

The Realities of Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5: 17-21

The passage we have read today is rich in doctrine and blessing for the believer. Through the atoning death of Christ on the cross, providing our redemption, God has reconciled believers to Himself. We have been freed from the bondage of our sin, and made acceptable in the sight of God through Christ. Such a transformation is nothing short of miraculous – so miraculous in fact, we have been made new in Christ. The old man of sin is now dead, and we were raised in newness of life, being totally transformed a new creation in Him.

Paul had experienced this glorious transformation and felt compelled to serve as an ambassador for the Lord, taking the good news of the gospel to all who would hear. Such reconciliation was too marvelous to keep to himself. Paul wanted all to know of the grace of God and the provision now available through the atoning death of Christ.

Within the text, we discover two basic aspects of our reconciliation – the incomprehensible blessings associated with reconciliation and the responsibilities that accompany reconciliation. As we discuss the [facets](#) of this divine transaction I want to consider: [The Realities of Reconciliation](#).

I. The Miracle of Reconciliation (17) – [Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.](#) Take a moment to consider the enormity of such a statement. Honestly, it is more than we can comprehend. Paul declared those in Christ are now a new creation. The Lord did not merely adjust a few areas within our lives that needed attention – we were made new in Christ. The former things are passed away and all things have now become new. The very essence of our being has been transformed in Christ.

➤ Those born in sin, being dead to God, are now made alive in Christ. Those separated from God, having no relationship with Him, now enjoy fellowship with the Lord. Those once dominated by sin, living only to please the flesh, now seek a life of righteousness in Christ. Those once condemned in sin, facing the penalty of eternal death, are given eternal life. Those once facing eternal judgment in a Christ-less hell are now promised eternity in heaven. What a miracle one experiences being reconciled to God.

II. The Mediator of Reconciliation (18a, 19a) – Paul, along with other writers in Scripture, reveals the plight of mankind. We are all born in sin, separated from God, hopeless to do anything about our situation. Humanity stood in need of one able to deliver us from sin and reconcile us to a holy and righteous God. God Himself, through the incarnation and sacrifice of the only begotten Son, stood as the mediator and personal provider of redemption and reconciliation. Consider:

A. The Source (18a) – *And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus*

Christ... Paul declared all things are of God. He is the Creator and sustainer of the universe and all who inhabit the earth. He created mankind in His own image, choosing to do so in order that we might worship Him and enjoy fellowship with Him. God also knew, prior to creating Adam and the human race, that mankind would fall in sin and need redemption. He knew this would require a perfect sacrifice to atone for our sin, one He alone would be able to provide. We are reconciled to God through the sacrifice of His Son, the second-person of the Godhead. In the midst of man's hopeless dilemma, God provided the sacrifice necessary to atone for our sin and reconcile us to Himself. God provided for our salvation and reconciliation through the sacrifice of Christ the Son.

B. The Sovereignty (19a) – *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.*

One must bear in mind the holy and righteous nature of God. He cannot fellowship with sin. Those who enter His presence, having the privilege of fellowship with Him, must be righteous, absolutely free of sin. There was a major problem for mankind however – due to the fall of Adam, we all were born in sin, lacking the righteousness God demands. We had no way of obtaining the righteousness necessary to commune with God.

- In this verse we discover a beautiful aspect of our reconciliation. God alone is holy and righteous. His righteous nature is offended by the sin within humanity. Therefore, we discover that God is the righteous one, the one offended by sin; but in His grace and mercy, God chose to provide the solution for our dilemma. He chose to send His only begotten Son to this world, born of a virgin, free of sin, to die on the cross as the ransom for sin. In providing the perfect, acceptable sacrifice for sin, God chooses to impute, or transfer, the righteousness of His Son, to all who come to Him in salvation. God could have condemned us to a Christ-less eternity; we were guilty and deserving of eternal death. Instead, He chose to redeem and reconcile us to Himself through the offering of His Son. He places the righteousness of Christ on us, receiving the saved by grace just as He does His Son. I stand righteous before God in Christ.

III. The Ministry of Reconciliation (18-20) – Having discussed the wondrous grace of reconciliation, Paul then reflected on the responsibilities associated with it. Consider:

A. The Calling (18b) – *And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.* Paul declared those who have been reconciled to God are now responsible for the ministry of reconciliation. This does not imply that we are able to reconcile anyone to God. We have been reconciled to Him, but He alone has the ability and authority to reconcile. So, what exactly is Paul referring to in this statement? Many think he is referring primarily to himself and the other apostles, but by implication a responsibility for every

born-again believer. Those who are in Christ are to live surrendered unto the Lord, seeking to know Him and make Him known. We are to live in such a way that others will notice the transformation in our lives as we bear witness of our reconciliation to God. All who have been reconciled to God are to bear witness to their reconciliation among those who also stand in need of reconciliation. We are to testify to the goodness and grace of God in our lives.

B. The Commission (19b) – *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.* Living upright before God and others is certainly expected of those who have been reconciled, but that alone is not the only requirement. We have also been committed with the word of reconciliation. We are entrusted with the good news of the gospel. As we live our lives among those in need of reconciliation, we must also be willing to share the gospel with them – revealing how they too can be reconciled to God. Having a good testimony among others is essential, but unless we are willing to verbalize the gospel, the lost will never understand their need for reconciliation to God, much less understand how such a gracious transformation is possible in their lives. *Eph.2:8-9 – For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast.* Romans 10:14 – *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? [17] So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

C. The Compulsion (20) – *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* Paul revealed his life was no longer his own to live as he pleased. He served as an ambassador for Christ, along with all who had been reconciled to God. This is an interesting aspect of our relationship to Christ. The saved serve as ambassadors for Him. We represent the interest of the sovereign we serve. We proclaim the message of the King. We do not seek glory or recognition for ourselves, but seek to point others to the Sovereign. As an ambassador for Christ, we are to proclaim the gospel of His atoning work to redeem and reconcile humanity, urging the lost to respond to His grace and be reconciled to God.

IV. The Measure of Reconciliation (21) – As Paul concludes this thought, he brings us back to where we started. This profound statement affirms and settles everything we have discussed thus far. Let's take a moment to examine one of the most compelling statements in Scripture. Notice:

A. The Substitution (21a) – *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* I will admit, the doctrines of redemption and reconciliation are much deeper theologically than I can comprehend. I stand in awe and wonder of the love and

grace of God bestowed on undeserving sinners. How is all of this possible? How can one dead in sin be raised in newness of life, being made acceptable to God? How can one separated and condemned in sin now enjoy fellowship with God? Paul reveals the answer in this verse.

- God placed the sin of the world, yours and mine included, upon His only begotten Son. As Christ hung between heaven and earth, He bore our sin. God in His holiness had to judge sin. He judged our sin in the body of His precious, sinless Son. He who knew no sin, became sin, so that we could stand before a holy God free of sin. We were the guilty; we deserved death on the cross. We deserved to endure the righteous judgment and wrath of God being poured out upon sin. After all, it was our sin that was judged in Christ. However, Christ took our place on the cross. He stood in our stead, bearing the wrath of God for sin and tasting death so we could be redeemed and reconciled. Christ became our substitute, dying in our place! We now enjoy eternal life in Him because He willingly laid down His life to atone our sin. What a Savior we have the privilege to serve. [Hebrews 2:9 – But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.](#)

B. The Transformation (21b) – [that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.](#) The scoffers and doubters at the cross viewed Christ as one who hung in open shame, defeated. They viewed His death as the end of one considered a blasphemer. Little did they know that in death Christ secured eternal victory. It was there that sin was defeated. It was there that He provided the righteous sacrifice worthy to atone for sin. It was there that He secured righteousness for all who come to Him in salvation. God judged our sin in the body of His Son that we might be made righteous in Him. Those who were once dead in sin, separated and condemned before God, are now righteous through Christ. We are justified in Him. We have been transformed from deadness to life, from sin to righteousness, from enemies to children, adopted into the family with all the privileges associated with being part of the family. What a marvelous transformation in Christ! [Romans 3:23-26 – For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ^{\[24\]} Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ^{\[25\]} Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ^{\[26\]} To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.](#)

Conclusion: Have you been reconciled to God through Christ? If not, come to Him in repentance and faith. God provided the means of your salvation and reconciliation through the sacrifice of His Son. Christian, are you committed to the ministry of reconciliation? Are you living in such a way that others can see the transformation in your life? Are you willing to share the gospel with those who stand in need of reconciliation? Come to Christ today for the needs in your life.