

The Way To Reconciliation

So, what is reconciled? The Merriam Webster dictionary has several definitions but the one that most closely aligns with our message this morning is **“to restore to friendship or [harmony](#)”**. Believers of the Gospel know that this harmony with God was destroyed in the fall. But because of His great and eternal love for the elect, He in the council halls of eternity purposed and provided for us a way back to that harmony, and a restored perfect fellowship with Him. That is what we will be looking at today. I have titled this mornings message **“The Way To Reconciliation”**

The text for this mornings study will be from 2 Corinthians 5: 17-21. So, if you would like to read along open your bibles to 2 Corinthians 5 and let's pick up reading right there in verse 17.

[17](#) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

[18](#) All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

[19](#) that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

[20](#) We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

[21](#) God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

In vs 17 it speaks of believers being a new creation ...in Christ.

In vs 18 it is declared that we are reconciled to God....in Christ.

Vs 19, God is reconciling the world to Him..... in Christ.

And then in vs. 21, God made Him, CHRIST to be sin for us, a sin offering for us and through that offering we are made the Righteousness of God in Christ.

We are going to go deeper into each one of these as we work our way through our text, but the outline for the message is very clearly laid out for us, it is in Christ, by Christ and through Christ alone that all these things are accomplished.

Today as we look at reconciliation to God, made necessary as a result of the fall where mankind lost the sweet fellowship with God that Adam had enjoyed, that "HARMONY", all lost and in its place a complete separation from God was brought and with that the ushering in of sin and death. **We will see** that in Christ, we have sweet fellowship with God restored and it is by Him alone that this miracle of grace is brought about.

It's not Christ plus our works

It's not Christ plus any kind of free will

It's not Christ plus our parents desire for us

It's not Christ plus the family we are born into

It's not Christ plus our church attendance, our baptism, a sinners prayer or raising of a hand

It is in Christ alone that our communion with God will be restored.

THE DEBATE

I went to a republican candidate debate here a few months ago. 3 of 4 of the candidates that were vying for the opportunity to be our district representative in the US Congress were there. They were asked a question about their faith and how that faith would affect the way they would govern if elected to congress. Well, 2 of the three candidates

declared they had **always** been Christians as one had been born into a devout Christian family and one a devout Catholic family and each had grown up attending church every Sunday. And that faith they grew up with remained as the basis, the foundation, for all their major decisions. The third candidate had a slightly different story in that she became a Christian at the age of 5 after her Grandma had read her some children's bible stories. She decided then and there she wanted Jesus to come into her heart and has always tried to please Him in everything she does. Like the others, her lifelong faith in Jesus will dictate her decisions while in congress.

Well, those are all fine stories, all well and good-- heart tugging stories, but the conclusions--- just--- aren't--- possible. There is a story often told about a preacher who, after services one Sunday, was having a discussion with a nice elderly lady. He asked how long she had been a Christian and her answer was, "Well, all my life". His reply to her was well, "that's just too long", **i.e.**, that's just—not--- possible. Let's look at what our text says about this and the other things mentioned at the start of the message beginning with vs. 17.

THEREFORE, IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATION. THE OLD HAS GONE, THE NEW HAS COME.

Paul is laying out a path here, one that all believers will experience. There must be a passing from the old man, fallen in Adam, dead in sin, at enmity against God, vowing to never let this man rule over him, then passing **on to** the new man, the new creation no longer at enmity with God but rather at peace with Him and now a willing servant, and a happy debtor to Gods glorious grace.

To explore this just a little further, let's look at what Paul has to say in Ephesians Chapter 2.

READ 1-10

This lays out for us a pretty clear path as to how God brings His people to Himself. Sinners from birth, dead in our sins, followers of the ruler of the air. In verse 3 Paul tells us this:

ALL OF US ALSO LIVED AMONG THEM AT ONE TIME GRATIFYING THE DESIRES OF OUR FLESH. So notice this---

It's not some of us, not most of us, BUT ALL OF US! No one is free of this. Why, because we were all born sinners. We didn't become sinners because we committed our first sin, we sin because we're sinners by nature, by birth as a result of Adams fall in the Garden. Since then, all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God. But all believers will share the experience that we read about in vs. 4 and 5. **(Ephesians4,5)**

Because of God's great love for us, in order to display his great mercy to us, He made us alive in Christ even though we were dead in our transgressions.

Remember that list of things I mentioned just a bit ago, beginning with being Christians from birth? And then going on to it's not Christ plus our works, our family heritage or desire and so on? ***All of those arguments someone will want to use to add their works to what Christ has done?*** Well, each of those arguments are disposed of right here, because it is not works that brings life-- We are made alive in Christ. Paul goes on to expand on this in vs'. 8 and 9:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

It is by God's free sovereign grace we are saved. Don't boast by adding your works to it, God has never been pleased with man's works.

In Romans 5 Paul tells us, **while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** He gave us a new life—the result? We have passed from the old man to the new man, from dead in sin to alive in Christ. **And a quick look at vs 6 reveals to us another glorious truth:**

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, **that** is reconciliation! Communion with God has been restored, so much so that **“God raised us up with (whom) Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in (where)---- Christ Jesus,”** We are one with Him and through Him one with God. All because of God's great love and mercy for us, His people.

Going back to verse 17 in Chap 5 of II Corinthians, we recognize it because of similar language found in Jer. 31 and also Hebrews 8. *They speak to the passing away of the old covenant, the covenant of the law and of sin and death and then the entering into the new covenant, the covenant of freedom from the law replaced with freedom, life, righteousness and reconciliation which brings us to that glorious rest in Christ.* In that same manner, we will pass from the old man and on to the new man, that new creation in Christ. From the darkness of the old way, to the light of the new.

Have you ever wondered what a new born baby feels, what it senses as it passes from the mother's womb into the bright lights of a delivery room?

Hearing all that noise –all that motion going on around it? Can, does the baby feel fear, **uncertainty**—wonder?

Does the baby then feel comfort when the mother hugs it to her breast for the first time? **How about when the dad holds that baby for that first time in his hands?** When the baby hears the familiar sounds of mom and dad’s voices? We know that babies soon do begin to recognize and appreciate all those things. Kris and I have a new grandson, his name is Blake, and it is pretty clear that little guy **loves--- his--- life!** Anna sends us pictures and videos all the time and he is so full of laughter, giggles and love for his momma and her attention. He is always jumping up and down, excited to see her, excited to be with her, reaching out for and loving that attention he gets. And he continually –**wants-** more!

Isn’t that similar to our experience when we passed from the old man to the new man? Enjoying all that we gained **in that new birth Christ tells Nicodemus about when he says**, paraphrasing here, in order to enter the Kingdom of God **YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN?**

As we find ourselves standing in that glorious light of the Kingdom of God, where, while standing in that light, we can look back at that darkness we have been delivered from. Just as Ezekiel 36 tells us, only after God has worked His marvelous acts of grace upon us, **only then** can we look back and see our evil ways and wicked deeds.

We then just might find ourselves asking, did HE really, because of his eternal love for me, did He really redeem me? Can It Be That I Should Gain? Did He really deliver me from that hopeless pit, that world of darkness, that valley of dry bones? Well, tell me more. Like Blake, I want more! I **love** to hear that Old, Old story! **About How a Savior came from glory, How He gave His life on Calvary--- to save a wretch like me;** Yes, that story of being born again. Of being accepted in the

Beloved. Has that really happened to me?! Well, Thanks be to God, if you are a child of His, a believer in that old, old story----it did.

We get to hear more of **that Old, Old Story** as we go on to vs 18 – 20. Here Paul speaks of his God given ministry of reconciliation.

And what is that ministry? It's the preaching of the gospel, the good news. Scripture gives us a pretty good look in to Paul's life, his ministry and from **that** we know Paul was a faithful preacher of the good news, wherever God sent him and whatever his circumstances. So much so you can say his ministry goes on even to this day. He proclaimed that this is how Gods people will hear the message. In Romans 10 he says this:

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

This is why spending time with and fellow shipping with others in a church is so important. This is where people come to hear the good news, to edify and to be edified. It is where people learn about all God has done for us, what he has prepared for each of us do, and some are even called to become preachers of the gospel. That is why preachers are so important, they get the message of Christ out to the world to hear! God continues His work from there, but he has purposed that all must first hear the message. So it follows there must be someone to preach to them, beautiful are the feet that will **bring** the good news.

Enter Paul who is **imploring** the people to hear his message, not for his glory but for the sake and glory of Christ. This is what God has called him to do, bring the message of God's reconciliation to the world. Not just this little spot on a map called Israel, but in all four corners of this round globe there are sheep waiting to hear the message. And one

thing we know **is that we know not** who the elect are, so, **preach** as if you are a **dying man** preaching to **dying men**. Implore them to hear the gospel message, their lives depend on it.

Look at Paul's passion here. **"WE IMPLORE YOU ON CHRIST'S BEHALF: BE RECONCILED TO GOD."** They **must** hear the message. The good news. And who will hear, who will believe that good news?

Acts 13:48 is one of many vs. that answers the question. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed". God's message will **not** go out in vain. As Christ says in the book of John, **"My sheep hear my voice, I KNOW THEM—AND THEY--- FOLLOW--- ME."**

And then for those that truly understand the Sovereignty of God in salvation, in election and predestination, what Paul has to say about this in Romans 8 really strikes at the heart:

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Those He predestined He called, Called according to His purpose, they heard because of the beautiful feet bringing the gospel message, that call of the great Shepherd to all that the Father has given Him, to all that hear His voice, that follow Him, heard the message and believed. And the same happens today, until the last of God's sheep are called home, God's message will go out. Paul's message will be repeated. WE IMPLORE YOU, ON CHRIST'S BEHALF; BE RECONCILED TO GOD.

And now, on to vs. 21, the heart of this message,

GOD MADE HIM WHO HAD NO SIN TO BE SIN FOR US THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM.

So much said in this verse. The event at the cross was the vindication of God against sin, against death, against the enemies of the church. Finally, that perfect sacrifice that God required for the redemption of His people was here, the day of Salvation was at hand. He who had no sin, God put upon Him our sin. **The wages of sin is death.**

He died, suffering that death for us, because—**all---** of our deaths combined could not satisfy that debt, could not muster up the total of wages needed to pay that debt. Where was our hope? Who could deliver us from this body of death? It could only be Him. Him who had no sin, Him who suffered no guilt, He took our sin and our guilt upon Himself and died for us, not for any sin He had committed for He had none, but ours, it was our sin, us, that put Him on the cross. It was our debt He was paying. In John chapter 10 He proclaims that He would lay down His life for the sheep. He was that Lamb of God, that perfect sacrifice. Let's look at the story as Isaiah tells it. Let's go to

ISA. 53:4-11 Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.

9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

11 After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied ; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Can you see the theme here, the gospel message, and if you will, that Old, Old story? **It Is His life** for our sins.

He was pierced for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death, **though He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.**

¹⁰ Yet it was **the LORD's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer,**

THE LORD makes His life an offering for sin, and yes
by His wounds we are healed.

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Yes, even Isaiah was preaching that gospel of separation, substitution and reconciliation. It truly is the Old, Old story.

As we continue looking at vs. 21, it is also important to look at how Christ's obedience to the Father plays a role in our reconciliation to God.

Philippians 2 speaks to us of that perfect obedience of the Son to the Father. I have copied the passage here in to my notes so I can read it to you, but if you want to follow along we will be in Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

So, we see where He left His place in glory, making Himself nothing, a servant, being made in human likeness, being obedient even unto death. But, it was because of that perfect obedience He could be that perfect sacrifice. But why would He do such a thing? In Hebrews 12 we are told to

Fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Who, for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For the joy set before Him, through obedience to the Father even unto death and then being raised to the heavens and now sitting at the right hand of the Father, advocating for all the Father had given Him, all He had sacrificed for. **He was satisfied.**

Looking back at Isa. 53:11, it tells us that **“After He has suffered, He will see the light of life and be satisfied; by His knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities.”** He was satisfied, the Father was satisfied. God’s purpose was complete in Him and that brought joy to all the Godhead.

As we continue to look at Christ as the perfect Lamb and the only one acceptable to God the Father as a substitutionary sacrifice for sin, for our reconciliation to God, I would like to look back at the Story of Abraham and Isaac. Throughout the OT we are given pictures of Christ in lambs found acceptable for sacrifice, **as burnt offerings for the sins of Israel**, lambs without spot or blemish.

The story of Abraham and Isaac **is one of the more** familiar OT pictures of Christ and His role as the substitute sent by God. We know how the story goes as Abraham received instruction from God to take Isaac up on to a mountain and sacrifice his one and only Son. And Abraham by faith obediently took Isaac up to the mountain believing God could resurrect Isaac from the dead as we are told by the writer of Hebrews: **Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.** So, in that faith they went to the mountain. On the way up Isaac asked Abraham, “Father we have the wood and the fire but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” And Abraham replied **“MY SON, GOD WILL PROVIDE HIMSELF A LAMB FOR A BURNT OFFERING.”**

We know God did provide Himself that perfect, sinless without spot or blemished lamb-one without violence, without deceit in His mouth. Not only in that ram caught by his horns in the thicket that God provided Abraham as a substitute for Isaac, but He provided Himself in the person of His one and only begotten Son, that perfect substitute for His church, the elect of God.

Years later John the Baptist would be heard to proclaim as he saw Jesus off in the distance **“BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!”** And we know from the Gospel story that this truly was the Lamb of God, the Son of God who had left His place in glory **to put an end to sin and death brought about by the fall for His elect.** He who had no sin had come to do the will of the Father. The time had come.

He was bruised, pierced, mocked, scorned, separated from the living, even His own Father.

Many times in the New Testament the Son speaks to the Father through prayer, always starting the prayer by identifying the Father as the one He is speaking to. But in crying out on the cross He did not say ***My Father My Father, why hast thou forsaken me? No, He cried out My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?***

The Father and the Son are one, but the Father is immortal, He cannot die, so he sent His one and only begotten Son to lay down His life for all the Father had given Him.

And for that brief, set time **Christ cried out “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me”** as He was suffering the agony, the pain, the eternal wrath of God, the humility, the shame, of the cross. All because He was paying the penalty for our sins. Should we wonder why He would feel Forsaken-feel that temporary but painful separation between Him and the Father?

But for the joy set before Him, that Lamb of God accepted His death and then was buried taking with Him our sin, our guilt- He was the innocent dying for the guilty. Now the vindication of God over sin and death is complete in Christ . He rose up from the grave, **proving** that He **truly** was the Son of God. If He had not arose, we would still be waiting for that promised Redeemer to appear. If He hadn't come forth from out of the grave, He would not have been the One. But He did come out of the grave, and as we figuratively were buried with Him, we also rose with Him, free of sin, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, reconciled to the Father who art in heaven. Free from any fear of the second death.

HE AROSE—*hallelujah*...He arose. He arose the great victor—victorious over sin- over death –over the grave. We are again one with the Father. Our sins, our transgressions all buried as far away as the east is from the west, buried in the deepest sea to never be remembered evermore. All our sin, past present and future, all buried, all done away with, the victory was complete. As Christ said just before His death

IT IS FINISHED.

I recently read an article by John Gill where he put it this way,

”Sin is so finished and made an end of by Christ's satisfaction for it that it will be seen no more by the eye of avenging justice. It is so put away and out of sight that when it is sought for, it shall not be found. God, for Christ's sake, has cast it behind his back and into the depths of the sea” ([Micah 7:19](#))

So, Just as our text declares, being reconciled to God we now have the righteousness of God imputed to us in Christ. That work of reconciliation by Christ has brought it all to its conclusion. Paul puts a capstone on this in I Corinthians 1:30 when he proclaims:

³⁰ It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

So, what is the way to reconciliation? I hope this message has made it clear that there is only one way--Through Christ. He is for us the Way, The truth AND the life. He is the light of the world, our reconciliation and righteousness for all who believe. For anyone out there hearing this message who has maybe never heard it before, **I IMPLORE YOU, BE RECONCILED TO GOD!** How? you may ask. Well, like a newborn baby, Rest in the comfort of Gods loving arms. He has done all the work. Come to me you who are weary, and I will give you rest.

What do you do? You rest in Him, He who sent His son to die for you, He will never let you go.

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON THAT WHOSOEVER BELIVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE. That is a promise to all who believe, And as to that “whosoever”, what is the rest of the story?

Again, **AND AS MANY AS WERE ORDAINED TO ETERNAL LIFE BELIEVED.** The promise that God gives us in John 3:16, like all of God’s promises, will not EVER be broken. Guaranteed there will be no empty chairs in heaven. Just rest in Him.

In conclusion, a few more words by the apostle Paul from **Romans 7:24,25 “WHAT A WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM----WHO WILL DELIVER ME FROM THIS BODY OF DEATH—YES, WHO WILL RECONCILE ME----ME THE HOPELESS ONE---me the one who CAN’T TAKE ON THE DEBT----me the one who CAN’T PAY THE PRICE----me the one who had spent my former life rejecting Him---at enmity with Him---me, the one who was the cause of the death of His only begotten Son on the cross--- BUT THANKS BE TO GOD—HE WILL DELIVER ME FROM THIS BODY OF DEATH---He will reconcile us----Oh that sweet harmony restored--- THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD!**

There is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

There is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we might be made the righteousness of God.

And---- There is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be reconciled.