

Reconciliation
2 Corinthians 5:18
Part One

Broken relationships are very common in our world. We see it displayed among friends, among family members, among co-workers, among governmental agencies, and certainly among nations. And when this happens it is a terrible thing in light of the fact that truly nothing good ever comes of it.

And if there is any doubt about this all we have to do is to consider the rift that has taken place between God and man. And how did this come about?

Adam, following the lead of his wife, ate fruit from a certain tree that God had forbidden them to eat. And what was the result? Adam and Eve, as a result of their rebellion against God, plummeted from the pinnacle of innocence and intimacy into the pit of guilt and estrangement and ultimately took the whole of the human race into that same pit with them.

We see the first manifestation of this estrangement in **Genesis 3:7-8**. So let me now read these verses for you. **“Then [or in other words after they had transgressed against God by eating the forbidden fruit] the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. [Then it says] (8) They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”** So here we have it, the first manifestation of human estrangement and alienation from God, which was the consequence of their rebellion.

And if this manifestation had not been so tragic it would have been laughable. Here we have the first human couple with fig leaf aprons hiding behind some trees lest God find out what they had done. What a pathetic picture.

But this was the consequence of their rebellion. In other words, as soon as the forbidden fruit was eaten the first couple immediately passed from life to death, from sinlessness to sinfulness, from intimacy to alienation; the

relationship that they had enjoyed with God prior to that point of rebellion had been torn asunder, ultimately producing a rift not only between themselves and God but also in the ultimate sense, a rift between all of mankind and God.

This fearful reality of universal alienation lies behind and frames **2 Corinthians 5:18-20**, the passage that we will be studying over the next several weeks, a passage whose theme, very appropriately in light of universal alienation, is reconciliation.

So what does the word “reconcile” mean? The word reconcile (KATALLASSO) means “to change,” or in other words to change the state of a relationship from one characterized by enmity and alienation to one of harmony and closeness.

And certainly in light of the world’s present relationship with God, which is a relationship characterized by enmity and alienation, there is a great need for a change. Yes, the world’s relationship with God is presently broken but it does not have to remain that way. There is the possibility of reconciliation, as we will see in the passage that we will be examining this morning.

So now let me read **2 Corinthians 5:18-20** for you and see if this is not so and I will be reading from the NAS and this is what these verses say. **“Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, (19) namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (20) Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”** So is it possible, based on these verses, for people in this world, though alienated and estranged from God, to be reconciled? Absolutely!

And I believe this will become very apparent to us as we seek over the next several weeks to answer the following question: What do we learn about reconciliation from 2 Corinthians 5:18-20? This morning we will only be able to consider one of the things that we learn about reconciliation from these verses.

So, what is my hope for this message as we seek to answer this question? My hope is this that as we consider the first of several things that we will learn about reconciliation from this passage, that we not only be filled with praise but will also be even more motivated to carry out the ministry of reconciliation with even greater faithfulness.

So, what is the first thing that we learn about reconciliation from **2 Corinthians 5:18-20**? The first thing that we learn is this: The ministry of reconciliation proceeds from God and returns to God (2 Corinthians 5:18). Or in other words, it is God who reconciles us and He reconciles us to Himself. Therefore apart from God working on our behalf through Christ there would be no reconciliation, or in other words there would be no change in our relationship with Him. We would have remained His enemy, alienated and estranged from Him forever if He had not reconciled us to Himself.

The unregenerate of this world have no ability to make things right with God, to satisfy His holy justice or conform to His standard of righteousness. Therefore if our relationship with God is going to change, or in other words if reconciliation is going to take place, it will be because of God and not because of man.

We need to understand this. For until we understand this we will most likely continue to buy into the great lie, which is that sinners, based on their own moral or religious efforts, can reconcile themselves to God, or in other words change their relationship with Him from one of alienation and estrangement to one of closeness and intimacy. But this is not true and **2 Corinthians 5:18** will hopefully communicate this to us very clearly as Paul declares very definitively that it is not us who reconcile ourselves to God but rather it is God who reconciles us to Himself.

So now let us look at **verse 18** more carefully and see if this is not so. And how does this verse begin? It begins with these words, **“Now all these things are from God.”**

So, what was Paul referring to when he spoke of **“all these things?”** When Paul spoke of “all these things,” he was speaking about all the things associated with having become a new creature in Christ referenced in 2 Corinthians 5:17. It was **“these things”** that Paul was referring to.

And whom did Paul identify as the source of the re-creation and all the things associated with that re-creation? Paul identified God as the source of the re-creation and all the things associated with that re-creation. So let us continue to read and see if this is not true. And what did he say? **“Now all these things** [our re-creation and all the things associated with it] **are from God.”**

So now let me ask you another question. How did God bring about our re-creation and the bestowal of all the things associated with that re-creation?

Our re-creation and the bestowal of all the things associated with that re-creation were made possible when God reconciled us to Himself through Christ. So now let us once again continue to read **verse 18** and see if this is not so. **“Now all these things** [our re-creation and all the things associated with that re-creation] **are from God** [who what?], **who reconciled us to Himself through Christ.”**

Therefore not only is God the source of our re-creation and of all the things associated with that re-creation but He and He alone is also the source of our reconciliation, a reconciliation that was accomplished through Christ. Isn't that what the verse is telling us? We did not reconcile ourselves to God; He reconciled us to Himself through Christ.

So how did God reconcile us to Himself through Christ? God was able to reconcile us to Himself through Christ because Christ, in dying our death, satisfied the righteous demands of the Law against us (2 Corinthians 5:14-16). And how could this be? How could Christ die our death so that He might satisfy the righteous demands of the Law against us? We have already considered the answer to this question in **2 Corinthians 5:14-16.**

Because we, in exercising faith in Christ, have been joined to Christ, through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, when He died we died thus changing our relationship with God from one of enmity and alienation to one of harmony and closeness. Let me read for you **Ephesians 2:13-16** and see if this is not so.

“But now in Christ Jesus you who were formerly far off [referring to Gentile Christians] **have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (14) For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups** [in other words Jews

and Gentiles] **into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, (15) by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two** [or in other words the two groups both Jew and Gentile] **into one new man, thus establishing peace, (16) and might reconcile them** [both Jew and Gentile] **both in one body** [to whom?] **to God** [through what?] **through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.”** Whose enmity? Our enmity! And with whom was our enmity put to death? It was our enmity with God that was put to death.

So now let me ask you this question. Based on what we just read, when did God reconcile us? In a practical sense we were reconciled to God when we first exercised faith in Christ, but in a positional sense we were reconciled to God when He (in other words Christ) put enmity to death when He died our death (Ephesians 2:13-16).

So let me ask you another question. Does this thought that God has reconciled us through Christ when He died our death excite us? It should!

At one point in time we were the enemies of God and in rebellion against Him. And it was not just a question of some minor misunderstanding which could easily be put right; it was a case of mutiny, and mutiny of a kind, far more radical in its nature and effect, than anything that we might have experienced in a purely human relationship or for that matter will ever experience. For the essence of it was our desire as the creature to push God aside and to set ourselves up in His place, thus making ourselves the arbiter and controller of all things. How amazingly prideful but that was how we were.

And even though God in the midst of our rebellion continued to love us, and even though He commended that love toward in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us according to **Romans 5:8**, His love for us did not diminish His hatred of our sin.

Let me now read for you **Romans 1:18** and see if this is not so. **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”** So, what can we conclude?

We can conclude this: Even though God commended His love toward us even while we were yet sinners, it did not mean that He was indifferent toward our rebellion (Romans 1:18).

As we look around us today and observe what is taking place, we should hopefully see this truth being manifested. People, based on God's moral order and as expression of His wrath, reap what they sow and even beyond this we see within the Scriptures certain times when God, as an expression of His wrath toward sin, will supernaturally intervene in the affairs of men. These expressions of wrath are like warning shots fired over the bow of humanity by God to alert them to a far greater expression of wrath that is awaiting every individual who persist in their rebellion and who continue to reject the reconciliation He is offering this world through Christ.

So now let me once again ask you the question that I asked earlier. Are you excited about having been reconciled to God, by God, through Christ? And hopefully your answer is absolutely! How could we not in light of the fact that through our reconciliation we have gone from being an enemy of God to a friend, and more than a friend, but even in Christ a child of God?

And as such we have the opportunity as a foretaste of future glory to enjoy intimate and close fellowship with Him as we draw upon His strength, His patience, His Joy, and His disciplines.

What an incredible change. We were once God's enemies who were awaiting the outpouring of His wrath at the final judgment, but because God reconciled us to Himself through Christ we are now the recipients of all these wonderful blessings.

And beyond all this: We, as those who have been reconciled to God through Christ, not only have been saved from His wrath, but we have also been given the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18).

And this brings us back to **2 Corinthians 5:18**. **“Now all these things** [our re-creation and all those things associated with our re-creation] **are from God, who reconciled us** [or in other words changed our relationship with Him] **to Himself through Christ** [who through His death on the cross paid the debt that we could not pay, or in other words who was willing to die our death thus putting to death enmity between ourselves and God, and then

what does Paul say? He says this] **and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.**

So, what does Paul mean by this. When Paul said that we have been given the ministry of reconciliation, this was equivalent to him saying that we have been commissioned to go into the world to preach the gospel (Matthew 28:19-20).

And we have been commissioned to go into the world. What did Jesus say to His disciples in **Matthew 28:19-20**? This is what He said, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

So, what is the first thing we learn about reconciliation from **2 Corinthians 5:18**? The first thing we learn is this: The ministry of reconciliation proceeds from God and returns to God. Or in other words, reconciliation is not something that we do, it is something God has accomplished for us through Christ, whose death appeased or satisfied God’s righteous demands against us.

So if you have in fact accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, you can know this for a fact, that you have been reconciled by God to Himself through Christ and therefore you presently have a relationship, a dramatically changed relationship, where you are no longer His enemy and under His judgment. But you having been reconciled to Him through Christ have become His child, a partaker of the divine nature, able to enjoy Him each and every day and always looking forward to the day when we will finally be joined with Him in glory.

So are we excited about having been reconciled by God, to God, through Christ? I would certainly hope so. And if we are then let us by the grace of God continually be filled with praise and a growing determination as minister’s of reconciliation to go out into the world Gospel message so that others might be able to share in these riches with us; not only for their sake but for the Lord’s sake.

May God give us the grace, as those who have been reconciled to God by God through Christ, to give Him the praise that He is due and to faithfully carry out the ministry of reconciliation that we have been given.