Reconciled to God

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"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 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. 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. 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"

II Corinthians 5:18-21

Introduction:

A. Last Sunday we observed the Lord's Supper, and Jesus Christ's death for us included reconciling us to God!

B. Last Sunday we studied the six glorious things in Daniel 9:24, which included reconciliation for iniquity!

C. Today we studied Romans 11:11-15, where we read of Jewish unbelief bringing reconciliation for Gentiles!

D. God chose to describe salvation of His children by a variety of terms for us to get the fullest sense possible.

E. Reconciliation is one of those theological (or soteriological) terms that used to be understood and appreciated.

F. If we are to contend for the faith once delivered against those who will not endure sound doctrine, enjoy this!

G. For more about the various facets of salvation.

What Is Reconciliation

A. The relational work of bringing two antagonistic and warring parties to a peaceful and final settlement of differences, so that they are agreeable and affectionately united with each other again.

1. Reconcile. To bring (a person) again into friendly relations to or with (oneself or another) after an estrangement. 2. To win over (a person) again to friendship with oneself or another. 3. To set (estranged persons or parties) at one again; to bring back into concord, to reunite (persons or things) in harmony. 4. To bring (a person) back to, into peace, favour, etc. [OED].
2. The Law of Moses forbad the eating of any sacrifice whose blood had been taken into the holy place to reconcile … to make atonement for sin, as on the Day of Atonement (Lev 6:30; 16:20).
3. Philistines feared David would reconcile himself to Saul by cutting off their heads (I Sam 29:4)!
4. If you have offended a brother, go be reconciled to him before worshipping God (Matt 5:23-24).
5. A Christian wife divorcing her husband must remain single or be reconciled to him (I Co 7:11).
6. We do accounting or bank reconciliations to make sure that accounts or statements totally agree.

7. Similar terms or synonyms are acceptation (Ep 1:6), advocacy (I Jn 2:1-2), atonement (Ro 5:11), intercession (Rom 8:34), mediation (I Tim 2:5), peace (Hag 2:9), and propitiation (Rom 3:25).

B. It is a very serious activity as shown above, where an intermediary gets between two warring parties.
   1. The Bible warns about the danger and difficulty of getting into the strife of others (Prov 26:17).
   2. There is high probability that no matter what you do, you could be hated and hit by both parties!
   3. Have you ever viewed a real fight, where both parties totally hated the other and wanted to kill?
   4. Have you ever seen anyone try to break up such a fight, and how they were despised by both?
   5. Police fear calls of domestic violence, where bitterness and hatred are running wild in both directions, for no matter what they do, they run the risk of the wrath of both or one of the parties.

Need of Reconciliation

A. Consider the dire situation between God and men and the grave danger and difficulty of solving it.
   1. Much material could be presented for God's pure justice and man's condemnation and depravity.
   2. However, since you should already know the situation well, consider the One charged to do it!

B. An infinitely holy God will not at all acquit the wicked (Nah 1:3), clear the guilty (Ex 34:7), forgive offenders (Josh 24:19), or compromise justice with a solution less than entire and eternal damnation!
   1. He hates the foolish (Psalm 5:4-6; 11:4-6) and is angry with the wicked every day (Psalm 7:11).
   2. Even with friends, He would not let Moses (see Canaan) or Paul (thorn in the flesh) off the hook.

C. On the other side are human rebels that chose His archenemy and lies to rebel against their Creator and Paradise, and they willfully choose this arrangement with great zeal every day of their lives.
   1. Since Eden, man never thinks about God to seek peace (Ps 10:4), but rather avoids and blames.
   2. No matter what is offered or threatened, He will not learn righteousness (Is 26:10; Luke 16:31).
   3. No matter how clearly God is presented, they will worship and serve the creature (Rom 1:18-25).

D. There has never been any reconciliation like this in the universe or any imagined drama for effect.
   1. When Jesus Christ came to earth to reconcile men, they despised and violently killed Him!
   2. He came first to His nation and relatives; they rejected Him in spite of humility and miracles.
   3. Man's anger and envy was so great against God they killed John and apostles and God's Son!
   4. Though God prepared them a fabulous wedding feast, they killed Son and servants (Matt 22:1-7).
   5. When Jesus Christ turned to reconcile God, He forsook Him and pounded Him (Psalm 22:1-21)!
   6. He was despised, rejected, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, stricken, smitten of God, afflicted, wounded, bruised, chastised, given stripes, oppressed, put to grief, cut off (Is 53:1-12).
   7. Though Jesus begged for a lesser means of reconciliation, He was turned down in Gethsemane.
   8. It pleased God to so hurt Jesus Christ, because He saw you in Jesus Christ. Get a view of that!

E. Consider well what caused (1) God to be open to the idea and (2) Jesus Christ to do all the work!
   1. Only by God's wisdom could both parties kill the peacemaker and have it work for salvation!
   2. Jesus Christ fearlessly entered straight into the hell of this conflict to redeem your rebel soul!

Reconciled by Jesus Christ

A. God reconciled the elect to Himself by pouring out judgment and wrath on Jesus Christ in their place to fully satisfy His anger and enmity, for we were made acceptable to Him in the Beloved (Eph 1:6).

B. Once we were God's enemies, but the death of His Son reconciled us; with legal reconciliation in place, we shall be saved forever by his intercessory life for us (Romans 5:9-10; 8:34; Heb 7:25).

C. God reconciled the world of His elect to Himself by Jesus Christ, by imputing their trespasses to Jesus Christ instead of them, and in turn applying His Son's righteousness to them (II Cor 5:18-20).

D. Jesus Christ by a bloody death made peace with God and reconciled all the elect in earth and heaven to God, who before regeneration are aliens and enemies of God, but now blameless (Col 1:20-22).

E. The death of Christ reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to God by bringing in peace (Eph 2:14-18).

F. Jesus was incarnated with our nature so as to make perfect reconciliation for our sins (Heb 2:14-17).

G. The Desire of all Nations made peace while the second temple was yet standing (Haggai 2:6-9).

H. Those who are not reconciled remain under their sins and God's wrath, for God is angry with the wicked every day (Ps 7:11; Matt 7:21-23; John 3:36; Rom 1:18; 9:22; Eph 2:1-3; I Thess 1:10; 5:9).

Reconciled by the Gospel

A. God is fully reconciled by the death of Jesus Christ without further need for satisfaction, peace, atonement; as shown above and below, He is satisfied and now accepts the elect (Is 53:11; Ep 1:3-6).
   1. They have always been accepted in His sight by the terms of the everlasting covenant in Christ.
   2. There is nothing for them to do to activate or add to this finished work of salvation by Christ.
   3. It is only by ignorance of scripture that many put the final burden of reconciliation on sinners.

B. The gospel is good news and glad tidings of salvation – it conveys the information of reconciliation.
   1. Consider how the gospel brings life and immortality to light, not the actual benefits (II Ti 1:10).
   2. Gospel preachers have the ministry of finished reconciliation by telling men about it (II Co 5:18).
   3. Gospel preachers have the word of reconciliation in that they carry the news of it (II Cor 5:19).
   4. Gospel preachers are ambassadors, telling elect children to be at peace with God (II Cor 5:20).
   5. Jesus Christ finished the work and made the full peace, and He prays (begs) you to be at peace!
   6. The gospel is the glad tidings and good news that the war is over! Jesus won the final victory!
   7. This is why Paul so earnestly desired the gospel salvation of Jews, who were still in bondage to Moses' ceremonial system of religion for their peace with God (Rom 9:1-5; 10:1-4; 11:14).

C. A war may be fought and won, but until engaged soldiers are told, they keep on with war activities.
   1. There are stories of Japanese soldiers after WWII continuing to hold out and fight for decades!
   2. For a timeline of such Japanese soldiers discovered, see.
   3. For the individual story of Lt. Hiroo Onoda.

D. Until God directed the gospel to the Gentiles, they had no news of such reconciliation (Rom 11:15).
   1. Think of Cornelius praying and giving without soul relief knowing reconciliation (Acts 10:1-6).
   2. Think of the Ethiopian eunuch not knowing beauty and truth of Jesus in Isaiah 53 (Act 8:26-40).

E. Until the gospel is heard and believed, false religion keeps men as slaves to fight a war already over!
    1. Paul described it exactly this way – the fear of death keeps men in religious bondage (Heb 2:15).
    2. Roman Catholics pray to Mary for help at the hour of their death! Are you kidding? Mary died!
    3. Muslims make pilgrimages to Mecca to hopefully kiss the meteorite there, or they blow themselves up in a Haifa restaurant, both in hope that they can earn eternal life by these means.
    4. Mormons seduce their members to get baptized for dead relatives to save them by Joseph Smith.
    5. Arminians assume all are reconciled, though they know most go to hell, so God's reconciliation in Christ is nothing, but rather their accepting of Jesus, instead of God accepting them (Eph 1:6)!
    6. Only unconditional salvation by grace declares the news that the war is over won by Jesus alone!
    7. Preaching the gospel is like dropping leaflets on holdout soldiers to return home in peace, for preaching is by God's 66-book Bible that says throughout that His plan and Son won victory!

F. If God sends a man, one among a thousand, to say, "I have found a ransom," rejoice (Job 33:23-26)!
    1. Without preachers preaching, the good news cannot be known, believed, claimed (Ro 10:14-17).
    2. Are you thankful as you should be for preachers? Are you concerned as you could be for others?

Text of Reconciliation

5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

A. What is the connection of the all things of 5:18 and the all things of 5:17? All things are of God.
    1. This verse is a transitional verse, taking us from the practical "all things" of 5:17 to the legal work of God to reconcile and justify us by Jesus Christ of 5:18-21.
    2. Paul transitioned to the work of God for us (5:18-21), by giving the credit for all things to God.
    3. The foundation for all things – eternal life (5:5), Christ's death (5:14-15), and a changed life (5:17) are all of God, founded in His eternal predestination and vital regeneration, both by grace.
    4. No matter what we work out, it was worked in us first by our glorious God (Philippians 2:12-13).
    5. No matter what part of salvation we consider, it is of God, for without grace we can do nothing.
    6. He had earlier left his line of reasoning to give all the credit for eternal life to God (II Cor 5:5).

B. Reconciliation is putting two warring parties at peace with each other, which is a relational term.
    1. We often use it relative to warring marital spouses, just as does the Bible (I Corinthians 7:10-11).
    2. Is it different from justification, redemption, or propitiation? No, just another facet of salvation.
    3. When did reconciliation occur? On the cross of Calvary (Dan 9:24; Rom 5:10; Col 1:20-23).

C. What is the role of the minister? He is the bearer of the good news of reconciliation (II Tim 1:9-10).

5:19 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.

A. Here is further explanation of what was just stated, for "to wit" are God's words for an explanation.

B. There are four beautiful aspects to our salvation described here by the Spirit's inspired explanation.

1. The blessed God, Who wrought us for immortal glory (5:5), sent Jesus Christ, Whom He chose out of the people to be our Saviour and Mediator (Ps 89:19; John 6:38-39; 17:2; I Tim 2:5).
2. God reconciled the world of His elect, out of Jews and Gentiles, unto Himself, by putting away their sins and making them entirely acceptable to Him (Rom 9:21-24; Eph 1:3-6; Col 1:20-23).
3. Instead of charging them with sin, He charged their sins to Jesus Christ, which put them in the glorious condition of being forgiven their sins (Ps 32:1-2; Isaiah 53:5-11; I Pet 2:24).
4. The message of this accomplished fact is brought to the elect by preaching, which is done by men chosen, gifted, and appointed by God (Eph 4:8-14; II Tim 1:9-10; II Tim 2:2).

C. Gospel preachers do not bring reconciliation or offer reconciliation; they bring the news of the facts!
1. Gospel preachers do not bring life or immortality; they only bring them to light (II Tim 1:9-10).
2. There is not one soul more or less in heaven by the labors or lack thereof of any or all preachers.
3. The blessed God of heaven is not begging sinners at all to please let Him be reconciled to them!
4. The gospel is a savor of life unto life and death unto death, but not death to life (II Cor 2:14-17)!

5:20 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.

A. If reconciliation was accomplished and finished at the cross, how did they yet need to be reconciled?
1. They needed to know about this acceptance and forgiveness, as did Cornelius (Acts 10:34-35).
2. They needed to have this glorious news of immortality brought to light (II Timothy 1:9-10).
3. They needed to lay hold on eternal life by believing and obeying (I Tim 6:17-19; II Pet 1:5-11).
4. Consider Paul addressing born again Jews, who were ignorant of reconciliation (Rom 10:1-5).
5. Consider Paul telling Gentiles that they heard of reconciliation due to blind Jews (Rom 11:15).
6. God was already legally reconciled by Christ's death, but the elect need the practical news of it.
7. God was already legally reconciled by His death, but the elect needed to know and believe it.
8. The only ones who will hear and receive the news are those vitally saved (I Cor 1:18,24; 2:14)!

B. God satisfied by Christ by which He is fully reconciled toward His elect must be believed by them.
1. Until they hear and believe it, they cannot have full peace and deliverance (Rom 10:1-4,14-17).
2. What good is an acquittal or pardon, unless a man is told of it? He still believes he is condemned.
3. What good is a surrender or truce, if soldiers are not told about it? They think the war is still on.
4. The cry must go out loud and clear, the war is over! Only then can souls find their perfect peace.
5. Jesus did the work and finished the war completely; He prays (begs) for you to be reconciled.
6. Every doubt or fear you allow about this matter reflects very poorly on God and on Him. Stop!
7. Believing the gospel is like getting a leaflet as a holdout soldier to return home in peace, for preaching is by God's 66-book Bible that says throughout that His plan and Son won victory!

C. How can God's reconciled elect be themselves reconciled to God? By believing the finished work.
1. Trust God's written revelation to you that He is fully satisfied forever for all sins by Jesus Christ.
2. Crush doubts and fears about salvation by trusting this revelation that is communicated clearly.

3. Stop all your fears and efforts to please God by your own means to gain eternal life from Him.
4. Glory in the wisdom and grace of God to design it and the Son of God to start and finish it!

D. When God's ministers are preaching the word of God, they should be received as God's servants bringing God's very words (I Sam 8:7; Mal 2:7; John 13:20; Acts 16:17; Gal 4:13-16; I Thess 2:13).
   1. An act against any ambassador or embassy is considered an act against the nation and people.
   2. The ministers of God have a great office and work, and they have beautiful feet in their work.
   3. They should be highly esteemed in love for their work's sake and paid (I Thes 5:13; I Tim 5:17).

5:21 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.

A. Here is one of the plainest statements of justification, reconciliation, and salvation in the Bible.

B. This is a legal verse, which does not address the eternal, vital, practical, or final phases of salvation.
   1. There is no possibility or potential in this transaction, for God purposed it and did it (Eph 1:11).
   2. Legally speaking, reconciliation was completed by Jesus Christ at Calvary (Romans 4:25; 5:10).
   3. Legal transactions are in God's mind, but as binding as any other transaction (Romans 5:12-19).
   4. God viewed the elect from eternity as reconciled, but He actually provided the price at the cross.

C. Consider the two incredible sides of the most fantastic legal settlement made in the world's history.
   1. First, God put our sins on sinless Jesus Christ, Who then died as a Substitute for them (Is 53:4-12; Dan 9:24; Rom 5:6-10,15-21; I Cor 15:3; Heb 9:15; 10:10-14; I Pet 2:24; 3:18; Rev 1:5; 5:9)!
   2. Second, God put the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ on us, by choosing us acceptable in Him (Acts 10:34-35; Rom 3:21-26; 5:15-21; 8:3-4; I Cor 1:30; Eph 1:3-6; Phil 3:9)!

Conclusion:

A. Today we studied Romans 11:11-15, where we read of Jewish unbelief bringing reconciliation for Gentiles!

B. God chose to describe salvation of His children by a variety of terms for us to get the fullest sense possible.

C. Reconciliation is one of those theological (or soteriological) terms that used to be understood and appreciated.

D. If we are to contend for the faith once delivered against those who will not endure sound doctrine, enjoy this!

E. Be at peace with God! He is at peace with you! He has shed this peace abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:1-5).

F. If you have doubts about your assurance of salvation, then you need to study and remember this great subject.

G. Since you have benefited so much by God sending the news to you, are you burdened to send it to others?

For Further Study:

1. For a similar sermon that fits well with this one.
2. For more about the various facets of salvation.
3. For more about the various phases of salvation.
4. For more about the true purpose of gospel preaching.
5. For a timeline of Japanese soldiers holding out after WWII ended.
6. For the individual story of Lt. Hiroo Onoda.