

RECONCILIATION -THE WAY OF PEACE

2 Cor.5:18-20

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

The Spanish have a story about a father and son who had become estranged. The son left home, and the father set out to find him. He searched for many months with no success. Finally, in desperation, the father took out a newspaper ad that read, "Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your father." On Saturday, 800 men named Paco showed up looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers.

The apostle Paul never lost his focus on the simple, straightforward message that the sinner's greatest need is reconciliation to God, the Creator, through the message of the cross of Christ.

Let me start off by defining the word "reconciliation"? It signifies bringing about "a thorough change, or exchange." It is the act of reconciling parties at variance, renewal of friendships after disagreement or enmity.

Regarding a restored a relationship between God and man, reconciliation is what God accomplishes not man. And it isn't God who requires reconciliation, but man.

It was Adam, who sinned and turned his back on God in the Garden of Eden. Adam become God's enemy; God did not become Adam's enemy.

We all know, how Adam hid from the face of God, behind a tree, when he broke trust in Him and severed the relationship. Sin makes man afraid of God. But God, who is rich in mercy, went looking for Adam. He called out to him and said, "*Where are you?*"

God Himself was the eager reconciler. And ever since he has been reaching out, seeking to reconcile sinful man to himself through the death of His Son.

Because of his rebellion and sin, man is alienated and separated from God. And there is an active hostility in his heart toward God.

Isaiah 59:2 -But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

But God, the offended one, but who is rich in mercy, has made the first move to overcome this animosity and alienation caused by man.

Col. 1 :19-22 -For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.

God had done the world no wrong. He had no need to apologize. It was man that started all the antagonism by disobedience and rebellion. Yet God, took the initiative for reconciliation.

What is remarkable, for God's normal rule for human beings when they fall out among themselves is that it is the responsibility of the one that did the wrong to take the initiative in effecting reconciliation.

But that does not mean that God by making the first move went soft on sin and was prepared to surrender to human arrogance and wickedness to retain and regain man's friendship. Almighty God is no pushover.

He could not and would not adopt the view that man's sin doesn't matter. So then, we need to understand what is meant, ***“Through Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.***

Let me try to explain.

Suppose Becky has done something terribly wrong and has deeply offended Emily, and Emily has every right to be angry with Becky and hold her wrongdoing against her.

Now, to reconcile Becky to Emily, it is so much about getting Becky the offender to have a change of mind about Emily, and telling her, “I’m sorry.” It is all about getting to remove the cause of Emily’s just anger against Becky. The anger must be eradicated.

To reconcile the world to Himself, God had to first remove the cause of His wrath against the world. He had to punish the world's sin, even to its root. There could be no reconciliation, no welcoming back of men and women into his friendship without it.

Adam, the first man, as representative of the human race, by one act of disobedience brought humanity into sin and placed everyone on the path to Hell—the place of God's eternal.

People don't realize the infinite, terribleness sin and Gods absolute hatred of it.

But Christ, the second Adam, also as representative of the human race, on cross became sin for us, tasting death for us all, taking on God's holy and fierce indignation.

2 Cor. 5 :14- *We therefore judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died.*

Since Christ was the representative of all on the cross, therefore we can say all humanity, potentially died there on the cross outside the walls of Jerusalem when Christ died. His death was my death. My hell became His hell.

Death is the terrible sentence of God, against sin. The death Jesus tasted for us all was the second death, Hell itself. No one needs to go to Hell. Hell was created for man, not for the devil and his angels.

Many assume that people go to hell because of their sins. That's not correct. All sins have been paid for by Jesus, therefore the only thing that condemns a person to Hell is the rejection of the payment for sins. Jesus was the payment. Refusing Him is refusing the payment. How you accepted Christ as payment for sins?

God provided the way to Heaven in Jesus so to reject Him you are rejecting the only way for salvation. This is a hard truth for some who look for multiple ways to heaven.

Because divine justice has been satisfied by Christ's death, God is no longer obliged to impute the world's sins to them.

All, anyone, can come to God through Christ, be reconciled to him, and make everlasting peace with God.

Man does not have to make his peace with God. Christ has already done that for him. All man needs to do is receive the reconciliation and peace that Christ has made.

The position of the world before God is completely changed through the death of Christ, God's own attitude toward man is not the same.

Now all men are rendered savable. Humanity has been put in the position whereby anyone can be saved.

However, Christ died for all; but not all will be saved. God wants all men to be saved; but not all men want to be saved. God wants forgiveness and reconciliation for all men: but not all men want God's forgiveness and reconciliation.

Forgiveness is the foundation of reconciliation. Only by having the guilt of sin forgiven can sinners be reconciled to God.

Now, because of the cross true lasting horizontal reconciliation is possible between man and man, between Jew and Gentile, between races and nations, and between husbands and wives.

God expects us to have forgiving hearts toward those who have wronged us. To be an eager person of reconciliation and restoration.

Christ said, ***"if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, Leave you gift at the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift"*** (Matt.5:23-24). Go right away, don't think twice!

A forgiving heart is a joyful heart. An unforgiving heart is a corroding heart. Many people are stingy in the grace of forgiveness. They give vent to their anger, hostility, bitterness, and retaliation which destroys their home life, family life, and fellowship life. According to Matt.6:15, they don't realize that God holds back in forgiving them.

Has anybody offended you? Seek reconciliation." "Oh, but I am the offended party." So was God, and He went straight ahead and sought reconciliation.

CH Spurgeon: *“Well, I’ll forgive you, but I can’t forget! Dear friend, that is a sort of forgiveness with one leg chopped off, it is a lame forgiveness, and is not worth much.”*

Col. 3:12 -13 -As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, put-on compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also **MUST forgive.**

Unsettled conflicts must be settled ASAP for us to maintain a healthy and right relationship with God and our fellowman.

Regardless of who is responsible for the break and breach in the relationship—often there is guilt on both sides —we should determine to make reconciliation before we come before God to worship, offer praise and make donations.

Our worship is futile if we are not on speaking terms with our brothers. Broken relationships block the Holy Spirit. The unforgiving person forfeits God’s grace and blessings.

Bible Examples

A classic OT example of reconciliation worth remembering is that of two twin brothers, Jacob, and Esau. Through exploitation and greed, Jacob stole Esau’s birthright and blessing. Enraged, Esau vowed that he would kill his brother, and so Jacob fled far as he could.

Twenty years went by, and Jacob was moved by God to return to his homeland. Returning with a large family and great wealth. But his fear of Esau hadn’t left him (Gen. 32,33).

In reading the narrative, we discover that when Esau saw Jacob, he broke rank with his 400 men and ran to meet him. We are gripped by the story, and we wonder if he is ready to carry out his vow, to kill his brother. But to our amazement, Esau embraced Jacob, threw his arms around him, kissed him and they wept.

So exemplary are Esau's actions of reconciliation that Jesus uses the same three verbs to describe the compassionate heart of the prodigal's father when he saw his son making his way home. While he was still far off, he "ran "and "embraced him and kissed him (Luke 15:20).

Jacob initiated the reconciliation, Esau accepted. Jacob could not change the ugliness of his greed and abuse in the past. However, through reconciliation, they ended their hostility and built a bridge across their quarrel. Now that these two brothers have released decades of emotions they can begin to speak. In this case, time was indeed the healer.

Another classic and beautiful example of forgiveness and reconciliation in the OT is that of Joseph and his ten brothers. His brothers were very jealous of him. They saw him as daddy's pet, and they despised his dreams about them, so they decided to kill him. But by God's providence they threw him in a pit instead, and soon afterwards they sold him into slavery.

Twenty years roll by, and Joseph is made the top governor in Egypt while his brothers are facing starvation in Canaan. And again, by God's providence, the turn of events was that they went looking for bread in Egypt where an abundant amount of wheat was gathered in for seven years. God brought them right into Joseph's palace.

How will Joseph react now that he has power and authority? Will he take revenge and condemn his brothers to hard labor, repaying them for what he suffered at their hands?

No! Joseph feared God. He chooses the way of love and forgiveness. When Joseph exposes himself, his brothers are gripped with fear and their guilt begins to burden them. But they had already confessed their sin to Joseph the first time around when they did not realize who he was.

So, Joseph now says to his brothers, "Come close to me." I'm your brother. Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him weeping. And he kissed his brothers and wept over them. Afterwards his brothers talked with him. They're on speaking terms again. They have made up. What a beautiful picture of reconciliation and restoration. And peace was established between them.

Nothing more clearly illustrates the supernatural character of the gospel of Christ, and no work brings more joy to the Father in heaven, than when former enemies embrace in tears of love and reach out to those who harmed them most.

God Moved the Fence for Us

During World War II, as Allied soldiers fought their way across France, a soldier died during a bloody firefight. After the battle was over, his buddies wanted to find a way to give him a decent burial.

The only cemetery in the closest village was a Catholic cemetery so they approached the priest, asking for permission to bury their fallen comrade there. "Is he Catholic?" the priest asked. "No, he's Protestant," came the reply. With great regret, the priest said, "He cannot be buried here. This cemetery is reserved for baptized members of the Catholic Church."

So, the soldiers found a suitable place outside the fence that marked the border of the cemetery. With great sorrow, they buried him and then went back to the war.

Some months later, the soldiers returned to the tiny village, hoping to provide a suitable tombstone for their friend. To their surprise and consternation, when they came to the burial spot, they could not find the grave.

Not knowing what else to do, they asked the priest if he knew what had happened. He told them after they had buried

their friend, he could not sleep at night. So, one morning he got up early and moved the fence to include the body of the much-loved soldier who had died for his country.

That's what God did for us. He could not rest while we were on the wrong side of the fence. He wanted so much to bring us into his family that he sent his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who through his death on the cross **"moved the fence"** so that we would have a place in God's family.

If God has "moved the fence" for us, can we not do the same for others? If God found a way to include us in his love, can we not reach out to include those who have sinned against us?

This is the very heart of the gospel. What God has freely done for us; we are called to do for others. The heart of God is filled with love and at its center stands a cross. Through that cross we have been forgiven. May God give us grace to "move the fence" for others as God has "moved the fence" for us.

A Final Word

Reconciliation with God is not something you do, but something you receive. It is not something you can accomplish; it is something you embrace.

Have you received by faith God's reconciliation? Do you want God forgiveness and peace in your life? You can freely have it. Today!

"Call upon the name of the Lord and you will be saved and reconciled."