



“Reconciliation” ~ August 25, 2019

OPEN

What do you think of when you hear the word reconciliation? You might think about reconciling a bank statement or conflicting ideas. But our focus is the restoration of peaceful relations between two estranged parties. Read **II Corinthians 5:11-21** to see what God has done to reconcile us to Himself.

DIG

Followers of Jesus are recipients of reconciliation - vv. 11-17

The first fact that we encounter is that the follower of Jesus is a recipient of reconciliation. Being reconciled to God is something that is provided for us. Paul’s explanation in **verses 11-13** is that it was his role to sound the warning to the Corinthian believers that they were in need of God’s rescue from their sins. We must accept the truth that apart from Christ, we are enemies of God. And we cannot produce reconciliation in our selves.

However, **verses 14-16** point us to the powerful and transforming love of God expressed in Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:19-20, “*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Christ], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*” Reconciliation through Jesus was long awaited in the Old Testament. That it would require the blood sacrifice of Jesus was portrayed over and over again through the ceremonies and sacrifices.

Romans 5:10, “*For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*” In his book ***The Saving Life Of Christ*** by Major Ian Thomas emphasizes the truth that when we are reconciled to God we are not left in a static state. Once restored to a new relationship with God by the death of Jesus, we are in an ongoing way being saved into a completely new life – exactly as we read in **verse 17**. Thomas writes,

You will have become totally dependent upon the life of Christ within you, and never before will you have been so independent, so emancipated from the pressure of your circumstances, so released at last from that self-distrust which has made you at one moment an arrogant, loud-mouthed braggart, and the next moment the victim of your own self-pity.... You will be free from the tyranny of a defeated enemy within. You will become more than conqueror, for even death itself is conquered by His life.... You will be restored to your true humanity – to be the human vehicle of the divine life. Your faith will open the windows of heaven, for God will move in to do the impossible.

Followers of Jesus are ambassadors for reconciliation - vv. 18-21

The second fact about reconciliation flows from the first. As we read in **verses 18-19**, not only are we reconciled, but we have been commissioned to serve God in declaring His reconciliation to the world. What does this look like? It is the role of being an ambassador. In **verses 20-21** we read that anyone who has received reconciliation is a vehicle through whom God is spreading the message of reconciliation. An ambassador does not produce his/her own authority – yet they are an authorized representative.

Circling back to **verse 14** we see the phrase “the love of Christ controls us”. This term “controls” means “to compress forcibly the energies into one channel. This gives us an image of hydro-power – whether it is generating electricity or a power washer. Paul’s life and ministry shows us what this means: believers are *authorized for authenticity*. II Corinthians was a letter in which Paul had to stress his spiritual authority (as an Apostle) and yet it is full of his authentic, down-to-earth struggles. Consider the following passages: **1:8-10; 2:14-17; 3:5; and 4:5-7**. What is the lesson for us? If you want to be a compelling ambassador of reconciliation, be real, honest, and vulnerable. As you let God transform your life, He will use your life to testify! A friend who is involved in peace camps in the Middle East writes that these camps,

...create a relational space of authentic dialogue and relationships that never existed before, not just based on similarities, but on diversity. [Peace camps] create a space where stones can be removed in participant’s lives so that the soil of our hearts are more fertile to receive the seeds of the Gospel. We liberally express Christ’s love to others, embracing others in real relationships, creating community, while at the same time, remaining true to our faith centred in Christ, yearning and praying for others to take steps toward freedom and wholeness in Christ. So when a Muslim friend forgives the pilot who dropped the bomb that killed their father who was a doctor helping others putting his life at risk, she is one step closer to Jesus...How the church takes steps toward loving their neighbor and “the other” is not simply tolerating each other, it is a central part of Jesus’ kingdom message, and the very heart of God.

REFLECT

[Never the Same](#) is a short movie in which you’ll travel to the swamps of Papua, Indonesia to meet the Sawi, and see what the message of reconciliation has accomplished in their society. Fifty years earlier the Gospel first came to these warring, cannibalistic tribes.

But how about your life? Are you a recipient of reconciliation? Would your life be described as a “new creation”? Are you an ambassador of reconciliation? Is the “new coming” in your life?

C. S. Lewis wrote in his book ***Mere Christianity***, “If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.” There are many messages of pseudo-reconciliation in our world today. These revolve around self effort. But only God can reconcile us to Himself.