

# God's Peace Treaty

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**Bible Text:** 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

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## **Heritage Netherland Reformed Congregation**

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Our Scripture reading for this evening you can find in the book of 2 Corinthians chapter five.

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, 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 confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that 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 ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or 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 know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things

are 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 wit, 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 stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.<sup>1</sup>

Thus far the reading of God's holy and infallible Word.

Beloved, I stand before you now as your pastor. It seems surreal. I am still coming to grips with it, but the Lord has been good. The Lord has been faithful. And I pray that as my ministry among you commences that it would be a fruitful relationship that exists between you and me, between the pastors that I work with.

The Lord this morning has confirmed my call to the ministry in the ordination which has taken place. It is a special day for you as you receive another pastor to serve you and to lead you.

It is my desire that this relationship would grow and flourish that Christ, as we heard last week, would be formed in you, that together with Dr. Beeke and Pastor VanderZwaag that we would labor as we heard in child... as in the pangs of child birth to see Christ formed in you.

As we labor, we turn to the Word of God as we heard this morning, the Word of God which guides us, which leads us, which is our foundation for all of ministry, for all of life, really.

So I want to begin my ministry by turning to that Word. And our text for this evening is 2 Corinthians five verses 18 to 21. And there we read:

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 wit, 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 stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.<sup>2</sup>

Children, perhaps you know what the name of the treaty is that ended World War I in 1918. The *Treaty of Versailles* was signed bringing peace and reconciliation between the

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:1-21.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:18-21.

two warring parties, between the Allies on the one hand and the Axis powers on the other hand. It brought these two parties together and sought to restore the relationship that had been disrupted by the war that had taken place. It was authored by the Allied powers. As they negotiated they each wanted a stake in this treaty. They each wanted something that served them. The parties who had started the war, the Axis powers were left out of this negotiation. They had no say in how this peace treaty was formed. And so as the different powers jockeyed for their positions to their advantage, the peace treaty has been called an unhappy compromise because neither party really received what they wanted.

But what this example shows us tonight is the principle or the doctrine of reconciliation as we see it in our text. And reconciliation really means that proper relations are reestablished after these relations have been disrupted or broken.

And this *Treaty of Versailles* was really a unilateral peace treaty. It was a one sided peace treaty in which the receiving side had no say, but simply had to accept this treaty.

But tonight the Word of God sets before us another unilateral peace treaty, another one sided peace treaty. And for all those who come under this treaty it is a happy compromise. We all receive what we need. God receives all the honor and the glory and sinners receive peace and life and reconciliation with God.

But why does Paul speak about the ministry of reconciliation? Why does Paul speak about this peace treaty? Well, he gives us a theology of ministry anchored in this peace treaty.

I am sure if you apply for a job in the work force today you need to... if you are a teacher applying for a job at a school you need to give a philosophy of teaching which will outline what you believe, what your methods of teaching will be and how you will go about teaching. You might give a philosophy of finances if you are applying for a job in the financial sector.

And here Paul gives not only just a philosophy of ministry, but he gives a theology of ministry rooted in this peace treaty that God has made with man.

The Corinthians were having difficulty distinguishing what really made a minister of the gospel. There were some among them who were all for appearance. And Paul says in verse 12, “that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance.”<sup>3</sup>

There were those in the Church of Corinth who were glorying in appearance. They had missed the substance of the gospel ministry. And so Paul seeks to correct their understanding.

As I begin my ministry among you, I want to set forth clearly before you what the gospel ministry is, what my gospel ministry among you will be, what the ministry of my brothers in the ministry is.

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:13.

He shows his work as a gospel minister flows from this very peace treaty, from the gospel that God has made. This is the foundation of his work. It is the substance of his message.

And so our theme tonight as we consider Paul's ministry and hopefully my own among you anchored in this peace treaty, our theme is God's peace treaty with three points. First of all we see the author. Secondly, we see its ambassadors. And, thirdly, we see its appeal. God's peace treat: its author, its ambassador and its appeal.

And so we see that the ministry of reconciliation, the ministry of the gospel is anchored in this peace treaty that God has authored himself. Reconciliation in this passage, it really means God's peace extended to sinners. And the wonder of this peace treaty is that God has authored it himself. God has taken the initiative upon himself to establish peace with you and with me tonight.

Paul says in verse 18, "All things are of God."<sup>4</sup>

He speaks here especially of salvation, of this reconciliation. "All things are of God."<sup>5</sup> Salvation is of God. Paul here extols the sovereignty of God in salvation.

You and I are God's enemy by choice. We don't seek this peace. We don't make any attempt at establishing this peace with God. We are the aggressors and yet here we see that God comes to us tonight with this peace treaty and he says, "I am the God of peace. I am a God who desires to make peace with you tonight."

Charles Spurgeon says, "The first overtures for peace are not made by man the offender. But they are made by our aggrieved and offended God."

Here is the mercy and grace of God revealed in this peace treaty. And as the author of this peace treaty God also brings it into effect.

Paul says in verse 18, "God... hath reconciled us to himself."<sup>6</sup>

In verse 19 he says, "God... is reconciling the world unto himself."

It is God who has destroyed the enmity and the hostility that exists between you and between him. He has accomplished redemption for you, child of God.

Paul says, "God hath reconciled us," no more enmity. There is no more warfare, no more hostility. But there is peace between you and God. He is reconciling the world as well. The entire cosmos, the universe which he has created which is now groaning under the effects of sin. God is bringing all of these things into peace with him. He has made

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<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:18.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

reconciliation with you, child of God. He has erased the debt and the death of sin. And he is offering that to all men tonight, all those who are gathered under this word of reconciliation. He offers this peace freely without condition.

And God has accomplished this, says Paul, by Jesus Christ in verse 18. God has sent his only Son to establish peace between God and sinners. Christ is the agent of peace. He is the prince of peace. It is on the basis of Christ's sacrifice. It is on the basis of his blood and his righteousness that peace is established between you and him. Sin stands in the way between us and God, between peace being made.

But Colossians one verse 20 says that through the blood of the cross God has made peace. God sees the blood that Christ has shed and he is pleased with that sacrifice and he offers it to sinners tonight so that those who shelter under that blood can receive life and peace.

Salvation belongs to God. It is his initiative. It is a unilateral peace treaty. It is a one sided peace treaty that you and I don't seek by nature. It is here in God's peace treaty that my ministry among you must be rooted. It is here that the ministry of every Christian is rooted. If God had not provided this one sided peace treaty we would have no reconciliation to speak about. There would be no hope for sinners because you and I would remain at enmity with God.

When it comes to establishing this peace Anselmos Canterbury, the 11<sup>th</sup> century theologian said it well. He said, "Man has to establish peace, but he cannot. And God can, but he doesn't have to. But Christ Jesus, the God man, he both has to and he can."

There is nothing in you, beloved, that can make this peace. It is all in Christ. God has supplied everything for your and my salvation, for your and my peace.

Is God's work in Christ your foundation for ministry, for your life of faith?

This brings us to our second point in the ambassadors that God uses to announce this peace treaty.

Paul is clear that God uses human means to announce this peace, to represent him before you, before all humanity. But what motivates Paul to preach about this peace? What motivates Paul to be an ambassador for Jesus Christ?

Well, if we go back to verse 14 we read, "For the love of Christ constraineth us."<sup>7</sup>

There was a driving force in Paul's life that is more than just an inner impulse. It is more than just a motivation. It is a motivation outside of himself. It is a motivation rooted in a love that Christ has for him. It is rooted in his own salvation. It is the love of Christ

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<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:14.

which drives Paul, which compels him to preach the gospel, which leads him to say, “For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”<sup>8</sup>

When Paul is persecuted he can say, “The love of Christ compels me.”

When Paul is dealt with he sees Christ being dealt with unfairly on his behalf and he says, “The love of Christ compels me.”

When Paul is beaten and in prison he sees the stripes that were for his healing and he says, “The love of Christ compels me.”

When Paul is in despair even of life, when all have rejected him, he hears the cry of his Savior on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”<sup>9</sup> And he says, “The love of Christ compels me.”

When Paul sees the souls under his charge he says, “It is the love of Christ that compels me.”

With the help of God, beloved, I stand before you I see my Savior and I say, “The love of Christ compels me to preach the gospel to you. He has done for me what I never sought. He has done for me what I cannot do for myself. He has established peace between himself and me through Christ.

The love of Christ compels me. And I pray that the love of Christ would continually compel me as I visit with you, as I labor among you, as I bring the Word from Sunday to Sunday.

I don’t come to you as one who stands above you. But I come to you, as Spurgeon said, as a fellow sinner. And he says, “We hope that our former condition as sinners and unbelievers will make us speak to you more tenderly and will enable us to reach your hearts the better.”

Beloved, it is the love of Christ that constrains me. It is the love of Christ that compels my brothers who labor among you.

But that is not all that motivates Paul. That is not all that motivates me. He says in verse 18, “God... hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”<sup>10</sup>

The word for “ministry” here comes from the word for deacon. It means to serve. God has called me to serve among you.

Verse 19 Paul says, “God... hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:16.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:18.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19.

Like we heard this morning, it is the Word, it is the basis, the foundation of ministry of the gospel. So it is not only the love of Christ that compels me. It compels our other pastors, but it is also the commission that Christ has laid upon us. Paul backs up his ministry to the Corinthians by saying that ambassadors are not sent on their own initiative. Ambassadors are never sent out that way. They are sent by their sovereign, by the one whom they represent. And so we are sent to you not by man, but by God himself.

An ambassador is one who is sent to represent a king or a president to another nation. This is what a minister is. This is what I am to you. God has sent me to you tonight to be an ambassador, to represent Christ, to represent God to you and his Word. And we see that while God has authored this peace treaty. While he is sovereign over all things, he is also sovereign in sending to you ambassadors.

Paul says in verse 20, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ.”<sup>12</sup>

It is because of this ministry of reconciliation that enables us to come to you.

In the Roman and Greek understanding of Paul’s day, an ambassador would represent a group of people before the emperor. But here Paul turns that around and he says, “No, an ambassador is the one who represent God to a group of people.” He turns the concepts around.

The Christian minister represents Jesus Christ. And here the word for “ambassador” is not a title. It is not a noun. It is a verb in the Greek. It means to be an ambassador. So it is not just a title that God has placed upon his ministers. But it is who they are. It is what they do. It is a weighty calling to represent God before you because we represent the most high God.

We see in these verses that we are to represent Christ with urgency. In verse 10 and 11 Paul speaks about the judgment seat of God that each one of you, that I must give an account of the deeds done in the body whether good or bad.

There is an urgency to the work of an ambassador seeing that the day of the Lord is approaching. This is what gave the prophets in the Old Testament the urgency to speak the Word of God, to set forth the terms of this peace treaty, because the day of the Lord is approaching. The judgment of Christ is approaching.

This is what gives urgency to my ministry among you. The day of the Lord is coming and how will you stand before his throne of judgment? Will you stand there with shamefacedness because you refuse to accept the terms of this peace treaty? Or will you stand there with joy, with gladness, with thankfulness because of what God has done by Christ, establishing peace?

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<sup>12</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20.

This urgency is also apparent in verse 20. Paul says, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: [and] we pray you in Christ’s stead.”<sup>13</sup>

The word “beseech” and the word “pray” gives a sense of urgency. An ambassador of Christ represents Christ but also pleads on behalf of God as we see this day approaching. We beseech you, beloved. Be ye reconciled to God. I pray you in Christ’s stead. It is as if God is speaking through me to you, as if God is speaking to you himself. I am called to faithfully speak the mind of God to you urging, beseeching, praying you in Christ’s stead to be reconciled, to be at peace with God, to accept the terms of this peace which he has offered to sinners.

He uses men, sinful men to plead with me and women and children to be reconciled to him.

A good ambassador in the political arena, he takes the words of the one he represents. He speaks them as if the king or the president himself is speaking.

These are my words, not my words, but God’s words that I am speaking, that I hope to speak to you faithfully, to take his Word, to aim it at your heart, at your lives, at your minds so that peace might be established between you and God, that you might be reconciled to him.

But not only is there urgency, but there ought also to be earnestness in the life of the ambassador, in this ministry of reconciliation. And to be earnest means to have a single focus. And earnest ambassador will always have the one in view who sent him.

I used this quote last Sunday afternoon in a sermon, but I think it is appropriate and I use it again by John Angell James and his book *The Earnest Ministry*. He says, “Earnestness implies a selection of some one object of special pursuit and a vivid perception of its value and importance. In the case of an ambassador, of a minister of God it is to represent Christ and his gospel.”

John Angell James continues. He says, “The earnest man, the earnest minister is a minister of one Christ and one gospel and that one Christ and one gospel occupies, possesses and fills his soul. And to every other claimant upon his time and interest and labor he says, ‘Stand aside. I am engaged. I cannot attend to you. My focus is on Christ’”

As I endeavor to focus on Christ in my own life and ministry, I endeavor to take you along in that focus, to focus you on the Savior who has come to accomplish this peace.

The ambassador ought to be moved with compassion, with zeal for lost souls in a hell worthy condition. He ought to be earnest in plucking them from the fire, to have compassion on others making a difference. An earnest ambassador will not only have lost souls in view, but he will have the upbuilding of the people of God in view.

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<sup>13</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20.



And so I pray that my single focus among you might be to faithfully represent Christ, to focus you on him so that you might be saved, so that you might be built up, so that you might be set at peace with God.

That brings us to the message that the ambassador brings. This peace treaty as an appeal. And God sends his ambassadors to appeal through this message of reconciliation, to appeal to your hearts tonight to be reconciled.

We have already seen, to some extent, the content of this peace treaty. Anything less than this appeal that God issues to you tonight will not faithfully represent what God aims for in reconciliation, in making peace with you.

Verse 20, the appeal begins with a command. The Word of God says, “Be ye reconciled to God.”<sup>14</sup>

Your and my responsibility is clearly set forth in this command, “Be ye reconciled to God.”<sup>15</sup>

God has reconciled us to himself. He is reconciling the world by Jesus Christ. God has accomplished this peace in Jesus Christ. But now he sets forth your and my responsibility under the gospel. God has done his part and now comes your part and my part.

“Be ye reconciled to God.”<sup>16</sup>

And no matter what your state is tonight before God, you need this reconciliation that God has accomplished. Child of God, you need this reconciliation daily. You need to know that God stands here with his arms of peace open, ready to receive you if you have sinned. He stands here again extending this peace treaty, appealing to your heart, to your mind to come before him with your sin, to lay down the remaining hostility that rises up in your heart.

The principle of sin still lives in your heart. The good that you want to do, you don't find yourself doing. And the evil that you don't want to do you find yourself doing. Be reconciled to God. Go to him and plead upon the blood which has procured this peace, which has bought your salvation and your peace.

Some of you have not yet been reconciled to God at all. You are still at enmity. There is still hostility between you and God. You still have not accepted the terms of this peace treaty by faith. I pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

He comes to you tonight with his scepter of peace extended to you. To ignore this offer of peace is to incur his wrath and his justice against sin.

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<sup>14</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

“Harden not your hearts as in the day of provocation,”<sup>17</sup> but “turn ye, turn ye,”<sup>18</sup> says the Lord. For I delight not in the death of the wicked. He says, “Come now, and let us reason together.”<sup>19</sup>

He offers this peace treaty. He comes and he reasons with you tonight.

Why will you die? If you ignore this peace treaty... He calls you to lay down your arms, to lay down your hostility, to lay down your hatred of him. He calls you to have this relationship with him restored. It is God the Spirit who strives with you tonight to lay down your arms, to be reconciled with God. He pleads in tender mercy with you.

Maybe you are an aged sinner. You have had a lifetime of opposition to the gospel. You say, “Well, God is sovereign. He has to do it.” But here God is clear, “Be ye reconciled to God.”<sup>20</sup>

His hand of peace is extended. Will you accept that peace by faith? That is the only way that peace can come between you and God. God has established it. He has accomplished it. He has authored it and he offers it to you tonight.

Perhaps you are a young sinner warring against God. God stretches out his hand of peace and pardon to you tonight as well. Don’t harden your hearts against the gospel, but heed the call of the gospel tonight which is offered to you.

I pray that the Spirit would soften your heart to receive the terms of this peace treaty.

Why does God issue this command to each one of you tonight? Why does this command leave you inexcusable?

Well, Paul gives the reason in verse 21. He says, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”<sup>21</sup>

Here is the reason that God issues this command. It is redemption accomplished. It is redemption that he is willing to apply. If God is powerful enough to author this treaty and to effect it, don’t you think that he can apply it to your hearts if you ask for it? Be reconciled to God for God has provided a substitute. You don’t have to remove this hostility yourself. You don’t have to make peace yourself on your terms. God has done so already. He has provided a substitute and that calls you to respond in faith. And those who respond in faith are united to this substitute, are set at peace and at liberty with God.

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<sup>17</sup> Hebrews 3:8, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Ezekiel 33:11.

<sup>19</sup> Isaiah 1:18.

<sup>20</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20.

<sup>21</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21.

You receive all the benefits that flow from this substitute. A command to be reconciled is based on this fact that Christ has accomplished redemption, that he is the substitute for sinners. Christ has made the great exchange. God has made him who knew no sin to be sin for us.

Here is the doctrine of imputation. Christ who is perfectly righteous was counted in your place as a sinner, child of God. And you as the sinner are now counted righteous in him.

To understand this better think of it in terms of an organ transplant. You have a sick organ, an organ that is in need of a replacement. You find a donor who is an exact match so you can receive his healthy organ, so you are made whole and complete.

And for the sake of the illustration your diseased organ goes to the organ donor. That gives us a picture of what God has done in Christ. You and I have a disease, a disease that needs to be taken away, that needs to be removed. It is called sin. And Christ has righteousness. He has right standing before God. He has blood which can deal with your sin. He has an organ that can be transplanted into your life and to your heart, into your soul, so you can be made whole again, so you can be at peace with God.

God has offered a replacement for sinners, his own son who knew no sin.

Not only is Christ willing to give his own righteousness, but he has taken our sin upon himself. He bore the curse that is due to you. He bore the wrath of God that is due to you for your sin. And here we see not only the possibility for salvation, not simply the opportunity for salvation, but salvation itself extended to sinners tonight. Here is God's peace treaty. There is nothing you and I can do to add to Christ's finished work, but to respond in faith and humility, accepting the terms of this peace treaty, saying, "Lord, you have done it all."

Christ is the only way of salvation and he is offered to all tonight who hear him.

Perhaps you make excuses and you say, "Well, I don't know if I am elect. I don't know if I know my sin enough."

Someone has once said that the atonement is not offered to an individual either as an elect man or as a non elect man, but it is offered to you as a man and a sinner. Are you a sinner tonight? Are you in need of reconciliation? Are you in need of peace between you and God? And here is peace in the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, in this doctrine of imputation, in what Christ has done for sinners. And the purpose of Christ being made sin for us is so that we can be made the righteousness of God in him.

You say, "Well, what does the righteousness of God mean?"

It means that God's character demands that sin be punished because sin is in violation of God's holiness. It is in violation of God's justice and his righteousness. And what it means that you are made the righteousness of God in him, it means that Christ has taken

your place. He has taken your curse. He has taken your punishment. He has taken the cross that you ought to be nailed to. He has hung there in the place for sinners. It means he has taken your punishment to retain the character of God, to retain his holiness, his justice and his righteousness.

And if you and I are to bear the punishment of sin that you deserve, you wouldn't be able to stand before God. That is why he extends peace tonight to sinners. That is why Christ was made the criminal, so you might be declared free, that your debt might be erased, that your records might be clean. And so we see the gospel of reconciliation focuses not on me, focuses not on the other pastors, but the gospel of reconciliation focuses on Jesus Christ.

Calvin says, "Every good thing we could think or desire is to be found in this Jesus Christ alone, for he was sold to buy us back, captive to deliver us, condemned to absolve us. He was made a curse for our blessing. He was made a sin offering for our righteousness. He was marred so that we might be made fair. He died for our life."

Here is peace. Be reconciled to God. We beseech you as though God speaks through us. I pray you, as we see the day of the Lord approaching when you must give an account for what you have done, be ye reconciled to God.

Remember that this reconciliation is not in you. But God has authored it. He has accomplished it. And so he accepts all, no sinner too great, who comes seeking this peace for Christ has accomplished redemption.

He who was made to be sin for us knew no sin so that you and I might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Amen.

At this time I would like to make some personal remarks and thank God above all for his Son Jesus Christ who is my life and my peace. I thank God for calling me out of his free and sovereign grace from a life of sin, from darkness to his marvelous light. I thank him for calling me to serve him in the ministry, to serve you in the coming years, to serve you so that Christ might be formed in you. I thank him for each one of you, for the care of your souls that he has entrusted to me. And I thank him for each of the people that he has placed in my life in his good and wise providence.

So I would like to thank you, Jennifer. Thank you for being my wife, my encourager, my best friend. You are God's gracious gift to me and I always say that I wouldn't be half the man I am if I didn't have you by my side. Thank you for your faithful prayers, your encouragement, your correction throughout these four years of seminary study, for our married life. You supported me from the very beginning and I am deeply grateful to you for that. Thank you for being the world's best mom to our children, for taking care of them when I wasn't home, being away so many weekends. I pray that God would

continue to bless you as you continue to stand by my side as we serve this people. I pray together that we might pray for them and lead them.

I want to thank you mom and dad Kuivenhoven. You are the best parents a man could ever have. I am convinced that it is your unfailing prayers, your faithful warnings and encouragements in my teenage years that those are part of what brought me to Jesus Christ, your unfailing support and generosity throughout these four years, as well, of studying deserves special mention. Thank you for being here today and thank you, dad, for participating in laying on of hands. That was so special. Thank you so much.

Mom and Dad Voss, thank you for your wonderful daughter. I know I said this on our wedding day, but I thank you again. Thank you, too, for your unfailing support and encouragement and help behind the scenes. And having you hear today means a lot for Jen and myself as you witness God's faithfulness in our lives.

Pastor Keldermann, I am deeply indebted to you. You were the ambassador that God used in my life. And to him be all the glory and the honor. You modeled to me what a faithful servant of Christ should be. And often when I heard you preach, when God was laying the call of the ministry upon me I thought to myself, "I want to preach the gospel like he does." Continue on, brother. You have been a mentor to me even if it was long distance over these four years and before that as well. But I think especially in these last years, in this last year I thank you for mentoring me, for helping me especially during the five week internship in Burgessville. Thank you for all the time and energy you have spent on me. I thank you especially for doing the ordination service this morning. It meant so much to me.

Dr. Beeke, I want to thank you for being a faithful and godly example as you taught and preached and interacted with other people in front of me these past years. Day in and day out your passion and devotion for Christ stood out. And I thank you for modeling that for me. I pray that our relationship would continue to grow as we labor together in this flock, as I still study under you at the seminary. I thank you for encouraging me and training me, seeing in me what I often didn't see in myself and by God's grace bringing that out. You have had an impact on me that is beyond description. Thank you so much.

Pastor VanderZwaag, I thank you for being an example of unfailing and unflinching resolve to lay down your life for the sheep no matter what the cost. You are my brother and example of our Savior Jesus Christ the great shepherd who lay down his life for us. Thank you, too, for your encouragement in these past weeks. Thank you for mentoring me, too, in the internship last year. I look forward to beginning our ministry together. As we spoke together before, I pray that you would be a Paul to me, teaching me and mentoring me and helping me and that I would be a Timothy to you in encouragement and a comfort. Thank you for all that you have done for me.

Congregation and consistory, I thank God for each one of you as I have said before. I thank you for calling me to be your pastor. I pray that you would hold me accountable and I look forward to serving you as an ambassador of Christ with all my heart, with all

my mind, with my soul and with my strength. I pray that our relationship together would be one of mutual encouragement, of growth in Christ, of pulling together for the salvation of the lost, not only in these walls, but outside of them in this city. May God receive all the honor and the glory.

I call now upon those who will have personal addresses. Pastor VanderZwaag will speak first on behalf of the congregation.

Rev. Foppe VanderZwaag:

Dear brother Kuivenhoven, fellow pastor in the ministry. Indeed, in the words that you just mentioned about Paul and Timothy, they are very much appreciated and when we spoke about it earlier and even tonight again. When I speak to you, then, on behalf of our denomination and congregation, I would like to indeed acknowledge the Lord for his goodness to send another laborer in our midst and that your zeal and fresh ideas may be an encouragement for us and a very timely gift also to me personally. And God is very good and gracious. He knows our need. He plans our needs. He knows from the stillness of the never begun eternity what we see tonight. He is saying that I have said it many times for the second time, now the reality of it taking place. My heartfelt congratulations to you on behalf of our denomination and our congregation, to you and to Jennifer, to the children, to your family and may the Lord crown all that with his blessing.

This morning I read or I said the... during the laying on of hands the words from 1 Timothy six verse 13 and 14. "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things..."<sup>22</sup> There is the life, the power. "...and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>23</sup>

It is a charge that he gives Paul to Timothy, the very same charge that comes to you and to us as collaborators in the ministry together with Dr. Beeke. And we pray for God's blessing upon it that you may be a blessing to others of the very same comfort wherewith you have been comforted, that that may be to a comfort of others that here you and that witness you.

Now this particular charge Paul gives to keep this commandment. What is the commandment that he speaks of? We find it in the preceding verses. And you know that I mentioned these words also to you in the last consistory meeting. But I would like to repeat them because I think they are worthy of repetition and also to do that in the presence of the entire congregation.

In the previous verses we read in verse 11, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> 1 Timothy 6:13.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Timothy 6:13-14.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Timothy 6:11.

That is the first part of that charge and that commandment that must be kept. Flee. What are the things that this man of God must flee? Well, we find that before that all kinds of perverse disputings, all kinds of strife and envy, competition. And that is something that I pray that the Lord may cause us to work together without any strife, without any envy, without any disputations, but that God may unite us, that we may be as one, one voice, that we would not seek the glory of men and the praise, also not be lovers of money—it is the root of all evil—but that we would flee these things with a passion and that you may show that and that we may see that in you and learn it from you, that the congregation may see that we would flee those things and that you would also teach us to do the same, flee sin, flee pride, flee worldliness, flee selfishness.

But then second word that begins with an F, it says, “But thou, O man of God, flee these things,”<sup>25</sup> and then, second, “Follow.... follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”<sup>26</sup>

As you hear these words, you know that we need grace for every single one of them and for many more. But we also know when we see these words and we read the Scriptures carefully, we see the Lord Jesus himself. So when it says “follow righteousness,” it says, “follow Christ.” Follow godliness, follow Christ. Seek him and see him in the Word. Search the Scriptures daily so that not only we find there, you may find there reconciliation, but also our example to follow him.

Faith, love, patience, meekness. And as you then follow the Lord Jesus and search him in the Scriptures to get to know him better, to imitate him more, more fervently, that we may see that and that others may follow you inasmuch as you follow Christ.

Flee, follow and then fight.

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses,”<sup>27</sup> which you did this morning. You made a good profession before many witnesses in the presence of God.

“In the sight of God, who quickeneth all things,”<sup>28</sup> who gives all that is necessary for you also in your ministry.

Fight the good fight. It is a good fight. It is a fight, but it is a good fight. For we follow the captain of the Lord of hosts and he has won the war. We must follow him fighting his battles. Follow the Lord Jesus Christ. This is God’s charge through Paul to Timothy and all those who are called to minister.

And, dear congregation, as this is the call that comes to our new pastor, this should also

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Timothy 6:12.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

be our prayer, our expectation, our desire to hear and to see these very same things that we, too, may flee, follow and fight as we see those that lead us take the charge.

Let it be our prayer. Let it be also followed by searching the Scriptures that we would be like the Bereans, searching the Scriptures daily whether these things be so prayerfully, that we would not look for what we would like to hear, but that we from the Scriptures would see what we need to hear. And so then receive brother Kuivenhoven as your new pastor. May the Lord bless both you and us together. Thank you.

Rev. Maarten Kuivenhoven:

We will now have Dr. Beeke speak on behalf of the seminary.

Dr. Joel Beeke:

Dear Reverend Kuivenhoven, on behalf of the seminary we want to both as faculty and as students extend to you our best wishes and our warmest congratulations and with the prayer that God may use you mightily to lift up that wonderful name of Christ that you have preached to us so powerfully tonight.

Who would have thought four years ago when you came to the seminary that I would be standing here in this position speaking to you tonight as a co fellow laborer in HNRC Grand Rapids? God's ways are above our ways, brother. And I pray God that he may use you and go with you and that our relationship both in the seminary and here may flourish also with Reverend VanderZwaag and with the consistory and with the congregation.

We are excited to have you on our pastoral staff. We believe God will use you. We will be praying for you and we are here to assist you and to co partner with you in every possible way.

I have a little charge for you. I think your great question is—at least every new minister's great question is—how can I really be a good minister? And Paul tells you that in this very book of 1 Timothy.

“If thou put the brethren,” 1 Timothy 4:6 and seven, “in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.”<sup>29</sup>

So really what God is saying here to you, Reverend Kuivenhoven, is: Do you want to be a good minister? Do three things. First, you must expound the truth. Expound the truth. If you remember these things, tell the people these things, Paul says, all the things he has been listing. And all these things he brings back to Jesus Christ just as you have done tonight. He said, “Will you be a good minister? Preach Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

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<sup>29</sup> 1 Timothy 4:6-7.



I read recently of Charles Spurgeon was on a train and a young man came up to him with a Swiss army blade knife and he began to show him the knife and he showed him the screwdriver and the blades and the bottle opener and he was so excited and he was showing him this knife.

And Spurgeon said, "I realize that if the man had described it to me, but had kept it in his pocket, I never would have shown the least interest. But with excitement and with eagerness, this young man wanted to give me this knife."

Well, then Spurgeon writes, "This young man's energy taught me a lesson which I have turned to good account for all these years when I have been trying to tell people, 'Buy the truth and sell it not.'<sup>30</sup>"

Expound the truth.

The second thing, if you want to be a good minister, you have got to eat the truth. You have got to eat it.

"Nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine."<sup>31</sup>

Well, for four years you have been eating the truth. You have been drinking it in. You have been regurgitating it on paper. In sermons you have been hungry. You have been thirsty. You have been eating. Don't stop eating as a minister of the gospel. Don't think you have arrived. Keep studying. Keep learning. Keep growing. Keep eating. Keep filling your mind not with junk food, but with spiritual food.

And then, thirdly, says Paul, if you really want to be a good minister of Jesus Christ, you have to exercise yourself by that truth. Expound the truth, eat the truth and exercise the truth. You must discipline yourself regularly, consistently, patiently, enduringly and above all lovingly by your manual, your manual for ministry which is the Word of God, the holy Bible. Show that love. Show that discipline. Seek to be mastered by the texts you bring so that you might master them as you bring them to the congregation and that we might smell the aroma of Christ upon you. Whatever you do, wherever you go, whether you preach, whether you go to the HHOM, whether you do a one on one lunch with a young person, whether you do family visitation, whether you are at someone's bedside, wherever you go, whatever you do, whatever you say, may Jesus Christ amiable, lovely, approachable, so that the aroma of Christ may be upon you and you may exercise yourself to godliness.

That is how to be a good minister for Jesus Christ.

And, Jennifer, I know what your big question is. How can I be a good minister's wife? Well, six very quick things. Love and live this same truth. Love and live this same truth. Refuse fables and gossip, the text says. So don't listen to rumors and don't participate in

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<sup>30</sup> Proverbs 23:23.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Timothy 4:6.

them, but steer people away from them and love the truth and live the truth. Let Jesus Christ be your perfect husband and your supreme minister and lean hard on him when your husband is gone at night or gone visiting other churches.

Number two, be yourself as much as possible. Sometimes you will be in situations where you don't quite know what to do or maybe just a smile is all you need. Just be yourself. Don't try to be artificial. Be yourself.

Number three, be hospitable and loving, kind and warm. Just love this congregation. They are very lovable. Don't be afraid of them. Reach out. Let them love you as well. This is your new family, a family of 700 people. You have got a big family. Enjoy them.

Four, continue to support your husband. You have done marvelously well at that in the last four years. Encourage him. Keep being honest with him. Help him to be a better minister of Jesus Christ all the time and keep praying for him and treasuring the weightiness of his work.

And, five, enjoy being a minister's wife. Yes, there are down sides to it, I suppose, but minimize the difficulties and maximize the joys.

And, six, don't be afraid to ask for advice from the minister's wives among us. They will be happy to assist you. And so may God bless you together with Gwynneth and Justice in a mighty way and grant you together many happy, fruitful years of ministry in this congregation.

And may I say a quick word to Pete and Corey Kuivenhoven and John and Liz Voss. We are so happy to have you hear today. What a joy, what an unforgettable day this is for you.

When I was a young man my father often said to me, "To be called to the ministry is more important than living in the White House."

God has put your son into the most important position in the entire world. Your son and son-in-law needs you more than ever now. He needs your prayers as never before. Continue to be a godly example for him.

And, dear congregation, receive Reverend Kuivenhoven as a full fledged minister of the Church of Jesus Christ as he now is. Listen to him. Receive his Word as he speaks as he very Word of God and pray for him. He is young, but God uses young ministers in a mighty way as all of Church history proves. So pray that he will be greatly used for young and for young. And especially for you, young people, and young adults. Ask God that he might use this ministry of this young man in a powerful way for your salvation and let us all remember that on the day of judgment we will have to give an account of the ministry that comes from Reverent Kuivenhoven's lips to us and he will have to give an account of how we have responded to that ministry and how he has been faithful himself.

Oh, that on the day of judgment we may both give our accounts with joy in and through Jesus Christ, all of us exercising ourselves unto godliness.

Rev. Maarten Kuivenhoven:

Now Mr. Hank Kleyn who will speak on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches.

Mr Hank Kleyn:

Brother Maarten, Reverend Kuivenhoven, what a privilege. We have been so blessed to have been partners with your denomination and your congregation in the training of this dear brother in the seminary. I think you have had quite a few of our ministers speak to you. I come to you as on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of North America. Pastor Pronk has been your teacher. Pastor Procey has been your teacher. Pastor Vandermeiden has been your teacher. Dr. Jerry Bilkes and Dr. Lawrence Bilkes have all been your teachers. And once in a while I have had the opportunity to help you as well and it has been a tremendous privilege.

And, Jennifer, it has been wonderful to get to know your husband. Where is Jennifer? Wonderful to get to know your husband and you a little bit.

I think it has been very evident in the community of the seminary that you two are a strong partnership. And may this continue with the Lord's blessing. And I hope some day, Maarten, that Justice will say to you, "I want to be just like you, dad."

When you said to Pastor Keldermen, "I want to preach the gospel just like he did," I thought, "Maybe Justice some day."

Be a dad who is worthy of that kind of comment from your son.

So we congratulate you. We wish you the Lord's blessing.

I do want to take a few moments to speak to you from God's Word.

I was thinking when I received the opportunity to speak to you and to the congregation, I was thinking about what Jesus said to his disciples when he sent them off for their first time. I think they were as nervous as you must have been. And he said simply this. "Dear young men, be just like me."

I take you to Matthew chapter 10 where Jesus says in verse 24 and verse 25:

The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.

If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?<sup>32</sup>

I think, Maarten, that Jesus is describing himself here in three different ways and he says to you and to everyone here, actually, that he wants us to be like him. The Lord refers to himself as a teacher. He says that it is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher. Teach the way the Lord Jesus taught.

He says also it is enough for the slave that he becomes like his master or Lord. Serve the Lord and serve this congregation as Jesus served.

He says also it is enough for the member of the household that he become like the house ruler. Manage your responsibilities in this congregation and in the consistory room as Jesus did and does.

Now, Maarten, I think by God's preserving and sanctifying grace, this process of becoming like Jesus is going to be life long. Your teacher, your owner and your master want you to be like him. And it will take your lifetime. And I hope and pray that the congregation will be patient, but also be much in prayer for this to happen.

Seek to know, Pastor Kuivenhoven, seek to know and to abide by Christ's standards. Do not fear the frowns or seek the commendation of the consistory or of the members. Fear the Christ and serve his honor. Become like him by remaining a student of his Word, a servant of his will and a member of his household.

And, dear congregation and friends. Be encouraged to pray for your pastors daily that each may become more like Christ. Desire and pursue the same grace yourselves in your own lives so that together the congregation with the pastors and all who are truly his disciples, his slaves and members of his household, as brother and sisters of the Lord Jesus may look forward to that day, that glorious day when you will see him as he is and be just like him. Then you will finally know and be able to say, "It is enough. It is enough to be like my master. It is enough to be like my Savior. It is enough to be like my Christ."

Now and until then we see through a glass darkly. But then we shall see him face to face. Now and until then we know in part. But then we shall know even as we are known.

Dear Pastor Kuivenhoven, may the fruit of your ministry be that you increasingly become like Jesus. May all those who are overpowered by the gospel you may preach to them become like Jesus. He will be glorified and you will joy in his strength. His joy will be your strength.

Thank you for the privilege.

Rev. Maarten Kuivenhoven:

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<sup>32</sup> Matthew 10:24-25.

Thank you all for your kind words and commendations and charges.

I would also be remiss if I didn't thank you all for your prayers. In these last weeks and months Jennifer and I as a family have felt borne up by your prayers and we thank you very much for them. And thank you, too, to those who have come from far to witness God's goodness and faithfulness in our lives. And thank you, also, to those who are listening at home. Some siblings of ours couldn't make it. We thank you that you are watching us tonight.