

Subject: *Marks of a Normal Christian – Part 6*

Scripture: *2 Corinthians 5:14-21*

So far in this series of messages we have looked at five different marks of a normal Christian life (a serious commitment to Scripture, to Christ, to the church, to eternal things, and to prayer). In this message we will look at...

The 6th mark of a normal Christian life – a serious commitment to evangelism

In John Bunyan's classic story, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the main character Christian starts his journey with a burden on his back and a book in his hand. When he humbled himself at the foot of the cross, his burden fell off. Then he continued on his way to the Celestial City, and as he traveled he still had a book in his hand (the Bible) to guide him and encourage him.

In the same way we go through this life with a burden and a book. In salvation we lose the burden of our sins, but now it is normal for us to carry another burden and the same book (the Bible). We now have a burden for lost souls, and the book is for us and others to know and do God's will. God has given us an assignment. It's a job we have as long as we are in this world. It is our assignment to be ambassadors of Christ the king.

Many things can enhance and promote evangelism, but none of them can take the place of evangelism. For example, we need to pray for the lost and that goes hand in hand with evangelism, but pray alone is not enough. Acts of benevolence (like food pantry and disaster relief) can open doors for evangelism, but acts of benevolence are not enough. Financial support of evangelists and missionaries is important, but it is not enough.

1. THE MOTIVE FOR EVANGELISM (vs. 14-17)

Our motivation comes from our salvation and what Christ has done for us. The love of Christ constrains (compels) us. This word describes a pressure that causes action, but it is inward pressure that comes from the heart, not outward pressure from someone else.

A. Christ's love for us

His love is a sacrificial love (Rom. 5:8; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:25), an unlimited love (Eph. 1:17-19; and an unbreakable love (Rom. 8:35-39).

Romans 5:8 *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Galatians 2:20 *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

Ephesians 5:25 *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*

B. Our union with Christ

Christ died for all believers (“one died for all”) and all believers died with Him and now we live for Him.

C. Our concern for others

We no longer think of people in the same way after we are saved. We don’t know them “after the flesh.” That is, we don’t think of them only on a physical and human level. We think of them in a spiritual way. We think of them as souls with spiritual needs. This is part of “all things that have become new” (vs. 17).

2. THE MINISTRY OF EVANGELISM (vs. 18-20a)

This is the ministry or work of reconciliation. The word “reconcile, reconciliation” (found 4 times in verses 18-19) means that God has removed the enmity and hostility between him and sinners through the death of Christ. It has to do with restoring harmony where there is alienation. We see alienation in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned and then hid from God. Then God drove them out of the Garden. Later in the history of Israel, God reminded the people how sin separated the people from Him. In the Tabernacle and the Temple, God was separated in the Holy of Holies. The prophets also spoke of how sin separated and alienated the people from God.

Isaiah 59:2 *But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*

Romans 8:7 *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

Reconciliation is restoration to God’s favor and right standing. It means peace with God. Paul refers to our reconciliation, and then to the work of reconciling others to God.

A. Reconciliation is a divine work – This is God’s work (“all things are of God”).

God reconciled us to himself (vs. 18) and is reconciling the world unto himself (vs. 19).

B. Reconciliation is a Christ-centered work

One of beloved Christian carols speaks of Christ coming to reconcile us to God., *Hark, the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn king; peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled...”* But it took more than the birth of Christ to reconcile us. He had to die on the cross to accomplish that.

Romans 5:10 *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

“When we were enemies” describes who we are by nature as sinners. That’s a far cry from Adam walking and speaking with God face to face in the cool of the day.

Colossians 1:20-22 ²⁰ *And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.* ²¹ *And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled* ²² *In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight.*

C. Reconciliation is a finished work

It has been accomplished once and for all. God is not imputing sins to us any longer (vs. 19). We are no longer enemies of God, but sons and daughters. God doesn’t hold our sins against us. Like the work of justification, adoption, regeneration, and redemption, the work of reconciliation is done from the time we first believe in Christ.

D. Reconciliation is a shared work

God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation and has committed unto us the word (message) of reconciliation. We are laborers together with God.

E. Reconciliation is a serious work

We are ambassadors for Christ the king. God is pleading through us on Christ’s behalf.

3. THE MESSAGE OF EVANGELISM (vs. 20b-21)

A. The message of salvation is simple – “be reconciled to God” (vs. 20)

B. The message of salvation is profound (vs. 21)

Christ was without sin, yet God treated Him as if He had sinned. At the same time, God treats believers as if we are righteous. This is the heart of the Gospel. Christ took upon Himself what he did not deserve—our sins. We receive what we do not deserve—His righteousness. When God reconciles us to Himself, He no longer counts our sins against us, but instead He puts the righteousness of Christ to our account (vs. 19, 21).

Psalms 32:2 *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

Think of it like this. In Christ’s earthly ministry He touched people with leprosy and healed them. In doing so, Christ was defiled and they were made well.

Do you have peace with God? Not, do you feel like you have peace, but do you actually have peace with God? You can be sure only if you are reconciled to God through Christ.