

Reconciliation with God

Paul talks at various times and in various places about justification, and he does so again here. In Romans 5 Paul returns again to the theme of justification and peace with God. Only this time he talks about it in terms of reconciliation. For Paul this is another angle through which we can understand our new relationship with God. Reconciliation gives a picture of the overcoming of hostility, the ending of strife, between nations, between relatives, between political parties, between friends. In this case reconciliation restores harmony and peace to the relationship between man and God.

I am told that the Greek word for reconciliation used here is *katallage* which comes from two words, *kata* meaning down or down from and *allasso* meaning to change. Thus, it means to come down from a high or lofty position to change from hostility to friendship. In 2 Corinthians 5 Paul wrote that God reconciled the world to Himself in Christ. Yet, every person must respond in faith in order for that forgiveness to become effective. God has provided forgiveness for all people through the once-for-all death of His Son, Jesus. But only when we accept that forgiveness by faith is the contract completed and reconciliation takes place. God's part is finished; our part is a matter of individual decision! So tonight we are going to start by looking at four reasons why we need Reconciliation which are found in verses 6-8

The first reason is that we are powerless to help ourselves, in verse 6 Paul writes, "When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners." The Living Bible says, "when we were utterly helpless with no way of escape." The point is our total inability to save our self or reconcile our self to God. We are powerless to help our self or save our self.

The second reason we need reconciliation is that we are evil, let's remind ourselves of what we just read in verse 6, "Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners." (Romans 5:6 NLT) The King James versions and the NIV have "the ungodly"

The term ungodly has a religious connotation to it. It describes a person who has no use for God. It means a person who tries to exclude God from their thinking and feeling, from their mind and heart. A good description of the term is someone who is cold towards God, someone who has no respect for anything sacred. Every person without Christ has an evil nature that needs reconciling; we are all ungodly at heart.

A third reason is that we are all sinners, again in verse 8 Paul writes, "But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." (Romans 5:8 NLT)

Some get confuse by this word sinner, people might say, well a sinner is an evil person, so that doesn't apply to me. Others might say well a sinner is someone who won't help others and I'm always helping people. The term sinner in fact simply means someone who has missed the mark. Like the bull's eye on the dart board, we missed it. We've missed God's goal in life, to be in a relationship with God. We've missed God's intention. And I would suggest that we have all done this and continue to do it.

A fourth reason is that we are enemies of God. Again let's turn to our reading, "For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son." (Romans 5:10 NLT)

Again it's in our nature to be at odds with God. We are born hostile to God in our mind and heart. And, if we're honest with ourselves, we will realise that we live out our lives in a state of hostility to God and His redemptive activity towards us.

These are the four terms which describe our former state, or it could describe your present condition

if you've never responded to the love of God. That's why Jesus died, God planned to redeem the world from before the beginning of time. And Paul writes in verse 6, "Christ came at just the right time" (Romans 5:6 NLT). In Galatians 4:4 Paul also wrote "But when the right time came," (Galatians 4:4 NLT) When God's plan was ready to bring about the reconciliation of man "Christ died for you!" Not only was it the right time in the context of history, but it is the right time in the sense that we are powerless to break the chains of sin.

Without Christ we're bound by sin and destined for an eternity apart from God, an eternity in hell, and no amount of struggle will free us. The remarkable thing about the death of Christ is that it took place while we were still a sinner, helpless and powerless. It shows that God doesn't wait until we've performed well enough to merit His love. It shows that He's the loving Father who, having forgiven His prodigal son, watched daily for him to return home. And if you haven't returned home yet, He's waiting for you today. The proof of God's Amazing Love for us is the gift of His only Son, Jesus. So those are the reasons we have all, at some time or other in our lives, needed reconciliation, and maybe someone listening still does.

And Paul in this passage, having reminded his audience of why they needed reconciliation, goes on to remind them of the benefits of that reconciliation in verses 9-11

First Paul writes "And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ" (Romans 5:9a NLT) We are declared righteous by the blood of Jesus Christ. The King James Version and the NIV use the word "justified". This is the language of the law courts. In the presence of divine counsel, justified means declared not guilty or positively righteous. We've been declared right with God, righteous by virtue of the shedding of Christ blood. Paul considers this so important, so crucial, that he mentions it three times within the space of ten verses. It is mentioned in chapter 4:25, in chapter 5:1 and in chapter 5:9. Not only are we declared righteous, but we're made righteous, made acceptable to God. This means that we are just as if we've never sinned or ever will again.

Second Paul writes, "You're Saved from God's Wrath" (Romans 5:9b NLT) because what we have already looked at is true, we've been saved from God's wrath in the present. And in order to understand this we need to realise that the wrath of God is not an irrational burst of anger. It's not a type of knee jerk reaction from God, in response to our sin. Rather, it's the outworking of the consequences of sin upon people by a holy, righteous God. It's His personal reaction to sin. It's divine displeasure or retribution in a morally ordered world that God created.

And in verse 9 Paul, as it were, gives a progression. Because we have been made right with God, His wrath is averted, laid aside, dispersed, and it isn't a 'today' thing, it's an 'always' thing. The Bible commentaries tell us that the verb here is in the future tense, it indicates that the wrath in question is eschatological. In other words if God has made a way to declare us acquitted then there's no way that any future judgment can threaten that verdict. The Christian has assurance concerning the final judgment, there is no fear! We're saved from God's wrath!

And because of this we live through Christ, in verse 10 we read, "For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son." (Romans 5:10 NLT) I take verse this to refer to the life of Christ in the believer. In Philippians 1:21, "For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better." (Philippians 1:21 NLT) Again in Colossians 1:27 he wrote, "For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory." (Colossians 1:27 NLT) The only hope of us becoming what God intended us to become is to have Christ in us. Finally, in Galatians 2:20 he writes, "My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20 NLT) We live through Christ's Life in us, He is our source of life!

Finally Paul says we're reconciled, he writes in verse 10-11, "For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God." (Romans 5:10-11 NLT)

Reconciliation reflects the world of personal relationships. It's the restoration of a friendly relationship after a period of separation or being alienated. In Colossians 1:21 Paul wrote, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour . . .". The hostility that existed was both ours toward God and His toward us in our sinful state. But as the last part of verse 11 states, "our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God" (Romans 5:11 NLT), or as the NIV puts it "we have now received reconciliation." (Romans 5:11 NIV) It is a present reality for believers and something to rejoice about!

These are reasons we need reconciliation and these are results of receiving reconciliation. And it's only through faith in Jesus Christ that reconciliation with God is possible. And at the heart of God's plan for our salvation stands one solitary figure, Jesus Christ, His Son, our Saviour. Through His death He has made it possible for those who believe to receive forgiveness for their sins and enter into an eternal relationship of joy with God the Father. If you have already entered into that relationship today, then I encourage you to rejoice in it, if you haven't then I invite you to enter into that relationship by faith and receive reconciliation today?