

The Ministry Of Reconciliation

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2 Cor. 5:18-21

An important concept that is fundamental to the gospel of Christ is that of “reconciliation”.

2 Cor. 5:18-21, “*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.*”

In this scripture, Paul expounds upon this subject. He discusses how there is some sort of reconciliation between God and man. He describes the role he played in what he calls the “*ministry of reconciliation*”.

There are a couple of questions I would like to address in this lesson...

- Exactly what is the nature of the reconciliation between God and man?
- What roles might we play in the gospel of Christ as the “*ministry of reconciliation*”?

It is important that we first properly understand the meaning of “*reconciliation*” and its concept as it relates to God and man.

The process of reconciliation

Defining reconciliation.

Vine’s definition of “reconcile” (Grk., *katallasso*). “It properly denotes to change, exchange (esp. of money)”. “Hence, of persons, to change from enmity to friendship, to reconcile”.

Man has separated himself from God. There is enmity between God and man (because of man’s sin. Isa. 59:1-2, “*Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*”

Yet, the gospel proclaims how GOD has taken the initiative to reconcile man back to Himself. However, God is not reconciled to man, as though He were partly to blame for the enmity. Rather, man is reconciled to God, for it is man who moved away from God!

When people need to be reconciled to one another, it normally involves a situation where fault lies on both sides to some degree. Not so with the case between man and God; man has moved away from God, and it is man who needs to be reconciled back to God, not God back to man!

How reconciliation is made possible.

It is possible because of the initiatives that GOD took first! It is possible through Jesus Christ, in particular by His death for our sins! Note these verses that teach reconciliation comes through Jesus.

- 2 Cor. 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;”*
- Col. 1:19-20, *“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”*

Note these verses that teach reconciliation comes through Jesus’ death on the cross.

- 2 Cor. 5:19-21, *“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.”*
- Rom. 5:10, *“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”*
- Col. 1:20-22, *“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his*

flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.”

In other words, God took Christ, who knew no sin, to represent our sin and to receive the punishment due for sin in His death on the cross, so that we, who were enemies, alienated from God by our sins, might be reconciled back to God! And through Christ's death we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Cor. 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.”*

We might be holy, blameless and irreproachable in His sight, because our trespasses are not imputed to us:

- Col. 1:22, *“In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.”*
- 2 Cor. 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.”*
- Rom. 4:6-8, *“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”*

Indeed, reconciliation is possible because God has offered Jesus as a *“propitiation”* for our sins!

The word *“propitiation”* describes a sacrifice that is designed to appease for sins. It was used to describe those sacrifices that the Gentiles offered to their gods.

But in the New Testament, it is GOD who offers the *“propitiation”*, not man!

- 1 John 2:1-2, *“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”*
- 1 John 4:10, *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*

This illustrates the great love God has for us, and how far He has gone in trying to reconcile man back to Himself! It is when we understand the meaning and process of *“reconciliation”* (along with *“propitiation”*) that we begin to appreciate the wonderful extent of God's grace and love for mankind.

But God went beyond just sending His Son to die on the cross as a propitiation designed to reconcile man back to Himself; He has also developed...

The ministry of reconciliation

God sent “ambassadors”.

Note that Paul says God:

- 2 Cor. 5:18, “... hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;”
- 2 Cor. 5:19, “... hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”

There is a ministry (service) in which the word of reconciliation is to be made known to others!

The apostles in particular had this “*ministry*”. The word apostle means “one sent”. In a special way they were sent to serve as Christ’s “ambassadors” to the world! 2 Cor. 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.*”

Therefore, through the apostles...through their word... God is pleading with us... Christ is imploring us... “...*be ye reconciled to God!*” (2 Cor. 5:20).

Thus, God’s great love is manifest in the fact that He also sent ambassadors to tell the world what He has done to reconcile man back to Himself.

His “ambassadors” today.

The “*ministry of reconciliation*” continues today for people are still lost in their sins! God still loves those who are lost; but who are God’s “ambassadors” today? Who will take the “*word of reconciliation*” to others? Who along with God and Christ will plead and implore: “*Be ye reconciled to God!*”?

While there may not be “formal” ambassadors like the apostles were, Christ still has His ambassadors today:

The people of God, who proclaim His praises are His ambassadors today. 1 Pet. 2:9-10, “*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*”

These are faithful individuals, who properly taught can teach others. 2 Tim. 2:2, *“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”*

In fact, ALL Christians should be involved in *“the ministry of reconciliation”*!

Some may “go”, while others may “send”. Rom. 10:14-15, *“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? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”*

In whatever way we serve, we must remember that we play an important role in God’s ministry of reconciliation today!

Conclusion

How important is *“reconciliation”* and *“the ministry of reconciliation”*? If God is “pleading” and Christ is “imploring”, then it must be very important! Indeed, the eternal destiny of one’s soul depends upon whether he or she has been reconciled to God!

Does this not move us?

- First to be reconciled ourselves?
- And then to participate in the ministry of reconciliation for the sake of others?

A final thought: The fact that God “pleads” and Christ “implores” us to be reconciled tells us some things that are very important for us to realize... Reconciliation is not unconditional (we must respond!). Reconciliation is not universal (some will be lost!)

Indeed, the grace and mercy of God offered in the death of His Son must not be received in vain! As Paul goes on to say: 2 Cor. 6:1, *“We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.”*

Only through an obedient faith can we be sure to receive God’s grace, and have Jesus as the author of our eternal salvation! Heb. 5:9, *“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him,”*

Have YOU been reconciled to God? For that to happen one must become a Christian. The following are the steps necessary to make that possible:

- **Faith.** Heb. 11:6, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* When I was in high school (I was about 17 years old), a neighbor boy my same age told me he was an atheist. Since I had been baptized, I took the opportunity to talk to him about the scriptures. He told me that he could see that living the life of a Christian was good, but he wasn’t sure if he believed there was a God. But to be on the safe side, maybe he should go to church, and when he dies and stands before God (if there is a God) on the day of Judgment (if there is a Judgment), maybe if God sees that he has gone to church and lived a good life that God would send him to heaven (if there is a heaven), and not to hell (if there is a hell). I told him, “It doesn’t work that way. You have to believe in Him with all your heart or you cannot please Him.”
- **Repentance.** Acts 2:38, *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”* Acts 11:18, *“... Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”* If while you were sleeping, you heard a noise in the other room, and you think to yourself, “There’s a burglar in my house!” So you reach for your cell phone, and as quietly as you can, you call the police, tell them there is a burglar in your house, and you give them your address. Soon, you heard them arrive and capture the thief. He yells, “I’m sorry; I’m sorry!” What is he sorry for? He is sorry that he got caught; not that he stole. In true repentance the thief would be sorry that he ever stole and wants to change his life so that he would never steal again. That is true repentance. It is a change of mind that brings about a change of action. That is what we have to do before we can become a Christian.
- **Confession.** Rom. 10:9-10, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* What do we confess? That we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Note that in the above scriptures that faith (believing), repentance, and confession are “**UNTO**” righteousness, life,

or salvation. “Unto” means toward something; not that one has already attained.

- **Baptism.** It is baptism where righteousness, life, and salvation are attained. Jesus, himself, was baptized to fulfill all righteousness, “*But John forbid him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” (Matt. 3:14-17). Jesus was baptized because God said it was the right thing to do. Did you see how pleased God was about Jesus being baptized? Jesus also said “*it becometh **us** to fulfil all righteousness.*” We are baptized because it fulfills His righteousness, not because it is of our righteousness.

In fact, if we are not baptized, we are still in our sins. “*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*” (Acts 2:38). Peter, what did you say the reason of baptism is? “for the remission of sins”. Why would anyone want to leave out the step that removes our sins?

Jesus commanded that to reach salvation we must be baptized. “*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*” (Mark 16:15-16).

Ananias told Saul (before he was rename Paul) the very same thing, “*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*” (Acts 22:16). Baptism is a requirement given by God.

Baptism is called a burial. “*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*” (Rom. 6:4). Our old man is to be dead to us. “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been*

planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” (Rom. 6:3-6). Baptism is God’s blueprint for applying the blood of Christ in our lives by baptism. We are free from our old sins only when we are baptized.

This doesn’t mean “sprinkling. The scripture above says baptism is a burial. We don’t take a dead body to the cemetery and sprinkle a little dirt over it; we bury the body.

If you have not become a member of Christ's church, won't you consider it today?

