

Five Truths Of Reconciliation

Introduction. There is something about a reconciliation between two people that really touches the heart. In Genesis 33:4, Jacob and Esau were reconciled after decades of separation. In 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Paul discusses a more important reconciliation; a spiritual one. There are five truths of reconciliation in this passage which need to be examined.

I. ***Reconciliation Transforms Men (vs. 17)***

- A. This is not merely a reformed person, but a new creation. The rabbis used the term "new creature" to describe those whose sins had been forgiven. It is equivalent to the expression "new man" in Ephesians 4:24. There is a change produced in the renewed heart of man that is equivalent to the act of creation, just like someone was made over.
- B. "Old" is that which comes from an earlier time. The old nature is no longer in control and is no longer the description of the Christian. The structure of "passed away" points to finality. The former prejudices, opinions, habits, and attachments pass away. The love of self, of sin, and of this world passes away.
- C. A new Master rules one's life, and one's outlook is different. He has new views, new motives, new principles, new objects, and new plans of life. Spiritual matters become crucial, whereas once the sinner was dead to them.

II. ***Reconciliation Comes Through Christ (vs. 18)***

- A. "Reconcile" is to effect a thorough or complete change, to create a sense of agreement or harmony. When we are reconciled, we are united in feeling and in aim with God. It indicates that Christ's death removed God's enmity against man, which was the barrier caused by sin (Romans 3:20-26).
- B. This aspect of reconciliation makes salvation possible for man by paying sin's penalty and thus removing this obstacle, but it does not save everybody. Christ's death was sufficient for all, but not all are saved, for the benefits of Christ's death are applied only to those who believe (John 1:12) and obey (James 2:14).
- C. Jesus Christ was abundantly qualified for this task. He was the only Being that has lived in this world who was qualified for it (Job 9:33). He knew God the Father (Matthew 11:27) and He knew man (John 2:25). He loved God and He loved man.

III. *Reconciliation Is Available To All Who Believe (vs. 19)*

- A. God's act of reconciling the world was done in or by Christ. This verse is designed further to state the nature of the plan of reconciliation, and of the message with which they were entrusted.
- B. "Imputing" means "to place to one's account, to reckon." It was used in commercial papers of putting down to one's account. God could do this because He placed those sins on Christ instead (Isaiah 53:6).
- C. God did not give us stern justice for our offenses, but graciously provided a plan of pardon, and offered to remit our sins on the conditions of the gospel. So God through Christ was involving Himself in the work of reconciling sinners, not the task of condemning them (John 3:17).
- D. God sought the world's reconciliation. Man did not seek it. He had no plan for it. He did not desire it. He had no way to bring it about. It shows the strength of God's love in that He was the offended party and yet sought reconciliation (John 3:16).

IV. *Reconciliation Causes Men To Tell The Story (vs. 20)*

- A. An ambassador is an official representative, but he is more than an errand boy. He represents the king or government. An ambassador is a servant of the highest rank. So Paul regarded his responsibility as a most solemn and honorable one. When he proclaimed the gospel, it was as though God Himself were speaking.
- B. "Beseech" means to "urge, ask, or entreat." The form of the word indicates a continual or habitual action (2 Corinthians 5:11; Colossians 1:20-22). The announcement of this tremendous act of grace on God's part had been committed to Paul, the other apostles, and to every Christian as well (Mark 16:15; Acts 8:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 2:4). It is done in the place of Christ. It is doing what He did when on earth, and what He would do if He were here again (John 20:21).
- C. "Be ye reconciled to God" implies that man has a part in this process. He is to give up his opposition. He is to lay aside his sins. He is to submit to the terms of mercy.

V. *Reconciliation Appeases God's Wrath (vs. 21)*

- A. This last verse is the complete essence of the gospel. God placed our sins on the sinless Jesus and as our substitute, God punished Him with death. This harkens back to the scapegoat on the day of atonement (Leviticus 16:29-34) and the suffering servant of Isaiah 53:11.
- B. God did not make Him a sinner (God does not make anyone a sinner), for then it would not be true that Christ "knew no sin." "Knew" expresses knowledge gained by experience. What is meant by the

general term "sin" is the guilt, penalty, and shame involved. Christ was a sin offering and God treated Him as if He were a sinner.

- C. But Jesus was not guilty. He was perfectly holy and pure (Hebrews 7:26). If He had not been, He would not have been qualified to make atonement. "Knew no sin" is a statement of great beauty and dignity. He was unacquainted with sin and was a stranger to transgression.
- D. We are made righteous in the sight of God; that is, we are accepted as righteous, and treated as if we were righteous, though we are defiled. What a wonderful contrast. We were made righteous and He was made sin.

Conclusion. It is no wonder Paul was animated to serve God without despairing. He was gripped by the truth of what God had done for him in Christ, and he felt honored beyond words to be His ambassador. Can we see the benefits of reconciliation and obey the gospel? Can we see the benefits of reconciliation and go tell others?