

## WHAT GOD IS DOING IN CHRIST

### Introduction

- A. Text: **2 Cor. 5:17-21**.
- B. The story of the gospel of Christ is the story of *something being restored that had been ruined*.
- C. In His Son, God is doing something that is very, very important to Him — something He cared about enough to give His own Son's life to make it possible.
- D. It ought to be *important to us* to know what this thing is that was so *important to God*?
- E. What is God doing in Christ? *What is the gospel about?*

### I. WHAT?

- A. God made us "in His image" (**Gen. 1:26,27**). Surely this would have been a *glorious* image indeed.
- B. But in sin, we have become very *unlike* God. We have moved away from *glory* in the direction of *corruption* - **Rom. 1:18-32**.
- C. In Christ, however, God is offering what He calls "reconciliation" (**2 Cor. 5:17,18**). The root idea of "reconciliation" is the removal of *differences* or *discrepancies*.
  - 1. Jesus came as the "Son of Man." Cf. **Dan. 7:13,14; Mt. 8:20; 9:6; 16:28**; and many other texts.
    - a. He was not just the son of *a man*, but the Son of *Man*, i.e. the Son of Man-kind.
    - b. He was the second Adam. Cf. **Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21,22**.
    - c. He was a human being *par excellence*, the "epitome" of humanity, the perfect model of what God had in mind when He made the first Adam.
  - 2. But He was not just an *example* — He had to *die* to make possible our restoration to the original.
    - a. "For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost" (**Mt. 18:11**).
    - b. To save that which was lost, His death was necessary - **Hb. 2:10-15**.
  - 3. **In Christ, therefore, we can be remade in God's perfect image.** Cf. **Rom. 8:28,29; Gal. 4:19; Phil. 3:20,21**.
- D. But the plan is not automatic — it has to be *accepted!*

### II. SO WHAT?

- A. We ought to say *yes* and *accept* the plan. We ought to *enter* the process.
  - 1. We break God's heart when we say no to what He has offered us - **Mt. 23:37**.
  - 2. Hearing God's plan, our question ought to be the same as those on Pentecost: "What shall we DO?" (**Ac. 2:37**).
    - a. And, of course, the answer of the gospel to us will be the same as to them: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (**Ac. 2:38**).
    - b. Obeying the gospel doesn't get us all the way back to God's perfect image; it just gets us *started on the way back home*. It gets us into the *process* of being brought back to the original glory of being in God's image. Cf. **2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 1:6; 1 Jn. 3:1-3**.
  - 3. So if the *What?* is that God is "reconciling the world to Himself" (**2 Cor. 5:19**), the *So What?* is "BE YE reconciled to God" (**v.20 KJV**).
- B. We ought not to settle for less than what God wants.

1. Christ did not come to introduce the world's highest "system of morality" — He came to rescue men and women who had failed to keep the moral systems they already had.
2. Christianity is not about becoming nicer people than we were — it is about becoming totally new men and women. Cf. **2 Cor. 5:17**.
3. God knows that we need more than a little improvement — we need to be destroyed and then completely rebuilt. Cf. **Gal. 2:20**.
4. We dare not content ourselves with any of the *intermediate* satisfactions of life in Christ. We dare not reach the point where we say, "This is all I was interested in. My life is enough better than it was that I am content. After all, I don't want to become a *fanatic* about this thing."
5. The question is not at what point we've gotten what we were after; it's at what point God has gotten what He was after!
6. And Jesus was clear as to what God is after. He was absolutely serious when He said, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (**Mt. 5:48**). Cf. **1 Thess. 5:23**; **Jd. 24**.

C. We ought to understand the *price* of our perfection.

1. To *God*.
  - a. It cost the death of His Son for God to be able to restore His image in us - **Hb. 2:9,10**.
  - b. For Jesus, the *glory* was on the other side of the *suffering* - **Lk. 24:25,26**; **Hb. 12:2**.
  - c. While He lived in this world, happiness was the exception rather than the rule. Cf. **Isa. 53:3**. (He never had anything less than *joy*, of course, but that is quite another thing.)
2. To *ourselves*.
  - a. If it took God's Son's death, there is a death that we will have to die, too - **Phil. 3:10,11**. Cf. **Rom. 6:4-7**; **2 Tim. 2:11**.
  - b. Christ can't be followed without taking up a *cross* - **Mk. 8:34**. (There is no "crown" without the "cross" that goes before it.)
  - c. Being rescued from sin and turned back into perfectly godly creatures is not an easy process. It involves *difficulty* and *pain* - **Ac. 14:22**. Cf. **Mt. 7:13,14**; **1 Pt. 4:18,19**.
  - d. The gospel is not about being happy in *this* world.
  - e. In *this* world, we won't be any happier than is a seriously sick person in a "treatment center."

D. We ought to be grateful for the plan.

1. Even though it involves difficulty and pain, being restored to God's image is not a burdensome "necessity" — it is a *privilege*.
2. Deep gratitude is the response of any person who sees God's plan for what it is. (Consider Paul's attitude in **1 Cor. 15:9,10**.)
3. **1 Pt. 1:3-9**.

## Conclusion

- A. We aren't there yet.
- B. But we are *on the way* . . . and we are closer to the finish than when we first believed - **Rom. 13:11**.
- C. Reaching the goal is worth whatever it takes.
- D. **Phil. 3:12-14**.