

**Robert Murray M'Cheyne:**

There are three things in these words which we would consider.

The character of faithful ministers set forth in these words, 'We are ambassadors for Christ.' We do not come to you in our own name.

There is contained in these words the substance of our message, 'Be ye reconciled to God.' It is a message of mercy we have to preach, not one of wrath.

There is contained in these words the grounds of our embassy, 'For he hath made him to be sin for us', etc. If there were no ground to go upon, we would be mocking men when we entreated them to be reconciled to God; but ah! there is ground for the embassy.

Let us go over these three things, and let us take the last first. The ground of the embassy which God hath sent his ministers on: '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.' There are three things contained in this.

'He knew no sin';

'He hath made him to be sin for us';

The object he gained by this - 'That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'

Observe the description here given of Christ—'He knew no sin.' I believe it is the most remarkable description of Christ you will find in the Word of God. We are told that at his birth he was holy. The angel said to his mother, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). And he was holy in his life: 'Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners' (Hebrews 7:26). And we are told that he was perfectly holy in his death: 'Who, through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God' (Hebrews 9:14). But observe, brethren, in this passage we are told it in a different manner—'He knew no sin', that is, he did not know what it was to have sin in his bosom.

Learn from this, dear friends, what a lovely person Christ is. You know it is said in Canticles 5:16, 'He is altogether lovely.' It is this that ravishes the heart of seraphs when they sing, 'Who shall not fear thee, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy' (Revelation 15:4). This is the bloom of beauty on the Rose of Sharon—'He knew no sin.' Do you love Christ because he knew no sin? There are many among you who detest the name of Christ. And why? Just because he knew no sin.

Learn, again, from this, what a suitable Saviour Christ is—'Such an high priest became us.' He was suitable because he was man. But ah! this is the main thing - 'He knew no sin.' This is the thing that makes him infinitely suitable—'He knew no sin.' He was a high priest that knew no sin.

Observe how God dealt with him—'He hath made him to be sin for us'. This is described in the Bible in a great many different ways. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah it is said, 'All we like sheep have gone astray.., and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all' (verse 6); and verse 10, 'it pleased the Lord to bruise him', etc. The same thing is described by Peter: 'Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree' (1 Peter 2:24). But in this passage you will observe it is described in a far more dreadful manner. God heaped upon his Son all our sins until there was nothing but sin to be seen. He appeared all sin; nothing of his own beauty appeared; God took him as if he were entirely made up of sin. You know that unconverted men are all sin. You say you have many good things about you; you are sometimes light in your walk, and take a glass occasionally; 'but I'm a good fellow after all'. Ah, you do not know that you are one mass of sin; your mind, your understanding, your affections, and your conscience. Brethren, look at the love of Christ, that he should be willing to be made sin for us - this was his love.

Observe what the object was that he gained by this. 'That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' They are remarkable words. You know, brethren, that the pardon and justification of sinners is spoken of in

different ways in the Bible. In Romans 3:24, it is said: 'Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' Again, in Romans 5:19: 'For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' But observe that these words express it more fully. I think it means that those of you who have come to the Lord Jesus, his righteousness shall cover you, that you will appear one mass of righteousness. And, brethren, observe what a provision is here for sinners - for the chief of sinners; for it matters not how great or how small a sinner you are; if you come to Christ, his righteousness will cover you so that none of your sin will be seen. O my friends, is not this a gospel worth preaching?<sup>9</sup> May you now say as Luther used to do, 'Thou art made my sin, and I am made thy righteousness.'

Secondly, the message contained in these words, which we are sent on: '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.' When Christ came into this world, he was an ambassador from God. He is the great messenger that came not to do his own will but the will of him that sent him. He came as the messenger of God to man; but when he was about to ascend up on high, he came to his disciples and said unto them, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel' (Mark 16:15). And so they were ambassadors for Christ.

Learn from this, how we should preach, and how you should hear. We do not come in our own name, but in Christ's. We are to do as the disciples did when they received the bread from Christ. We are to receive our message from him and give it unto you; so, in one sense, it is immaterial to us whether you receive the truth or not.

Observe, we are to speak with authority. Many of you are not pleased at what we say; you say we might have spoken less severely; you quarrel at our words; but ah! if you look into your own heart, you would see, that it is not us you quarrel with, it is with Christ.

Observe, still farther, that we are ambassadors; we must speak tenderly. God is love. Christ is love. I am afraid it is here we err, and show that the vessel is earthly. When Christ came into the world, it was a message of love he brought; what love is in these words, 'O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever' (Deuteronomy 5:29). What words are these: 'O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea' (Isaiah 48:18). But how has our message been received?

Thirdly, I come now to the last thing to be considered, and that is the message itself. 'Be ye reconciled to God.' Observe what it is you are invited unto; you are invited into union with God. We are told, when we come to men, to call that they may be reconciled to God.

O brethren, you are invited into reconciliation this day; you have been long in sin. Is it not time to be reconciled to God? Be reconciled, sinner. O come, come, old sinner! O come, young sinners! Remember you are beseeched to come. I beseech you, brethren, to come. If you had been at Mount Sinai when the law was delivered, would you not have listened? Brethren, it is God that beseeches you now. It is God beseeching; it is Christ beseeching you, sinner. Had you heard his gracious words to the multitudes that came around him, or had you heard him at the last supper saying, 'Let not your hearts be troubled', brethren, would you not have listened? Brethren, it is him still.

Sinner! Sinner! if you do not listen, how will you meet a beseeching God? God beseeches you; Christ beseeches you; and the Holy Ghost beseeches you. Brethren, you will see him soon, and if you hearken not now to his voice, he shall say, 'Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh' (Proverbs 1:24-26). Amen.