

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

2 Corinthians 4:16–6:13

Key Verse: 5:18

In the Corinthian church some people, with various reasons, were criticizing Paul. So in 2 Corinthians he defends his apostleship and ministry. He longs for a heart-to-heart relationship with these believers (6:11–13). And in 5:18 he shares the ministry of reconciliation God has entrusted to him. Most scholars see this as the key verse of the letter. In this study we want to think about what the ministry of reconciliation means to us, and how and why we should engage in it in our personal lives, our church, our community and our world.

1. How does Paul describe our Christian experience here (4:16–18), and what does he mean? What more does he add about our hope (5:1–5)? How does this give us “good courage” (6–8)? Why should we always seek to please the Lord (9–10)? In light of this, what else do we do (11a)?
2. What has Paul already said about himself and his coworkers (1:12; 2:17; 3:1,4–6; 4:1–2, 8–10), and what does he add here (5:11b–13) and in the next chapter (6:4–10)? In light of their example, how can we trust God’s servants, and why is this important?
3. How does the love of Christ change our life purpose (5:14–15)? How does it change the way we regard others (16–17), and how does this transform our relationships?
4. What has God done through Christ (18)? What does “reconciliation” mean, and why is it so important (19,21; see also Ro5:10–11)? How does being reconciled to God affect our human relationships also (13:11; see also Eph2:16; Mt5:23–24)?
5. What does it mean that Paul and Timothy were “entrusted” with this ministry (18–19)? What does it mean to be “ambassadors for Christ” (20a)? How does accepting God’s reconciliation in Christ call us all to this new identity and mission?
6. What message does God want us to give (20b)? Why do all people so urgently need this message? What else does Paul say (6:1), and why do the Corinthians, and we, need to hear this? What Scripture does he quote (6:2), and why does he emphasize the word “now”? How does Paul conclude his appeal to the Corinthians (6:11–13)?