

RECONCILIATION

II Cor. 5:18 - 21

Introduction:

A few days ago a mother approached me and said, "I need some help." Her son had received a sentence for 15 years in prison. And he had been in prison for several months. And she felt like he had had a religious experience and she wanted to know if I would help, in some way, to shorten his term.

Every day we have the opportunity of making reconciliation - people with people, and trying to get people to become reconciled with God.

This is one of the great doctrines of the Bible. It is closely associated with atonement. But this work of grace has to do with the death of Christ. And there is nothing more positive than the declaration in Romans 5:10 - "we were reconciled to God by the death of his son."

First let me talk about the meaning of the term. And then I shall give you five things about reconciliation.

We are reminded that it signifies the changing of places, coming over from one to the other side. It is used of ourselves - the word implies changing the judicial status from one of estrangement and condemnation to one of acceptance and justification.

Saul had need to be reconciled to David. And to take him back into his royal favor. I Samuel 29:4.

Now we know, the Bible talks about being reconciled to your brother.

That is, to lay aside his anger. And to become reconciled.

Therefore, in this doctrine, we see that God has restored us in his favor through his son, once for all. Satisfying the claims.

In the meaning of it, Jesus, the High Priest, makes the reconciliation for the sins of people. Hebrews 2:17. To propitiate their sins. From the standpoint of Christ's sacrifice on God's side there is the ever lasting justice which has been satisfied through Christ's eternal sacrifice.

Keep in mind, God is not the offender. It is man who is the offender. And his sin has estranged him from God. Made him an enemy of God. And God is not reconciled to the sinner - for God has always loved the sinner. And has never been estranged to him. So it is not God, but it is we - the sinner that needs the reconciliation.

Let us organize this message under the following heads.

- I. The Need of Man For Reconciliation.
- II. The Author of Reconciliation.
- III. The Method of Reconciliation.
- IV. The Ministry of Reconciliation.

## I. THE NEED OF MAN FOR RECONCILIATION

There is really no question about the fact that the world has gone off of its moral and spiritual rocker. This means that a lot of terrible things that are happening in the world are displeasing to God. And the friendship between God and man has been broken. And this has happened because of man's willful

choice. This estrangement from God is the result of man's sin.

Man refuses to let God function in his life. Man tries to avoid God.

Why do children like crunchy cereal? One study suggests that the chance to snap, crackle, and pop appeases childhood hostilities. It provides them an outlet of aggressive feeling.

The same thing is why does a man or some women like to fondle a cigar or cigarette. Now this may be nothing more than indulgence in an adult version of thumb sucking. The cigarette serves as a pacifier for grown-ups.

Now these, and many other startling explanations of human behavior have been advanced by social scientists, who have made this through research. But we know as the English poet, long ago said, love is the weapon which omnipotence reserved to conquer rebel man, when all the rest have failed. And then he added, there is not one human being in a million, nor a thousand men in all earths huge millions, whose clay heart is hardened against love.

Now this is a revelation of God - which he gives of man.

The difficulties that man has all around the world is the problem of neighbor love, animosity affirms that he needs a reconciler. Now it is not that man is going to find a way to God but rather that God has made a way for man to God.

Mentioning reconciliation reminds man of his sinful nature, and his deeds. God made man in his own image. And man was free from sin. But man with his tendency, sin entered into his experience. And as David, Psalm 51:5, behold

I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. It means that you were born with a sinful nature. By birth, and by practice. And your iniquities have separated between you and your God. Psalm 59:2.

It is not a matter how many great sins you have committed. Your estrangement from God is due to the sinful nature of your heart.

Jeremiah reminds us, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. 17:9.

Jesus said, out of the heart proceed evil thoughts - murders, adulterers, fornications, theft, false-witness, blasphemy. These and other things defile a man. Matt. 15:19-20.

So your heart is unregenerated and there is evil. Now this is not a beautiful picture to be showing. It is no wonder then, that your heart is in rebellion against God. Now the offender does not like to be reminded of his offense. But to be reminded of it, you must, if you are ever to have your heart united in the fellowship with the heart of God, you must be reminded of it.

The world is not in harmony, nor at peace with God. And sin has done this and brought about this tragedy. Men are afraid of God. They are alienated from God. There is a great gulf between God and man. There is a great bridge that needs to be built across that gulf. Or on the other hand, we might think of it as a great mountain that is cast up between God and man. There is a need to level that mountain - and that is what we call reconciliation. God and man may not merely approach - but they need to be united in peace.

A sentence of condemnation from Heaven is against every transgressor of the law.

It was never more evident of today. The great curse of this world is the want of the spirit of reconciliation. There is strife, hatred, envy, and jealousy - and nations go to war one with another.

And the domestic scene many times it is turned into Hell when the husband, wife, and children do not know how to make up their quarrels. In some families, there are people who do not know anything about the matter of reconciliation.

The joy of friendship is lost when men become too proud to ask for pardon and to give it.

There is a greater need than to be reconciled with one another. And that is, man's greatest need is to be reconciled with the Heavenly Father. We cannot look upon one another as brothers and sisters unless we believe that we have been reconciled in the father.

We cannot be at peace with all the other members of our family unless we are first at peace with the head of all families. So our message today, is about the need of man to be reconciled.

What I am saying is, as I might illustrate with a tree in Africa. There is an insect which burrows up from underneath the ground into the soft fibers in the center of a tree. And eating away the pulp, leaves only the tough outer bark. From the exterior such a tree gives every appearance of being solid. But a strong man can puncture it with a sharp jab of his forefinger.

Sin has attack the innermost recesses of your life - leaving the exterior in tack. The exterior may be respectable, veneer. But only in times of testing does the tragic hollowness of life become apparent. Thus the urgent question is, is there anything that can get inside of my heart and will destroy this enemy of the soul. So the first lesson we gather from this lesson this morning, is the doctrine of the fact of the fall of man. And this is the key to the Christian estimate of human nature. And still looking upon man as a creature with a long series of struggles as animal existence - the Gospel teaches that man has capacities and that he needs reconciliation to exchange friendship, that once existed because there was a period in history that he was on good terms with God.

Now Paul insists that the breakdown of man and his present inward ruin and disorder came by one man's sin as he entered into the world. Rom. 5:12.

There are plenty of evidences of the fall - that we are guilty. And it has left it's mark upon us. And deep in man's natural intelligence, of course, is the idea of God. And he was yet unrestored, and man makes an effort somehow to over-come this. But when man cannot escape from God - he strinks from God, he runs away from God. There is something in man's own nature which whispers to him, that between himself and God, there is a lack of harmony. I do not have to emphasize this this morning, because in your heart - there is a desire. You'd rather keep out of God's way if it could be possible for you to do so.

The first man who hears the voice of the Lord God walking in the Garden in the cool of the day. And he seeks to hide himself from the presence of God among the trees.

Now it is not otherwise with you, concerning your moral nature. Because

you have an idea what is right and what is wrong. And there are many disputes down through the ages of what's right and what's wrong. It is as wide and old as the human race and yet it is marked off in a man's heart. What is your conduct and how does your human will re-act.

On the one hand, there is vice and you are condemned by human conscience - whatever order it is that produces it. It springs up like a garden. The good, that I would, I do not. But the evil which I would not, that I do. Now this is the thing that speaks of human nature and it describes it. Adam, could not transmit what he had lost and his children remained alienated from the source of life. Running from God, disobeying God, and troubled by an inner conscience. Now that man should somehow change this is an impossibility.

If a man could be restored a power greater than himself, independent of himself, must need restore him.

## II. THE AUTHOR OF RECONCILIATION

V. 18  Begins all things are of God. He has reconciled us to himself. Man, the creature and the sinner, should have been the first to seek the healing of the breach, by searching for the pardon and requesting mercy from God. But it has not been so.

The (initiative) was taken by God. He is rich in mercy and in love for the world.

There is (no difficulty) on God's side. His heart has always been full of love and God never broke away from us. We broke away from him. So it was God

who worked in Christ to reconcile the world to himself.

All things, the meaning of that is, the entire change of which Paul had been speaking about the new creation - and the person becoming a new man. It is God's work. God affects this great moral and spiritual revolution by reconciling us unto himself.

Now to reconcile is to remove enmity between the parties. Man never makes reconciliation. Man embraces it. And in this case, it was God, the source, and cause of the new creation. And that is why this is a great doctrine in the Bible. So long as we are under the wrath and curse of God, due to us for sin, we are enemies cut off from his favor and fellowship. Therefore until God's wrath and curse are removed, there is no possibility of holiness and love. It is vain to attempt to secure the favor of God by being holy.

Suppose a dear friend of yours does something to break your heart. Now what he has done constitutes a barrier between you - not in your heart but in his. But let us go further and suppose that you hold no animosity or hard feeling toward him. Your forgiveness of him is already in your heart, if only he will receive it. But until he confesses the wrong and receives your forgiveness - the fellowship between you remains broken. Now it is not because of what's in your heart but because of what's in his heart. You may show in every possible way that you long to restore this broken relationship however, until he responds favorably, there is still that breach.

In a more infinite way, this is the situation between you and God. You have sinned against God's holy nature. And since God is holy, he cannot ignore your sin. But because of your own attitude, you are separated from him. Now he cannot extend to you his forgiveness - he can only do it until your sins have



been removed. Because the wages of sin is death. So the removing of the barrier of unbroken fellowship was made possible by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And God makes possible the reconciliation of the world unto himself. Not on the basis of law but through Jesus and in Jesus Christ.

### III. THE METHOD OF RECONCILIATION

I have already indicated that the method was in Jesus. The message sent from a distant Heaven. From the throne of God by an authorized one, so God sent his only begotten Son. So the son of God became man. And yet continued divine. And his relation of both parties - he perfectly fitted in to be reconciled. He loved God and he was faithful to divine claims. He loved man and he wanted to secure salvation for man. He did so by taking man's room, place of responsibility as a transgressor. He was made sin though he was never a sinner. He bore the burden of sin. He took the mantel of shame and God layed upon him the iniquity of us all. And he became the righteousness of God. There is one mediator between God and man. The mediator is one who acts because first of all his nature -- on one hand he is very God. On the other, he is of the race of man. He is the bridge over the cavern which the fall had opened up between earth and heaven. He acts for God upon mankind. He acts for men toward God - and so the perfect man that represents the kind of eternal presence - the sinless representative makes it possible. As Paul says, we can do all things through Christ, that strengthens us. This is our complete reconciliation with God.

It is based on the sacrificial work of Christ. Paul always speaks of man being reconciled to God - never of God being reconciled to man. So there is no change on God's part. The change is man toward God. Not that God is changed

toward man. God is already reconciled - he is only waiting for man to be reconciled.

When Paul talks about man being reconciled to God, he means a transaction in which God acts. And God is persuasive and not passive in this matter. It is not a transaction which man does. But it is one in which God is active in. He reconciles us to himself - V. 18.

It is something to be accepted as God's gift. Rom. 5:9-10-11.

It is forgiveness. It is a change of attitude.

Paul talks about men as enemies - being reconciled. He is thinking of removal of God's displeasure toward them. He means that God's displeasure is removed and they are received into his favor.

This is illustrated - Matt. 5:23-24. Jesus said, if you bring your gift to the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, then he is to leave his gift at the altar and first be reconciled to his brother and then offer his gift to God. Here then, to be reconciled to your brother means to have your brother's displeasure towards you removed. It is not to change your attitude to your brothers, but to get him to change his toward you. So to be reconciled to God, is to have God's attitude changed from one of displeasure to one of acceptance and pleasure in us. He forgives, he restores. And the change is on man's heart. It is not God's part - but it is man's, that Paul has in mind here.

James Stewart, the Scotman, in a book - "A Man In Christ" - writes, no man can be at war with God without being at war with every thing else in his environment which is of God's appointment. When there is disharmony at the center

there cannot be peace at the circumference.

Now it is this fighting attitude toward God and circumstances that brings about wrong relationships to God. And this is what Paul has, and uses this word reconcile. It is a word that rings - it means that you are out of harmony with all of life. And the first thing that reconciliation with God does, is to adjust the soul to life. It takes away that strain and brings peace.

Now this is one of the simple decorations of God's love and it can be understood by a small child. And the proof that God loves us is found that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. It was in his love. And it implies that there is rebellion in man's heart. Man's sin. Isaiah says we have turned everyone unto his own way.

It is very interesting that in Alaska an Eskimo in talking about the term reconciliation, said - "it is making friends again." So he translated the Scripture. God was in Christ - making friends again with the world.

It was the infinite love of God that reached down to redeem and bring us back to the fold as wondering sheep. John 3:16. Our God was so moved with love that he gave his only begotten son.

As I speak of the method in Christ, I would like to emphasize again the word reconcile - which comes from Latin - means to bring a person again into friendly relations too, or with one's self or another after an estrangement. That there has been estrangement between the soul and God is abundantly clear in the early chapters of Romans. Man sinned and fled from God and became an enemy.

But now God is holding out light.

The Greek word translated reconciled comes from the word of the money changer. If you give two dimes and a nickle in exchange for a quarter, you have made an equal exchange. Now this was the original meaning of the word as used by Aristotle and others - but later the word was used for an adjustment of a difference. And finally a difference between two personalities, who had become estranged. As I desire to reconcile myself and be at friendly peace.

Thayer thinks that the word means the restoration of the favor of God to sinners, that repent and put their trust in the death of Christ. That, to me, is not exactly right.

It should be noted that reconciled is never used of God. It is used only of men. I think this is at the out-set is what we need to understand. God's ways are not our ways. And it is God who took the initiative. God did not have to be reconciled to man, because God is love. Man had to be reconciled to God because man is helpless and he is an ungodly enemy. And man by his fall was estranged to God.

Go back to the root meaning of reconcile - to exchange coins of equal value. And then to adjust a difference. In our verse and in our text, we were helpless, ungodly sinners. And not only so, we were enemies of God and God came in Christ and died for us.

God set himself up as a banker in the marketplace and calls out to sinners. Change your money here. Change your money here. I will give my power for your helplessness. I will give my Godliness for your sinfulness. I will give my love for you eminity.

If you do not receive the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, you will remain lost.

You always were lost. You were born lost. You are lost. And now we invite you to be reconciled to the true God who is all love toward you.

Romans 5:11 - And not only so, but we also exhalt in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have received the reconciliation. What a great change - three chapters back in the book of Romans, we were sitting in the divine judges court - guilty. Our mouths were stopped and all our works rejected. Now through our Lord Jesus Christ, we are rejoicing, exhalting in him who was our judge. Now this is what grace can do - and does. And in this we simply have received reconciliation brought by Christ. For the word here is not atonement - which means to cover up and to be applied as Old Testament sacrifices - but the word reconciliation is simply that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

To receive this, is to complete and accomplish reconciliation. How simple. Thus men and women can exhalt and be joyful in Christ.

#### IV. THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

What is the ministry of reconciliation (committed to us.)

You find an explanation of this in V. 20. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ. As through, oh God, did beseech you by us - he prayed you to be reconciled to God. The reality of this appointment is to be judged by the word of God. If you do not check all preaching by the word and by the Bible known - you will be held responsible by God. But what about all those that minister and claim to be according to the Scriptures. Now this is our

ministry - to go to the Moselm, the devil worshipper, the atheist in Russia - the agnostic in the university, the follower of the cult who talks about the love of God but denies the salvation provided in the cross. You are a sinner experiencing God - running away since the Garden experience. Totally helpless, ungodly, and sinful. Now he commands me to tell you that he has fully dealt with your sins, by sending Christ to die for you. Christ's blood cries out and silences God's wrath against you. Every sin which you have ever committed or ever will commit has already been charged to the account of Christ and God has been holding that against you. And so he authorizes me as an ambassador to say unto you that you can be forgiven by simply turning around and coming home. Just as you are. Just as you are - you are to do and to come just as you are. He doesn't ask you to go out and wash your face and clean up your life, and to change your garments, but he asks you right now to come and he will not do this until you step inside the door with all of your ungodliness and be reconciled to God. He loves you. He had made provision for you. He must take you in as you are. Whether you are pagan, unbeliever, atheist, or whether you believe in some little idols - you can come as bankrupt as you are. Knowing only that the blood of Christ has been shed for you.

This is the ministry of reconciliation. This is the Gospel.

Now Paul says we preach and we exhort men as ambassadors and we will have not the power to negotiate the terms of peace. We are the king's messenger. We are to proclaim his terms and press for acceptance and we know that we are to do this without excuse and without delay.

Reconciliation is of no avail accept those who are actually reconciled. It is not enough for a man to learn that it has been made or to know personally about the benefits of it. But this is what God gives every man to extend the

hand of faith and to receive.

We speak - He speaks through us and we speak in His name to you.

Now the word ambassador is rich in which the Roman province was divided into two types. One type was under the control of the Senate. The other was under the direct control of the emperor. The distinction was if the province was peaceful - then the Senators ruled it. If it was dangerous, then troops were stationed there and the emperor's direct representative ruled. So this has interesting meaning but when the Roman Senate decided in a country to add a certain part or change the boundaries of vanquished people to make a new constitution for them - these men were responsible. To bring their families to the Roman Empire. Their families and the citizens. The same thing is true in ambassadors to Britain, to our own country. He speaks his voice as the voice of Britain, and as the voice of America.

There are times when the Christian has to speak for Christ. In the decisions and the counselors of this world. And this was an honor for the ambassadors of Christ today. As Christians, and church members of the master. The message is be ye reconciled to God. And this is the Christian's proud privilege. Did you not know that by your words and by your actions men think more or less of the church that you seek to serve. It would be a tragedy for you to frustrate the grace of God.

The church is a harbor - it is not only a fellowship into which people come but it is a fellowship from which the household of God goes out. To minister and be ambassadors in words and works of God's love unto the end of the world. In the Caskill Mountains back of Kingston, N. Y., is a road which winds along the hillside. There is a lovely lake where many stop to drink in the beauty of the scene and to get a fresh breath of the forest and the sky. And there is

a sign - Ashokan reservoir, New York City, water supply. Then your mind makes your journey 90 miles to the South and you realize that the real business of this lake is not to provide anyone's private enjoyment or beauty - but it is to quench the thirst and cleanse the stain of a whole city of men. Here is a reservoir that flows down from the Magestic Mountains, through long pipes and aquaduct and out into millions of homes and lives with refreshment - cleansing, and new life.

So it is in God's love - it goes out to the places of iniquity. To the places of despair. Wherever humanity is huddled, around this world. Where they had devised evil - God's love goes out. And the invitation is, be reconciled to God. He can bring cleansing, refreshment, and new life into your heart.

Joseph - Reunion Egypt -  
with tears of joy he wept over Benjamin -  
"Fell on his neck of Bro. Benj. To weep -  
with kisses of love - his Bros -  
" words of cheer he talked with -

elshmar & elsaac - invited to perform last rite of father Jan 25/11