, we were in prison together.

After a while, one of the butlers came in and said, they spoke whispered to the governor, and the governor turned and said, Virgil, five of your friends were in prison with you in the kitchen. They want to talk to you. Virgil's sitting there in a chair, and these fellows standing around, and he said, what happened to you? We know you.

You were in jail with us. You were in solitary confinement as much as we were. We know you, and he's telling him about Jesus Christ, and then he'd look up, and the eyes of the five men around the table, they're leaning against the door, the governor of the sovereign state of Louisiana, listening to Virgil Keough tell how he met Jesus Christ, and God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.

The world hasn't rejected him. They haven't met him. That's what he wants you to do, not to live to yourself, but unto him who died for you and rose again, because he's committed unto you the ministry of reconciliation.

Shall we bow in prayer? Father, enough people in these walls tonight to change the world for thy dear son. If what we've read could become real in our hearts and lives and our experience, then we have to be patient with this, Father, because as Christians, we've been accustomed to reading your word and not thinking that it had a practical application in our daily lives and business and community. We thought that it was just theological knowledge that we tucked up into our minds that would stand us in good stead when we came to die, instead of realizing that it's something that the world desperately needs.

And we ask thee, therefore, that we may realize we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account as to whether or not we were aware that when Christ died for us, we were dead and we died with him, that we shouldn't live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again. We should be new creations, new creatures, new attitudes, new relationship, not trying to use Christ for our own comfort and security and pleasure, but realizing that you were in him reconciling the world to yourself. And you've committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation.

And we're going to give an account in that day as to what we've done with that ministry of reconciliation. So to that end, Father, we ask that you'll seal the word to our hearts, help us to realize that your plan begins tonight and that some way, somehow, we who are here are the means you have of doing what you

want to do in this desperately needy world. We could change it for your son if we're willing.

Oh, that we might be willing. We might be willing. And that we might realize that we're going to stand before the judgment seat of

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