

c. Confidence in the face of death. 5:1-10.

Chapter Five

v. 1 -- For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.

- 1) A belief, in one form or another, in the immortality of the soul is, of course, found in a variety of non-Christian religions and philosophies; but Paul is teaching something which far exceeds any of the tentative aspirations of paganism, for his perspective is enriched by the assurance that the Christian's body is to be redeemed and glorified as well as his soul.
- 2) There is for Paul one note of uncertainty, introduced by the conditional clause: "if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved." This, however, is in no sense an uncertainty about the unclouded future blessedness of all who are Christ's, but only concerning the question whether or not he would be overtaken by death. The reason why Paul treats this as only a possibility and not an inevitability is because it is balanced by another possibility, namely, that of the prior return of Christ, in which case he will not experience death, but immediate bodily translation and transformation.
- 3) This double possibility has been present to the minds of Christ's faithful followers in every age. It has at all times been a powerful incentive to holy living: neither the day nor the hour of the Bridegroom's coming is known to us; therefore it is an event which is always imminent for the Church; it is always probable that death will be forestalled by the return of Christ; and, in accordance with our Lord's admonition to watch, we should live every moment as we would wish to be found living at the sudden instant of His return or, should that be delayed, in the hour of death. "Every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 Pet. 3:11; I Jn. 3:3).
- 4) "The earthly house of our tabernacle", or, as it may better be rendered, "our

tent-dwelling on earth" (cf. RSV: "the earthly tent we live in"), is an expression which effectively emphasizes the fragile impermanence of our present bodies, for in ancient times a tent was a familiar picture of what was transitory and without foundations.

- a) Although it is true that this similitude was common to Greek as well as Hebrew writers, it is none the less probable that Paul had in mind the wilderness experiences of the children of Israel.
 - i) The camp-life of the Israelites in the wilderness, as commemorated by the annual feast of tabernacles, was a ready and appropriate symbol of man's transitory life on earth: while the land of promise with its settled abodes, the land flowing with milk and honey, typified the eternal inheritance of the redeemed.
 - ii) The contrast between an 'earthly tent-house' and a heavenly temple has its biblical background in the story of Israel. The tabernacle belonged to the wilderness wanderings, whereas the temple upon Mount Zion was associated with the triumphs of David and the splendors of Solomon's reign.
 - b) Another striking illustration of this reality, equally appropriate to Paul's theme here, is seen by the New Testament in the story of Abraham who, at the call of God, became a sojourner "as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents", for he was looking towards the heavenly city "which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:8ff.).
 - c) The life of the tent-dweller is never settled: his outlook is that of a sojourner and pilgrim, and this should be characteristic of every Christian (cf. I Pet. 2:11).
 - d) In John 1:14, indeed, the tent-metaphor is used of the Lord's incarnation and earthly sojourn: "the Word became flesh and pitched His tent among us".
- 5) Even if the Christian's tent-dwelling is dismantled by death, this does not alter the fact that he, in common with all other believers, **has**¹ "a building

¹Taking account of the passage as a whole, with its clear contrast between the present body and the resurrection body, the present tense of the verb "have" is

from God", that is, a permanent structure with foundations, "eternal, in the heavens," in strong contrast to his temporary tent-abode here on earth. Paul is not, of course, suggesting that our present bodies are not from God the Creator, but that the resurrection body, as part of God's new creation, will be entirely glorious, free from sin and its corruption, and fitted by God for unbroken fellowship with Himself. It belongs to that free gift of grace in Christ Jesus which is altogether of God and from God.

- 6) It is, furthermore, "a house not made with hands." This expression, too, must not be misunderstood, for it certainly does not imply that our present "dwelling" is made with hands. The expression may also be interpreted in part by reference to Paul's own particular handicraft, namely, tent-making: tents, with the manufacture of which he was so familiar, he naturally thought of as made with hands. This description, however, which is distinctive to the New Testament, must be understood as a synonym, almost a technical term, for that which is heavenly and spiritual in contradistinction to what is earthly and physical.
- a) Thus in Col. 2:11 we read of a "circumcision not made with hands" (cf. Rom. 2: 28f.) and in Heb. 9: 11 of a "tabernacle not made with hands" (cf. Heb. 9:24).
 - b) In fact, the latter of these two references defines the phrase precisely for us by adding the explanation, "that is to say, not of this creation."
 - c) And this provides us with the proper understanding of its meaning in the passage that is before us. The origin of the expression in its distinctive Christian significance may well be discovered in Mk. 14:58 where it is declared that it had been used by our Lord Himself in a manner, moreover, with which Paul's usage of it here completely harmonizes.
- 7) In fact, the obvious affinities between our Lord's utterance (so readily seized upon by His uncomprehending enemies) and Paul's terminology here make it virtually certain that the Apostle had this saying in mind when he was writing these words. This probability is corroborated by John who, in his

understood, with most commentators, as referring to a future possession which is so real and assured in the apostle's perspective that it is appropriately spoken of in the present tense.

account of the occasion when Jesus must have uttered these words, is careful to explain that our Lord was speaking about the temple of His body (Jn. 2: 19ff.). This in turn suggests that there was in Paul's mind a definite connection between the resurrection body of Christ and that of the believer – a connection which is explicitly asserted in Phil. 3:21, where the Apostle states that the Lord Jesus Christ "will fashion anew the body of our humiliation (our earthly tent dwelling), that it may be conformed to the body of His glory (the temple or building not made with hands)." Thus Ambrose comments: "This house signifies the immortal body in which, when we rise again, we shall ever be, and the form of which is already made clear in the body of the Lord in heaven."

- 8) The special significance for the members of the Corinthian Church of Paul's instruction here on the resurrection should not be overlooked, for, as Chrysostom reminds us, they had shown themselves to be particularly unsound respecting this doctrine.
- 9) Some commentators, ancient as well as modern, understand the "house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens" to refer to the heavenly home or abode of God's people after death (cf. Jn. 14:2ff.), rather than to the glorified body which they will receive at the return of Christ.
 - a) But this interpretation requires the term "house" to be taken in two quite different senses in one and the same sentence, which throws Paul's meaning into doubt and seriously weakens his argument. Sound exegesis surely demands that the word "house" as used by the Apostle here should signify "body," both when he speaks of the present earthly house (as is universally agreed) and also when he speaks of the house in the heavens.
 - b) The terminology he uses in the verses that follow confirms this conclusion, as we shall hope to show. He is concerned with the same great theme as that about which he has already written in I Cor. 15:35ff., but viewed from a different angle. He is, in a sense, filling in a gap in the instruction he has previously given.
 - i) There he is speaking of the sowing (in death) of this present frail physical body and of its being reaped (in resurrection) in power as a glorified body at Christ's coming.

- ii) Here his attention is focused upon the intermediate period between the sowing of the earthly and the reaping of the heavenly body.²

V. 2 -- For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven.

- 1) At this point Paul varies his metaphor. He has been speaking of the heavenly body as a dwelling, but now he describes it, still as a habitation, as

² Others have held that the eternal body is received by the Christian in this life at his baptism with the consequence that the intermediate state between death and Christ's return is not one of nakedness (verse 3 then being expounded in that sense). Thus a recent writer has affirmed that "those who have been baptized into Christ have already put on a new Body -- that of Christ (cf. Gal. 3:27; I Cor. 12:13) and can never again be naked." And he says, further: "The Christian is already clothed with Christ (Gal. 3:27) and has already 'put on the new man of life' in the power of Christ's Resurrection (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12) and to be raised up to heavenly places (Col. 3:1-3; Eph. 2:6). It is true, of course, that the full realization of this new life waits upon Christ's return even in the latest of the Pauline writings (Col. 3:4; Eph. 1:13, 14); but in the light of his emphasis upon the truth that Christians share in the Resurrection in this life, Paul can hardly have regarded death as an interruption of that incorporation -- as nakedness." But this interpretation must be rejected, firstly, because it would be entirely incongruous for the Apostle to long to be clothed upon with his habitation which is from heaven (v.2) if in fact he already possessed that habitation -- a man does not long for that which he already has --, and, secondly, because when he speaks of the Christian as being even in this life raised with Christ and seated with Him in heavenly places the experience he is describing cannot be explained as or equated with a bodily resurrection and ascension. The latter, for Paul, is always the end time experience, which will be realized only at Christ's return. Meanwhile his body is earth bound. The nakedness which his soul experiences through being divested of the body at death in no sense implies an interruption of his incorporation in Christ; indeed it is precisely that incorporation which explains the present experience, though still in this earthly tent-dwelling of being risen and ascended with Christ (and also, let it be remembered, of having died and been buried with Him, Rom. 6:3ff.) and the future end time experience of bodily resurrection and ascension.

though it were also a garment to put on. 2 Pet. 1:13ff. contains a corresponding garment-dwelling simile, where death is depicted as the putting off (like a garment) of the tent (of one's earthly body). Here Paul indicates something more than the mere putting on of a garment: he is talking of putting on one garment over another. The picture is that of the heavenly body being put on, like an outer vesture, over the earthly body, with which the Apostle is as it were clad, so as not only to cover it but to absorb and transfigure it. In this way the ideas both of continuity and of transformation, which are also prominent in the great resurrection chapter of I Cor. 15, are effectively communicated. Indeed, the very same metaphor is employed in the earlier epistle when it is said that "this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:53).

- 2) The Apostle's language indicates that it is still his earnest desire to be alive at the time of Christ's return so that, without undergoing the interposition of death and the intermediate state, he may experience the instantaneous change (I Cor. 15:51ff.) effected by the putting on of the abode from heaven over the earthly tent-dwelling. The clothing, at the coming of Christ, with the building not made with hands both of those believers who are living and of those who have died, was prophetically enacted or prefigured on the occasion of our Lord's transfiguration when Moses and Elijah appeared with Him and partook of His glory -- Moses representing those who have died (Deut. 34: 5) and Elijah those for whom the day of the Lord will anticipate death. It is Paul's wish to be numbered amongst the latter; and the reason for this is suggested in the next two verses.

According to biblical history, this change had already been experienced under special circumstances by two individuals of the Old Testament period, namely, Enoch, who "was translated that he should not see death" (Heb. 11:5; Gen. 5: 24), and Elijah, who also was taken up bodily into heaven (II Kings 2:11).

vv. 3-4 -- If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life.

- 1) Paul's meaning is as follows: "Of course if we have the garment of the body

on we shall not be found naked, that is, in a disembodied state, by the Lord at His appearing. For it is a fact that we who are in the tent-dwelling groan, being burdened by its frailties and limitations; which does not mean that we wish to divest ourselves of the body, but to put on over it the transforming heavenly garment, so that the present mortal frame may be completely absorbed by Life." The Apostle is saying, in other words, that if he is still alive at Christ's return then he will be found by Christ clothed with a body (this present body) and not in a disembodied state. To be without a body is to be "naked"-- a manner of speech well established in Paul's day. The same figure is found in Plato, who speaks of "the soul naked of the body," but for whom soul-nakedness was welcomed as a desirable state. The Pythagorean doctrine, that the body is the prison-house of the soul from which the soul of the wise longs to be liberated so that without restraint it may soar upwards and be reunited to the supreme soul of the world, was characteristic not only of Platonism and of the contemporary Philonism but also of Gnosticism which, in its various forms, presented so serious a threat to the early Church.

- 2) The Apostle's teaching, however, is anything but Pythagorean.
 - a) Paul clearly does not regard the soul which has no body as being, for that reason, in an enviable state, for the body, so far from being a dungeon of the soul, is essential, in accordance with the scheme of creation, for the full expression of the personal and potential faculties of humanity. The soul of man is able to express itself adequately only in conjunction with the specially prepared instrument of the body.
 - b) Without a body, man ceases to be truly and properly man. "We are burdened with this corruptible body," says Augustine, "but knowing that the cause of this burdensomeness is not the nature and substance of the body, but its corruption, we do not desire to be deprived of the body, but to be clothed with its immortality."

- 3) At death the soul is separated from the body (James 2:26), and man's integral nature is disrupted. This important aspect of the disintegrating character of death explains the Apostle's desire that Christ should return during his lifetime so that he might experience the change into the likeness of Christ's glorious body (Phil. 3:21) without first having to undergo the experience of "nakedness" which results from the separation of soul and body at death.
 - a) There is, of course, no question of death separating the believer from

Christ, but only the soul from the body.

- b) It is also true that for the Christian to die is gain, because to depart this life is to be with Christ (Phil. 1:21-23; and *cf.* verses 6-8 below) and his state after death is consequently one of peace and bliss. This, however, is not the consummating gain, but only that of an intermediate state in which he still awaits the glorious reintegration of soul and body in an incorruptible union.
- 4) True though it is that for the Christian the sting of death has been removed (I Cor. 15:55ff.), yet death in itself is not something in which he takes pleasure.
- a) It still means a state of nakedness and a period of waiting until he is clothed with his resurrection body.
 - b) Like the souls of the martyrs in the Apocalypse, there is a sense in which he cries "How long?" (Rev. 6: 9ff.).
 - c) Death, although no longer feared, is still repulsive to the Christian; it is still a disruptive event; it is still the reminder that he has not yet come to that state where there will be no more death.
- 5) The correctness of the interpretation we have offered is further confirmed by the language of the concluding clause of verse 4, where Paul speaks of what is mortal being swallowed up by life, or, to put it negatively, not being swallowed up by death. Of particular significance is the expression "what is mortal." A comparison with I Cor. 15:50-54 shows that Paul uses it to indicate in a precise manner the physical frame of the man who is still alive at the time of Christ's return. In I Cor. 15:50-54 (as in I Thess. 4: 13-18) it is evident that Paul has two categories of Christians in mind, namely, those who are alive and those who have died when the Lord returns

vv. 5 -- Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

- 1) In the Greek the word "God" is in a position of emphasis: "But it is God who fashioned us for this very thing," that is, for the ultimate investiture with the glorified body. Paul has been speaking of putting it on, but he now characteristically takes care to explain that this process of "clothing" is in no sense the product of man's workmanship. This, the crowning experience of

God's work of grace in the believer, is entirely of God. The good work begun in the Christian by God will be carried through to completion by God, until it reaches perfection in the day of Jesus Christ. Not only is everything attributed to grace, but it is towards this glorious goal that God's redemptive activity is all along directed.

- 2) In assurance of this great reality, we have the earnest of the Spirit which God has granted us here and now -- we already have the deposit which guarantees the payment in full in due course.
 - a) At creation man was fashioned by God, not for death, but for immortality.
 - b) This purpose has been reaffirmed in the new creation through Christ, so that the consummation of redemption is also the fulfillment of God's will and plan in creation. The particular association of the Holy Spirit with the theme which the Apostle is here expounding is clarified by the significant statement of Rom. 8: 11: "If the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised up Christ Jesus from the dead will quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwells in you." The Christian is assured that the same principle of power which effected the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead is also present and at work within him, preparing his mortal body for the consummation of his redemption in the glorification of his body.
 - i) This life-giving earnest of the Spirit explains, then, the daily renewal of the inward man which the Christian experiences and which is producing a weight of glory far in excess of the afflictions which he endures in the outward man (4:16, 17).
 - ii) On the believer's horizon there are no clouds: shadow and suffering there may be here, but it is all glory hereafter.
 - iii) There is nothing of which he is more certain, and he has this unshakable assurance because God has given him the earnest of the Spirit.

vv. 6-8 -- Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight); we are of good courage, I say, and we are willing rather to be absent from

the body, and to be at home with the Lord.

- 1) Paul is not cowardly in the face of death. On the contrary, he is full of confidence because of the indescribable glory that awaits all those who are Christ's.
 - a) Despair is an experience to which he does not submit; for to despair is to disown the Spirit, and to disown the Spirit is not to be a Christian at all.³
 - b) We are confident because we "know."
 - c) This confidence moreover, is constant ("always"); it is not dependent on moods or circumstances, nor on whether the Lord comes before or after death; certainly not on a resigned stoical acceptance of whatever the future may bring.
 - d) It is enhanced by the knowledge ("knowing") that to be at home in the body that is, the present tent-dwelling, the metaphor of the preceding verses being maintained here in the idea of being "at home" -- is to be away from our real home which is with the Lord, whereas to depart from the body tent (in death) is to go home to the Lord.

- 2) By saying that while at home in the body we are absent from the Lord Paul is not moralizing as though to suggest that those who feel "at home" in this life are not living close to Christ (true though this may be); nor does he mean to question the fact that in this life Christ is already very really present with believers, for the gift of the Holy Spirit ensures the Savior's presence in every believing heart and one of the great themes of the Pauline epistles is that of the believer's union here and now with Christ -- Christ in me and I in Christ.
 - a) It is precisely for the purpose of averting misunderstanding that the parenthesis of verse 7 is inserted: "for we are at present walking by faith and not by sight." This is manifest because we are now with the Lord through faith not through presence; and for this reason we are

³In v. 6 the "therefore" points back to what has just been said, while the following clause "and knowing ..." adds a further ground of confidence. Hence it is wrong to understand "and" here as the equivalent of "because", as though giving the ground for the conclusion introduced by the preceding "therefore".

absent from Him, not in faith, but in sight. For when we do not see Him, although He is present, we are absent from Him.

- b) In this life it is faith that gives reality to things which are still hoped for and assurance concerning things which are not yet seen (Heb. 11:1).
 - c) Hereafter, however, faith will vanish into sight. If absence from the body means to be at home with the Lord, then death cannot but be welcome, even though it involves a period of "nakedness" in a disembodied state. Hence, were there a choice between the present life in this body and departing in death to be at home with Christ, the Apostle would willingly choose the latter. But even more he would wish for his earthly tent-dwelling to be superinvested and absorbed by the habitation from heaven.
- 3) Again, there is no question of the Apostle courting death in a spirit of rashness. The wonder and sacredness of the ministry with which he had been entrusted never faded.
- a) It was a source of joy and encouragement to him; and he clearly saw himself as a runner with an earthly course to finish, not to abandon, and a steward with a ministry to accomplish which he had received from the Lord Jesus, "to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24; I Cor. 9:23ff.).
 - b) His outlook is nowhere more aptly and tersely summed up than in the words which he wrote to the Christians at Philippi: "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"; and though it is true that he has "a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is very much better", yet he realizes, as he tells them, that "to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake" (Phil. 1:21-23).

vv. 9 -- Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him.

- 1) "Wherefore"-- that is, because of his desire to be with the Lord -- it is only natural that Paul should also wish to live in such a way as to please Him.
 - a) This, indeed, is his consuming ambition, the motive force behind all that he does. To be well pleasing to Christ is, indeed, the sum of all

ambition which is truly Christian.

- b) In contrast to the ambition of this world, it is centered, not on self, but on the Savior; its goal is to please Him.
 - i) Hence Paul's injunction to the Colossians: "Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, ... heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men" (Col. 3:17,23).
 - ii) And this is his ambition, "whether at home or absent" – that is, whether at Christ's return he is found still alive ("at home in the body") or, through the experience of death, in a state of "nakedness" ("absent from the body").

vv. 10 -- For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

- 1) Paul's contemplation of the world to come was not esoteric or theoretical. All that he writes is intensely practical and has vital bearings upon this present life.
 - a) To have the glorious hope of being transformed into the likeness of Christ at His appearing in no way absolves us from responsibility for the manner in which we conduct ourselves now.
 - b) If our deepest longing is for that consummating moment when we shall at last be transfigured into His image, then it should be our present concern to progress daily, by the grace of God, towards the goal of Christlikeness.
 - c) But there is a further consideration, to which the Apostle draws attention here, namely, that even for the Christian there is to be a day of reckoning. We must all, apostles and the rest, whether living or dead at Christ's coming, be made manifest before the tribunal of Christ.

- 2) To *be made manifest* means not just to appear, but to be laid bare, stripped of every outward facade of respectability, and openly revealed in the full and true reality of one's character.
 - a) All our hypocrisies and concealments, all our secret, intimate sins of thought and deed, will be open to the scrutiny of Christ.

- b) This is a clear indication, incidentally, of the absolute Deity of the Redeemer, for it is only the divine gaze which penetrates to the very essence of our personality: "man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (I Sam. 16:7).
 - c) The conduct of our lives should constantly be influenced by the solemn remembrance that "there is no creature that is not manifest in God's sight, but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13; cf. I Cor. 4: 5).
- 3) Because much is required of those to whom much has been given, the thought of the judgment seat of Christ has for the Christian a peculiar solemnity. It is not meant to cloud his prospect of future blessedness, but to act as a stimulus.
- 4) The impartiality of Christ's tribunal is stressed by the assurance that each individual will receive as his own the things done in his body, according to what he did, whether good or worthless. It is important to see that the purpose of this tribunal is not positively penal, but properly retributive, involving the disclosure not only of what has been worthless but also of what has been good and valuable in this life.
- 5) All the implications and consequences of being made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ will not be known until the day itself arrives; but meanwhile the Christian is left in no doubt that he is regarded by God as fully answerable for the quality of his present life in the body.
- 6) This passage indicates, further, both that the limits of this present earthly life ("the things done in the body") are, so far as the judgment-seat of Christ is concerned, the limits also of our time of opportunity and responsibility, and that there is a quite definite continuity between this earthly body and the future glorified body, however much the latter may transcend the former in splendor and power. Thus to certain heretics who affirmed that it is a different body which is raised Chrysostom offers the rejoinder: "How so? Tell me. Has one sinned, and is another punished? Has one done virtuously, and is another crowned?"

11 Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.

As the "therefore" shows, this verse must be interpreted in close connection with what has immediately preceded, namely, the teaching concerning the judgment-seat of Christ before which all believers will be made manifest. Paul himself has a deep consciousness of the awe which should be inspired in the heart of every servant who will be required to give an account of his stewardship to his master. The recollection of this fact fills him with a wholesome reverence for his divine Master and causes him to treat the ministry which has been entrusted to him with the utmost seriousness. In the light of the ultimate realities of which he has been speaking every genuine follower of Christ should apply himself earnestly to "the perfecting of holiness in the fear of God" (7:1).

12 We are not again commending ourselves unto you, but [speak] as giving you occasion of glorying on our behalf, that ye may have wherewith to answer them that glory in appearance, and not in heart.

Paul realizes that what he has just written is likely to be seized on by his adversaries in Corinth and brandished by them as further proof (cf. 3:1) of arrogance and boastfulness on his part. Self-glorying is, however, as we have seen, far from the Apostle's mind. In fact, it is to his children in the faith at Corinth that he is giving an incentive to speak up boldly on his behalf in refutation of those who were making false charges against him. Certainly, the false charges of his opponents could not harm him in himself, for he has a clear conscience before God (hence the absence of all self-concern); but they were harmful to the unity of the Church and hindered the progress of the apostolic ministry that had been entrusted to him. His concern, in brief, is not with what men may think or say about him, but with the well-being and edification of the church of Christ. "We are taught here", says Calvin, "that Christ's servants ought to be concerned for their own reputation only in so far as it is for the advantage of the Church," and "that in the ultimate issue a minister's true praise is that which is common to him with the whole Church, rather than peculiar to him alone."

Paul is doing no more than reminding the Corinthians that the knowledge

which they have of him, both outwardly by personal acquaintance and inwardly through the testimony of their own consciences, is adequate for them to rebut the calumnies against his person of those "who glory in appearance and not in heart." By describing his opponents in this way the Apostle means, it would seem, that their glorying is entirely outward and fails to correspond to their true inward state; they put on a bold face and appear to be thoroughly confident of the things which they teach, but in reality, in their hearts, they are anything but confident, and indeed care little for the spiritual issues which they profess to defend, for their glorying is only a facade, a pretence designed to impress and deceive men and directed towards their own material advantage. Paul's glorying, however, is not in things which the world might reckon to be to his advantage: the things which were, in this sense, gain to him he had counted loss for Christ (Phil. 3:7). His outward glorying, as this epistle repeatedly shows, is in his infirmities and sufferings, because it is precisely through them that the grace and power of God are magnified. Accordingly, his concern is not to serve self or to impress men, but to fulfill the ministry entrusted to him (Acts 20:24) in obedience to the heavenly vision (Acts 26:19). Unlike his opponents, then, his glorying may truly be described as "in heart and not in appearance" – deeply genuine and not superficial; for it is centered on Him who is Himself the Light and the Truth. And this should be true of all Christ's ministers.

13 For whether we are beside ourselves, it is unto God; or whether we are of sober mind, it is unto you.

Whatever his state or disposition, Paul, in contrast to his critics, is entirely free from self-interest: if mad, it is to God; if sober-minded, it is for the Corinthians' sakes. This is the only occasion on which the verb here translated "to be beside oneself" is found in the epistles, and it does not occur at all in the Johannine writings. In the synoptic Gospels and Acts its most frequent meaning is "to be amazed." The same applies to the noun "ecstasy," which occurs seven times in Mark, Luke, and Acts and in four of these instances means "amazement." On the remaining three occasions (Acts 10:10, 11:5, 22:17) it is used of a state of trance in which a vision is seen – a state, that is, in which the mind as it were stands aside from the body. The verb is also applied to those who make what are judged to be extravagant claims and who are therefore said to be beside themselves, in a state of hallucination or mental aberration. Thus we find that at a

particular juncture of His ministry our Lord's relatives attempted to remove Him from the public scene on the ground that He was beside Himself, that is, mentally deranged -- a charge which was supplemented by the scribes from Jerusalem who declared that He was Satan-possessed (Mk. 3:21ff.).

In our present passage the verb is in the aorist tense, and some commentators have therefore taken it to point back to a particular event in the past, the most likely of which would be Paul's experience on the Damascus road; his rivals in Corinth might have suggested that on that occasion he was the victim of a great hallucination and had then gone out of his mind. Less probable is the proposal that it refers to the experience, mentioned in 12:1ff., of being caught up to the third heaven and hearing unspeakable words. This, however, was essentially a private experience, not mentioned elsewhere nor commonly known, and concerning which he uses the most guarded and indeed cryptic terms.

It is more likely, however, that the verb, rather than referring to some past event or experience, conveys an allegation concerning Paul's present state of mind. This is how it is understood by the majority of commentators, and it would indicate that the Apostle, as had been the case with his Master before him, was said by his enemies to be out of his senses. On a later occasion the Roman procurator Festus would make a similar charge ("Paul, you are mad; much learning turns you to madness."); though this must be distinguished from the present case in that Festus, unlike Paul's critics at Corinth, did not profess to be a Christian and also because the accusation had reference only to the gospel which Paul preached, and not, as far as we can judge, to anything exceptional in the Apostle's behavior. Accordingly, it is a charge which he immediately repudiates: his proclamation of the gospel to others, whether Festus or the Corinthians, is essentially sober minded ("I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but speak forth words of truth and soberness"). In other words, Paul's preaching of the gospel is at all times thoughtful, intelligible, balanced, directed to the mind as well as to the heart, and entirely free from any suggestion of "mania."

14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died;

15 and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again.

The objectivity and therefore the disinterestedness of Paul's outlook is nowhere better seen than in this passage. The great compelling motive force in his life since conversion is that of love; not, however, love originating, far less ending, in himself, but the love which originates and ends with God in Christ. His conduct, however it be judged, is dictated by the love of Christ (not so much his love for Christ -- though that inevitably is involved -- as Christ's love for him, which is prior to and the explanation of his love for Christ, and which is supremely manifested, as is clear from what immediately follows, in Christ's atoning sacrifice of Himself for mankind). It is this love (agape) and none other, that shuts him in, confines him as between two walls, to one purpose which may be summed up in the terms of the preceding verse as being to live selflessly "unto God" and, within the framework of that supreme allegiance, to his fellowmen ("unto you"). The constraining power of the divine love of Christ is the explanation of another famous statement of Paul's: "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21); it is the logic which demands his willingness to suffer the loss of all things for Christ's sake; and it is the reason for his overmastering ambition to win Christ, to be found in Christ, and to know Christ (Phil. 3:7ff.). In Christ, his Redeemer and Lord, lay the deep springs of all his conduct.

The Apostle, however, is not speaking merely of the response of love to Love, as though the spectacle of the cross were sufficient by itself to move us to repentance and faith. The theology of salvation is far more profound than that. The death of Christ for us has an inner consequence which can be understood only in terms of substitution; and this consequence is tersely propounded by Paul when he declares: "One died for all, therefore all died." Although it is true that the preposition "for" or "on behalf of" does not by itself necessarily convey the idea of substitution, yet this sense is fully appropriate when the context requires it, and Paul's language here has meaning only if it is understood in this sense. The substitutionary force of the preposition here is plainly indicated by the conclusion, "therefore all died"; for this conclusion cannot be valid except on the understanding that Christ died in the stead of all, as their substitute. On this ground alone is there justification for speaking as Paul does here of a logical identification of all with Christ in His death; and on this ground alone is there an adequate explanation of the constraining power of Christ's love. To interpret Christ's death as being merely exemplary or in some general sense as for the

advantage of man, as an assurance of God's good will notwithstanding man's rebellion, is to destroy the mainspring of the Apostle's argument.

In the scheme of salvation the doctrine of Christ's vicarious atonement for man's sin is of cardinal importance. It is central in the soteriology of the New Testament, and, as is generally acknowledged, is an essential element of Paul's teaching in this passage. If we all died, in that Christ died for us, there must be a sense in which that death of His is ours; He must be identified with us in it: there, on the cross, while we stand and gaze at Him, He is not simply a person doing us a service; He is a person doing us a service by filling our place and dying our death."

The two aorist verbs -- "One died . . . all died" -- point back to the one event, namely, the crucifixion of Christ. The same aorist occurs in Col. 3:3 ("you died") and, in a much more extended context, in Rom. 6:1-11 (which, of course, supplements the argument of Rom. 5:12-21). The death of Christ has a twofold significance for the believer, which is implicit in the verses we are considering: firstly, Christ died for me (cf. Rom. 5:6, 8), and, secondly, I died with Christ (cf. Rom. 6:8). On His dying for me, His meeting the demands of God's justice in my stead, depends the possibility of my justification; and on my dying with Him depends the whole possibility of my salvation. He who died with Christ must reckon himself to be dead to sin, but, in Christ Jesus the risen Lord, alive unto God (Rom. 6:6, 11). So also here: He died for all so that we should no longer live to ourselves (the old self-life having been crucified with Him on the cross), but unto Him who for our sakes died and rose again. This theme, so fundamental to all the Apostle's thinking and acting, is summed up in the notable affirmation of Gal. 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

In the New Testament the death of Christ is always, and necessarily, associated with His resurrection. Death without resurrection spells only hopeless defeat; a dead savior is a contradiction in terms. Only a risen, victorious Savior has the power to communicate His redemption to those on whose behalf He has acted. Accordingly, Paul speaks here of living unto Him who died and rose again for our sakes. **The implications of Christian baptism are closely bound up with the teaching we have been considering.** We become dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness, by being buried with Christ in His death (Rom. 6:3ff.), that we

may crucify the old man, destroy the old body of sin; and that, being made partaker of the death of Christ, we may also become a partaker of His resurrection so that finally we may inherit the everlasting kingdom.

b. The message of reconciliation. 5:16 -6:2.

16 Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know [him so] no more.

17 Wherefore if any man is in Christ, [he is] a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.

18 But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech [you] on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.

21 Him who knew no sin he made [to be] sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

5: 16 --

1. The consequence ("wherefore") of what Paul has just said, namely, that Christians no longer live to self but to Him who died and rose again for them, is that he now knows nobody according to the flesh.
 1. "Henceforth" doubtless means from the time when he formed the judgment or conclusion expressed in the preceding two verses, that is, the time of his conversion.
 2. His knowledge, by which he means his appraisal and acknowledgment, of persons is no longer, as it once was, after the flesh -- in other words, in accordance with the estimate formed of people by the unregenerate man and by the world in general.
 1. The world's standard of value is respect of persons in their outward appearance (cf. v. 12 above, "that glory in appearance and not in heart").
 2. But with God there is no such respect of persons (Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6: 9; Col. 3:25); and it follows that the faith of our Lord

- Jesus Christ is not to be held with respect of persons (Jas. 2:1).
3. In the teaching of Paul the flesh (in its ethical, not its material, connotation) is the antithesis and the enemy of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16ff.).
 1. Between the two there is a sharp dividing line separating mankind into two distinct categories according as a person's conduct and standard of values is dictated either by the flesh or by the Spirit.
 2. Hence Paul declares that "they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5).
 3. Typically worldly distinctions, such as those of race, social status, wealth, and title, should no longer govern the Christian's estimate of his fellow-men (cf. Gal. 3:28).
 4. The absolutely vital question, as the next verse shows, is whether a person is a new man in Christ Jesus. Yet it is sadly possible for those who profess the faith of Christ to estimate others according to the flesh.
 2. But what does Paul mean when, in one of the most arresting sentences of the New Testament, he affirms that even if he has known Christ according to the flesh yet now he no longer knows Him in this way?
 1. In the Greek, the construction indicates that he concedes as a fact what he states in hypothetical form: "even if, as is indeed the case, I have known Christ after the flesh"
 2. The question then arises as to the sense in which Paul wished it to be understood that he had formerly known Christ "after the flesh."
 1. Does his language imply that he had actually seen and had some form of contact with Christ during His earthly ministry?
 2. There is no inherent impossibility in such a contingency, and it has been variously suggested that Paul when a disciple of Gamaliel in Jerusalem must have enjoyed ample opportunity for hearing Jesus and even meeting with Him, that he had been a witness of the crucifixion of Christ, or that he was the rich young ruler who had questioned Christ (Mk. 10:17ff.).
 3. But, whether or not Paul had had some such personal contact with Jesus in the past, the significance of what he says here is determined

by the immediate context.

1. Prior to his conversion his knowledge of Christ had been after the flesh, formed in accordance with external and mistaken standards; but his conversion had meant the transformation of his knowledge of Christ.
 2. A man in Christ is a creature entirely renewed, for whom the old judgments after the flesh have become a thing of the past (v. 17).
 3. He now knows Christ as He truly is.
3. Contemporary theologians of the dialectical and existentialist camps have pressed this verse into service as a support for their depreciation of objective historical truth.
1. The great acts and facts of the Christ of history are treated by them (in so far as they accept them at all) as peripheral rather than central to the essence of Christianity.
 2. Judgments of value must rest upon experience that is subjective, existential, and of the present moment.
 3. "Christ-after-the-flesh," that is, according to this interpretation, Christ considered as an objective figure of the past, is not and cannot be known by modern man and therefore is irrelevant to him.
 4. But that such a meaning was very far from Paul's mind is plain from all his writings and not least from the concluding section of this present chapter (vs. 18 to 21).
4. To have known Christ in this way was a guarantee of nothing.
1. Great numbers had followed Christ in person who afterwards deserted Him and demanded His crucifixion.
 2. Even the privileged inner circle of His disciples, despite their intimate association with the Master, had failed to grasp the true significance of what He taught them;
 1. Their knowledge of Him was distorted by misconceptions and by this-worldly considerations.
 2. They wrangled among themselves as to who was to be given the place of honor in His kingdom;
 1. Peter who had confessed Him so remarkably was also the one who denied Him;
 2. Judas, who had enjoyed equal privileges of intimacy with

Christ, betrayed Him to His enemies; and all fled at His arrest.

3. Their knowledge of Christ in the flesh, filled with blessing though it was, was far from being unmixed with knowledge of Him after the flesh.
3. By the day of Pentecost they had at last come to know Him fully after the Spirit.
 1. Then we find them no longer dull of understanding, cowardly, despondent, of little faith, but wise in the things of God, bold, outspoken, and full of joy and power.
 2. To know Christ after the flesh, in accordance with the standards of this world, is not to know Christ at all.
 1. Our Lord's accusation against the Pharisees who criticized Him with such rancor was that they had no real knowledge of Him, precisely because they judged Him after the flesh (Jn. 8:14f.).
 2. The same had been true of Paul, the proudest and most prejudiced of them all, until that unforgettable moment when he encountered Jesus, acknowledged Him as Lord (Acts 9:4ff.), and was immersed to have his sins washed away (Acts 22:16).

5:17 --

1. Paul now propounds a further consequence ("wherefore", cf. preceding v.) of the Christian's identification with Christ in His death and resurrection (vv. 14, 15): not only does he no longer know any man according to the flesh (v. 16), but also as a man in Christ he is in fact a new creation for whom the old order of things has given place to an experience in which everything is new.
2. The expression "in Christ" sums up as briefly and as profoundly as possible the inexhaustible significance of man's redemption.
 1. It speaks of security in Him who has Himself borne in His own body the judgment of God against our sin
 2. It speaks of acceptance in Him with whom alone God is well pleased.

3. It speaks of assurance for the future in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.
 4. It speaks of the inheritance of glory in Him who, as the only begotten Son, is the sole heir of God
 5. It speaks of participation in the divine nature in Him who is the everlasting Word.
 6. It speaks of knowing the truth, and being free in that truth, in Him who Himself is the Truth.
 7. All this, and very much more than can ever be expressed in human language, is meant by being "in Christ."
3. No wonder that the Apostle describes it in absolute terms as a "new creation."
1. Redemption in Christ is nothing less than the fulfillment of God's eternal purposes in creation, so radical in its effects that it is justly called a new creation (cf. 4:6 where Paul has already related the enlightenment of regeneration to the activity of God at creation.
 2. In the experience of this new creation the standards and pretensions of this world sink into insignificance.
 1. Hence Paul tells the Galatians that, through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, the world having been crucified to him and he to the world, former distinctions, such as that between circumcision and uncircumcision, are of no consequence, but only a new creation (Gal. 6:14f.).
 2. And to the Ephesians he says, combining the two concepts of "in Christ" and "new creation" in a single phrase: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).
 3. Again, a Christian is one who has "put on the new man which is after God", in contrast to the old man which is after the flesh, "created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. 4:24). These considerations lead us to think that the most effective rendering of the first part of our verse is "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, there is a new creation".
4. When Paul declares that for the Christian old things have passed away, the

tense of the verb (aorist) points back to a definite moment or event, namely, the experience of the new birth (Rom. 6:3-4).

1. It is then that the old things -- the distinctions, prejudices, misconceptions, and enslavements of the former unregenerate way of life assume the character of “pastness.” “Behold, they are become new.”
 1. Note the tense again (this time perfect), indicating that the old things became and continue to be new.
 2. For the newness of God's new creation is not a newness that in course of time palls and grows old and outmoded like a new car.
 3. It is a newness that is everlastingly new.

5. The exclamation “behold” sounds an unmistakable note of spontaneous jubilation.
 1. This response of delight and wonderment cannot fail to be evoked in the hearts of those to whom the miracle of God's new creation is revealed.
 1. It is present in prediction – “Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old: behold, I will do a new thing !” (Isa. 43:18f.).
 2. It is present in fulfillment – “The first things are passed away.... Behold, I make all things new!” (Rev. 21:4f.).
 3. And meanwhile it is present in the hearts of all who, though still in this world, have already become by God's grace members of the world to come.

5:18 --

1. As in the original creation all things were brought into being by the Word of God, so also in the new creation God through His Son, who is The Word, is the sole Author of all things.
 1. A new soul (for it was cleansed), and also a new body, and a new worship, and new promises and covenant and life and table and dress, and all things absolutely new.
 2. For instead of:
 1. the Jerusalem below we have received that mother city which

- is above;
2. material temple we have seen a spiritual temple;
 3. tables of stone, fleshy tables;
 4. manna, the Lord's body;
 5. water from a rock, blood from His side;
 6. Moses' and Aaron's rod, the Cross;
 7. promised land, the kingdom of heaven;
 8. thousand priests, one High Priest;
 9. lamb without understanding, a spiritual Lamb.
2. The need for this message is seen against the background of man's alienation from God; and the cause of this alienation is, in a word, sin.
 1. By sin man sets himself in rebellion against God; he becomes an enemy of God.
 1. It is not a question of some minor misunderstanding which could easily be put right
 2. It is a case of mutiny and mutiny of a kind far more radical in its nature and effect than anything that is known in purely human relationships.
 3. For the essence of sin is seen in the desire of the creature to set himself up in the place, not of another creature, but of his Creator, the wish to be even as God, the attempt to place himself, instead of God, at the center of reality as the arbiter and controller of all things.
 2. Sin is the revolt of man both against God his Creator and also against his own constitution as creature.
 3. But man's rebellion, though it is the originating factor, is not the sole factor in the alienation between man and God.
 1. It is met and matched by the wrath of God against sin.
 1. God, in other words, is not the helpless victim of the mutiny of man.
 2. His supremacy as sovereign Governor of the universe is unimpaired, and His government of it is in conformity with those absolute moral principles which constitute an essential framework of an orderly world.
 2. It is of particular importance to emphasize that the wrath of God is by

no means a contradiction of the love of God.

1. For God to have permitted sin to flourish unchecked and unpunished, and passively to have watched the world degenerate into a dungheap of corruption and violence, would have been very far removed from an expression of love.
 1. It would have argued the impotence of His purposes in creation and
 2. the incompetence of His hand to control the affairs of men
 3. which would mean in turn that He was not God at all.
 2. Those who speak sentimentally of the love of God as though it were incompatible with the wrath of God show that they have entirely failed to grasp the realities of the situation.
4. The rebellion of man, however, is also met and matched by the love of God in Christ Jesus.
1. If there is no wrath of God against sin, then the love of God in Christ Jesus is deficient of all moral content;
 2. The Cross, however sentimentally it may be viewed, then becomes an exhibition of cruelty and injustice, which as such cannot be the action of a truly loving, let alone perfectly holy, God.
 3. But when the Cross is seen to be the place where God-become-Man bears for man and as Man the sin of man, endures the just penalty of sin, and therefore exhausts the wrath of God against sin, and all this because of God's surpassing love for man, **then alone will it be seen that at the Cross love and wrath meet in a common purpose, that mercy combines with truth and righteousness and peace kiss each other (Psa 85:10; Rom. 3:26).**
5. In Christ God's holy and loving work of reconciliation has been accomplished once and for all.
1. It is because the way of reconciliation now stands wide open that the ministry of reconciliation has been committed by God to His servants.
 1. There is no service to mankind more crucial and urgent than the exercise of this ministry.
 - 2/ This ministry with its message of reconciliation is, in the

ultimate issue, the one thing needful for our world in all circumstances and in every generation.

5:19 --

1. The expression "to wit, that . . ." introduces the terms of the ministry of reconciliation and shows in particular that it is a ministry of proclamation, involving the announcement to the world of a message of good news, the declaration of what God in His royal grace has done for the rescue of His fallen creatures.
 1. Christ's ministers are, in fact, His messengers: declarers of reconciliation, not agents of it.
 1. Hence Paul speaks here of the word of reconciliation which God has deposited in His ministers.
 1. This divine act of depositing implies two things:
 1. Firstly, that those who minister have themselves been made recipients of the grace of reconciliation, and,
 2. Secondly, that they are under obligation to proclaim that grace to the world (cf. Rom. 1:14ff.; I Cor. 9:16).
 2. Paul's fondness for the term "word" (*logos*) as a synonym for the message of the gospel⁴ and John's application of the term to Christ as a title⁵ take on extra significance in view of the consideration that in Greek thought *logos* indicates what is true and trustworthy as opposed to the term "myth" (*mythos*) which is descriptive of what is fictitious and spurious.
 1. Socrates, for example, declares that a particular story is "no fictitious myth but a true logos."
 2. Hence the term "logos" carries with it, like a kind of overtone, the implication of truth and genuineness, and is

⁴ (cf, for example, Eph. 1 :13," . . . having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation"; Col. 1: 5," . . . the word of the truth of the gospel"; I Cor. 1: 18," . . the word of the cross")

⁵ (Jn. 1:1, 14; cf. Rev. 19:13)

accordingly peculiarly appropriate as a synonym for the gospel, which is "the word of truth."

2. There has never been unanimity as to how the opening clause of this verse should be understood.
 1. It may be taken to mean either:
 1. That "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself"; or
 2. That "in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself."
 2. Of the alternatives mentioned above,
 1. the former would convey the interpretation that in reconciling the world to Himself God the Father was not only acting through Christ, as an instrument (see previous v.), but was also in Him, united with Him in being and act. God-in-action on our behalf is essentially God-in-Christ.
 1. The unanimity of Father and Son flows from their eternal unity (Jn. 10: 30), and on the fact that Christ acting for us is no less than God acting for us hangs the whole efficacy and security of our salvation.
 2. It is this presence of God in Christ, in the man Jesus, which gives to the sacrifice of the cross its infinite value; the doctrine of redemption depends on that of the hypostatic union, a doctrine with which these verses are impregnated.
3. Thus Paul effectively emphasizes the identity of Christ's work with God's work.
 1. Here, as before, God is still viewed as the end as well as the beginning of reconciliation: it is He who reconciles, and He does it to Himself.
 2. The scope of the reconciliation is now extended from "us" (previous v.) to "the world."
 1. This should not be understood in the sense of an indiscriminate universalism.
 2. This grand perspective of reconciliation is more explicitly affirmed in Col. 1:20, where Paul declares that it is God's purpose through Christ "to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross . . . whether

things upon the earth or things in the heavens.”

3. The method whereby this is achieved is now briefly mentioned by the Apostle: "not reckoning unto them their trespasses" (a statement which is further explained in v. 21).
 1. This God effects, not by overlooking the trespasses of men, for His mercy cannot be vindicated by injustice, but by not reckoning their trespasses to them.
 2. There is a reckoning of sins; they are reckoned, however, not to the sinner but to Christ, the sinner's substitute.
 3. In the truest sense, for the man in Christ old things have passed away; his sin and its judgment have been borne by Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn- 1: 29).

5:20 --

1. An ambassador acts and speaks not only on behalf of but also in the place of the sovereign from whom he has received his commission.
 1. It is his duty to proclaim faithfully and precisely the message entrusted to him by his sovereign.
 2. Accordingly there is a real sense in which the voice of the ambassador may be said to be the voice of the sovereign he represents.
 3. Here, therefore, Paul boldly urges this analogy: when Christ's ambassador entreats it is equivalent to the voice of God entreating through him.
 4. His message, his authority, his power are all imparted to him by his Lord.
 5. The Apostle makes no difference between Christ and God, Christ Himself being the Second Person of the eternal Godhead.
2. The message of reconciliation is not something which Christ's ambassador announces with impersonal detachment; he has been entrusted with vital news for people in desperate need.
 1. It is for this reason that he beseeches his hearers. We cannot fail to detect the strong note of urgency and compassion in the Apostle's language.
 1. He sees men as God sees them, in a lost state; he has the word which, because it is a word of reconciliation, above all else they

- need to hear; and,
2. because he is proclaiming what God in His mercy and grace has already done for them in Christ, his voice has the authority of the voice of God.
3. Some assume that Paul is addressing the words of this verse in a particular manner to the Corinthians, as though, because of their misdemeanors, they were in need of a fresh experience of reconciliation
 1. At this point, however, the Apostle is concerned with the ministry of reconciliation for the world at large rather than with its application to the special circumstances of the church in Corinth.
 2. He is referring, not to the requirements of believers, but to the evangelistic duty of Christ's ambassadors to go into all the world and announce the good news of reconciliation to every creature, pleading with men to receive as their own what God has freely provided in His Son.
 3. His specific appeal to the Corinthian believers comes shortly, in the first verse of chapter 6, but not here.
 4. For the present, the concise economy of the terms in which he effectively describes his universal missionary entreaty is best reproduced without resort to the introduction of inessential pronouns, as follows: "We beseech on behalf of Christ: 'Be reconciled to God!'"

5:21 -- Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

1. In these few direct words the Apostle sets forth the gospel of reconciliation in all its mystery and all its wonder.
 1. There is no sentence more profound in the whole of Scripture; for this verse embraces the whole ground of the sinner's reconciliation to God and declares the incontestable reason why he should respond to the ambassadorial entreaty.
 2. Indeed, it completes the message with which the Christian ambassador has been entrusted.
 1. To proclaim: "Be reconciled to God" is not good news unless it is accompanied by a declaration of the ground on which

reconciliation has been effected and is available.

2. Preaching from which the exposition of this ground is omitted is not scriptural.
 3. Thus it is important to see that the statement of this verse is an inseparable part of the announcement made by Christ's ambassador and must not be isolated from the immediately preceding exhortation of the previous verse: "Be reconciled to God: [ground] Him who knew no sin God made sin for us in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."
2. Christ is described here as not having known sin.
 1. The significance of this is made clear in other New Testament passages, especially:
 1. Heb. 4:15 ("one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"),
 2. I Pet. 2:22 ("... who did no sin"), I Jn. 3:5 ("in him is no sin"), and
 3. Heb. 7:26 ("holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners").
 2. The sinlessness of which these passages speak refers to our Lord's incarnate life.
 3. That as God He is without sin goes without saying; but what is of vital importance for us and our reconciliation is that as Man, that is, in His incarnate state, Christ knew no sin, for only on that ground was He qualified to effect an atonement as Man for man.
 1. To His adversaries He issues the challenge: "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" (Jn. 8: 46).
 2. Both at His baptism and on the mount of transfiguration the voice from heaven declares: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Mt. 3:17, 17:5).
 3. His freedom from sin is the secret of His unbroken unity and fellowship with the Father-"I and the Father are one", "I am in the Father and the Father in me" (Jn. 10:30, 14:10f., 17:11, 21f.).
 4. Even His earthly judge protested publicly that he found no fault in Him (Lk. 23:4, 14, 22).
 5. And those who witnessed His dying -- the malefactor crucified

at His side, the centurion standing by the cross, and also the gazing multitude -- were constrained to testify to His blamelessness (Lk. 23:41, 47, 48).

4. Only He who had completely and uninterruptedly obeyed the law of God was fitted to suffer the punishment due to those who have willfully disobeyed that law; Only He who was entirely without sin of His own was free to bear the sin of others.
5. Such a Mediator was absolutely essential for our reconciliation to God.
 1. None other could suffer for our sins, "the Righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God" (I Pet. 3:18).
 2. He alone, who did not know sin, had no need of reconciliation, whereas we, who did not know righteousness, were bound to be destroyed unless reconciliation were found.
 3. It is found in Christ who stood in our place so that His righteousness might be exchanged for our sin.
3. God, declares Paul, made the Sinless One sin for us.
 1. It is important to notice that he does not say that God made Him a sinner; for to conceive of Christ as sinful, or made a sinner, would be to overthrow the very foundation of redemption, which demands the death of an altogether Sinless One in the place of sinful mankind.
 2. But God made Him sin: that is to say that God the Father made His innocent incarnate Son the object of His wrath and judgment, for our sakes, with the result that in Christ on the cross the sin of the world is judged and taken away. In this truth resides the whole logic of reconciliation.
 3. The believer's reconciliation is fully summed up in the brief expression "in Him," which the Apostle uses here.
 1. As it is on Him that the full force of God's judgment against sin has fallen, so it is in Him that the sinner finds shelter from that judgment.
 2. It is in Him, precisely because He is Righteousness-Itself, that the sinner is made the righteousness of God.
 1. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon

Him, and with His stripes we are healed; . . . and Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:5f.) -- that is the meaning of Christ's having been made sin for us.

2. Not for one moment does He cease to be righteous, else the radical exchange envisaged by the apostle here, whereby our sin is transferred to Him and His righteousness is transferred to us, would be no more than a fiction or an hallucination.
4. It should be noticed, further, that, just as Paul does not say that Christ was made sinful, but sin, for us, so also he does not say that in Him we are made righteous, as though henceforth untouched by sin. It is, in a word, the sinner's justification of which the Apostle is speaking, whereby our trespasses are reckoned to Christ and the absolute and spotless perfection of His righteousness is reckoned to us.
5. It is plain, finally, that reconciliation is the result of expiation.
 1. Forgiveness follows satisfaction. Restoration is achieved through the vicarious endurance of punishment.
 2. The cross, therefore, is not an exhibition that all is well, but the proof that all is not well, and the place where God in pure grace and mercy deals with sin in a manner commensurate with His own holiness and justice.