

Wk 23

9June2023

Call to Worship.

Psalm

Doctrine (Reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ).

2 Cor. 5:18-19

Sermon Text: Rom. 5:6-11|The Means of Reconciliation; The Person and Work of Jesus Christ

V.6-11 'For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.'

Introduction.

Means of Grace 9-part Series.

- 1. Reconciliation to God. Rom. 5**
- 2. Baptism. Rom. 6**
- 3. Lord's Supper. Rom. 7**
- 4. Praise. Rom. 8-12**
- 5. Prayer. Rom. 8**
- 6. Preaching. Rom. 10**
- 7. Fellowship. Rom. 12**
- 8. Church Discipline. Rom. 13,14,15**
- 9. Giving. Rom. 16 'help her'**

This sermon today is an invitation to reconciliation with God. People today are lost.

They do not know God. They do not want to know God. **'none seek Him no not one' Ps. 14**

People are lost.

People are lost for a variety of reasons.

Sometimes there are people who are lost and they know that they are lost. Sometimes there are people that are lost and they are not aware that they are lost.

Those people are self-deceived. The people that are lost, but are unaware, are self-deceived.

But the people that are lost and are aware are or have been led astray.

The elemental things of the world have grabbed their attention and they have been taken captive by the world system and Satan.

'The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life' these things, as they display themselves in our culture, in many acceptable ways, are leading people into a lost lifestyle.

Many people are not even aware that they are lost. But there are constant warning signs showing them that they are lost.

Fear and dread that crumbles their conscience, making people weak and ineffective. Showing that they do not know how to navigate to green pastures.

Lust and greed that causes people to clamor after fleeting desires that do them no longer good. Show that they do not know how to drink from pristine wells.

Anger that is perpetuated by a heart filled with self-pride.

Heap upon all of this those who are self-deceived claiming that with statements 'well I have a peace about it' - Our own conscience is not the greatest comforting factor, nor should it serve as the ultimate assurance.

What you find is that people are hostile toward God. They are enemies of God. And they don't even know it.

They are wearing the enemy's uniform. Holding the enemy's rifle. Riding in the enemy's tank. And some are not aware and others are.

Friends, there is **NO SOLUTION** to our world's problems outside of **Reconciliation to God!**

Our Creator, God, has provided us 1, single means of reconciliation. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the means by which God reconciled us back to Himself.

This sermon is going to serve as an entry way into a Summer long series on the Means of God's Grace for His church.

God has provided us Grace through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In that, God has given us Saving Grace.

Further, God has given us **ordinary means of Grace** by which we can live and participate in His grace by these means.

So my secondary purpose is to give an invitation in that, is that you would become a member of this church.

Today, I invite you to be reconciled to God. The logical follow-on invitation is that you would become a member of this church.

You see this logical sequence in each example of the NT saints and Paul follows this logical sequence in the book of Romans as well.

People today like the idea of salvation but they also prefer their anonymity. This was not always the case with the Christian church.

Knowledge of Christians and their life was so close in the NT, that disputes broke out in Galtia among Christians to the extent of determining who was and was not circumcised.

The specificity of care in Christian congregations was so close that grumbling arose about who did not have enough to eat among the Hellenistic widows. Eventually shaping the offices of the Christian church.

Lives were so intertwined that church members were suing one another and taking each other to secular courts in Corinth.

Suffice to say, knowledge of the lives of the early Christians and really the Christian church in general was intimate, specific, and meaningful, that people knew and were ok with you knowing very specific matters of their personal life.

This was the case for the Christian church up until about the past 75 years.

We have developed to a degree in America that the local church is nothing more than a cute concept.

In some towns it has become a relic of the past, instead of a living and breathing organism to be a member of.

It has become a thing that you used to be familiar with, instead of family to be an active member of.

The local church might lack the networking of the internet, yet it has a direct connection to Heaven.

The local church might lack Amazon-qsce distribution capabilities, yet it disseminates God's Word to that community on a regular basis.

We live in a society today that is largely unchurched and that is just the way many people like it.

The pastor is not regarded in the public square, if he is biblical, he is often reviled. If he is a cheeky entrepreneur, he will be embraced and celebrated.

The Elders are not referenced when it comes to the mayor's public policies, instead, key business owners and majority lawn holders maintain the highest stakes of decision-making.

It is no wonder that immorality rules the day. As it was said in the book of Judges, in like manner, we live in an age 'where everyone does what is right in their own sight.'

Church Membership has fallen on hard times.

If a man or a woman has come to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ, then that man or woman should be committed to their local church in order to advance, support and affirm that work of Jesus Christ in that local place.

Just as 'all politics are local' - all ministry is local as well.

Revival and Reform is not somewhere, out there, over the rainbow.

There will not be a yellow brick road to follow on the way to Sunday service.

Revival is right here in the work of the Holy Spirit in the Human heart.

Reform is right here in the Words of God in the Bible.

But we live in an age where people like everything in its proper place.

We like our beer in our bellies, our Bibles on our bookshelves, and our bikes getting some fresh trails.

We like our recreation on Sunday and we'll worry about our reconciliation some other day.

But the trouble with all of that is, we do not see any Biblical example of a person Reconciled to God that rejects regular fellowship with God's people.

Now, I understand, you might say, I am reconciled to God, but I don't like a lot of God's people.

Well, that's ok, we've got teaching for that too! Just stick around, we'll get it all put together.

In the NT we do not find any explicit command to be a member of a church. Instead, what we find is that it is an intuitive decision, that if you are reconciled to God through Christ, then you are already a Spiritual Member of His church and it would make no sense to not physically fulfill what has been accomplished spiritually.

We find that every identifiable Christian was identified by their membership in their local church.

The way by which God's will was disseminated to God's people was through the local church.

And even, Shortcomings at churches are not justifications to not attend a local church.

In the first century the church at Laodicea was a church corrupted by its lusts and its greeds, but there were still people in that church that endured and overcame all of its shortcomings.

If you lived in Laodicea you didn't have the option of taking an uber to Ephesus.

If you were a Christian in Sardus, you might have felt like a Sardine in a can, but you had to determine that you were going to be faithful.

Today, church membership has taken a sharp decline and the direct result in a decline in church membership is a decline in knowledge of God, reverence for God, and indicatively reconciliation to God.

As a matter of fact, Paul witnessed and anticipated this reality. He says that people who do this will be turned away from God and turned over to a **depraved mind**.

This has resulted in a number of practical problems.

Our stock market is at an all time high, yet so is anxiety and depression. It seems telling that wealth does nothing to provide faith, hope and love.

The Healthcare system contains pharmaceutical drugs that can numb a person's pain near immediately, yet people still have a place in their soul that synthetic anesthesia cannot reach.

People will go to extraordinarily links to purchase a facade to maintain and build impressions to uphold.

They can paint on a face. They can dress up or dress down; but all of that is merely personal religion, masquerading as self-righteousness.

When at the core of what we need is Reconciliation to God.

Q: Am I Reconciled to God through Jesus Christ?

Because if I am, there are some logical proceedings that happen. We know that they happen because they happen in sequence to each figure that comes to saving faith in Christ in the Bible.

As a result of Reconciliation to God, you now have the faith, hope, and love of Christ in your soul.

As a mechanism of Reconciliation to God, You are now born-again. This is a work of the Holy Spirit in you.

You might leave, say, 'I'm not sure what happened there today, but I'm better off for it.'

As a good friend of mine says, 'I can explain it to you, but I can't understand it to you.'

The natural outworking of reconciliation to God is reconciliation to His Church. That is what is recognized as church membership.

Port William Membership. Following weeks.

Church membership has a leavening effect on the community.

Half-way covenant. Solomon Stoddard, Jonathan Edwards. Following weeks.

Eph. 5 Holiness or Happiness?

What is the point of Church and Membership in Church? What is the point of Marriage and Family and a deliberate integration into your marriage and family.

We have so many examples today of non-marriage, long-term relationships. Cohabitation.

Marriage and Church Membership are parallel examples.
The church is the Bride of Christ.

Let me put the importance of this reconciliation to better use in Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

In Eph. 4, Paul writes about the Unity of the Body of Christ.

In chapters 1-3, Paul summed up our salvation in Christ. Its regenerating work, its refining effects, its eternal results, and in chapter 4, Paul tells us the expectations of all of those who have been reconciled to God through Christ.

Eph. 4. Read V. 1-3

Ask.

Q: How can we bear with one another in love, if we don't ever have to bear with one another?

Q: How can we demonstrate an eagerness to maintain the unity of the Spirit in a bond of peace, if we are not in a bond of reconciled membership?

Read. Eph. 4:4-7

Q: If we are called to be one, why are so many scattered?

Q: If there is 'one Lord' do we all come together to worship Him?

Q: If there is 'one faith' do we all agree on it?

Q: If there is 'one baptism' have we all been baptized into it?

In v. 10-16, Paul goes into the structure of the church.

In v. 17-32, Paul explains the results of a New Life in Christ.

In Eph. 5:1-21, Paul gives further instructions of how to walk in love in a Christian church.

Then Paul comes to this illustration of the church being the bride of Christ. That the church is wed to Jesus Christ and Paul uses the example of a husband and wife.

Eph. 5:22-33. Read all.

Many people take this passage as its meaning in individual marriages. Certainly it has that application. But Paul is not just speaking to our individual marriages.

Paul is writing to the total church at Ephesians that it is wed to Christ and a micro picture of our submission to Christ, and Christ's love for us, is seen in a larger view in the local church.

After this, **in Eph. 6** we get instructions for the relationship of children and parents, even Employers and employees, **then**, Paul finally closes with the topic of fighting together in Spiritual Warfare.

There is no such thing as a non-enlisted Soldier, no such thing as an officer that has not been publicly commissioned and recognized.

We do not see that.

For a local church to be powerful and effective, it needs people that are Reconciled to God and Reconciled to One Another.

Charter membership.

This is a church planted here last year. So anyone that becomes a church member here is becoming a charter member of this church and will help to set the direction of this church for years to come.

What does it mean to be a Church Member? 2 things.

1. It means I am a Christian.

Is it possible to be a member at a place that calls itself a church but not be a Christian?
Of course.

The wheat do grow up with the tares. The goats do climb into the sheep pen. The wolves put their costumes on and sneak in.

But my intention as the Pastor is to grow the wheat so well and strengthen the sheep so strong that it will be easy to identify the chaff and the wolves that come in.

And for us, it will be no trouble to call the chaff, chaff for it is useless. And it will be no trouble to call the wolves, wolves, because they are harmful to our peace with God.

But to be a member of your local church is to make the public statement that I am a Christian and I am following Christ and that church. I am a disciple of what is happening at that place.

2. It means I am committed to following Christ and I demonstrate that commitment at this place.

'For better or for worse. For richer or for poorer. In sickness, and in health. Til death do us part.'

I'll tell you what, people today, they'll join when things are better and they'll act like they never knew you when things are worse.

People have no problem being a part of a large crowd, when it results in riches and honor. But find me one church member with a combat patch, with some overseas service stripes.

Find me a man or a woman that signed up, not knowing the full cost, but paying it out.

Membership is like marriage. You cannot have a good marriage and never commit to the other person.

You cannot have any of the great things that marriage offers but live a life of duplicity.

You cannot have a good relationship with your spouse, but spend more time with other people.

You cannot have deep communication when you have little communication.

You cannot have joyful moments if you are unwilling to endure difficult moments.

You cannot observe the compound interest that comes from years of time together, if you are unwilling to make small, regular deposits.

It's the same with growth in the body of Christ. You will not grow in the body of Christ if you are not in the body of Christ.

Further, you will not bear seasonal fruit, if you are uprooted and not planted.

You do not see these interest payouts on a weekly basis; you see them over years of integration.

The church hoppers, the non-committal congregants, they all have their reasons. I feel like I've heard all the reasons.

Everyone who disobeys has their reasons for disobeying.

Once a person exhausts their reasons, they get exhausted with the person who doesn't acknowledge their reasons and then that ends up serving as their final reason to disfellowship.

Everyone who leaves the dating relationship can say, 'It's not you its me'

I've had people tell me, they are not a church member because they cannot find a good church.

I've had people tell me, they are not an active church member because they have to pay too much in property taxes.

I've had people tell me, they cannot be a member because their children have sporting events.

The examples abound for why people do not do the very thing they are supposed to do.

What is access into membership? Reconciliation to God. Faith in Jesus Christ.

There are two aspects of the Christian church.

There is the **Spiritual Church** and There is the **Local Church**. Those are not different things.

Friends, a Christian is driving a very hard bargain when they claim to be a part of the Spiritual Church of Christ when they are not a member of the local church of Christ.

That is a concept that is impossible for me to reconcile. Frankly, if it is a reality, it can only be a reality in Apostasy.

I do not see any provision for reconciliation to God that results in dishonoring the Sabbath.
I do not see any provision for reconciliation to God that results in casually choosing church based on individual preferences.

I do not see any provision for reconciliation to God that results in golfing, skiing, mountain biking, hiking, or salmon fishing on Sunday morning.

I just don't see that anywhere in Scripture.

The church has its Spiritual and its local state and it has two other positions as well. **The Church Militant and the Church Triumphant.**

The Church Militant is the age we live in now where we battle against principalities and wicked forces in high places.

The Church Triumphant is the glorified church in its state of perfect peace in Heaven.

It reminds me of the movie quote in Gladiator, when Commodious comes up after the first battle and says to His father, Marcus Arelus, 'Father, have I missed the battle' and His father says 'Son, you've missed the entire war!'

This is where I want us to turn to Romans 5.

The passage here is about **Reconciliation to God.**

Paul has spent 4 chapters identifying how people are not reconciled to God and tells us specific reasons for why they are not reconciled to God.

A few years ago I took a month to do a book study on Romans and what I did was read 4 chapters a day on repeat through the book. So you end up reading the entire book about every 4 days. So you read the book about 5-6 times in a month.

Romans is one of the richest and densely stated books in the NT. And reading it all in one sitting is a good way to take a shot at it.

Each word, each prepositional phrase could occupy an entire sermon. But we won't do that today.

Romans 5 is the John 3:16 of the Book of Romans.

What John 3 states, Romans 5 expands.

What John 3 makes clear, Romans 5 makes even more clear.

Romans 5 is the entry point to the **love of God**.

V.6-11 'For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.'

Overview.

Helpless, ungodly, sinners, enemies.

1 type of person expressed in 4 different ways.

That is who is being addressed here. In the first four chapters, Paul established that the concept of Total Depravity applies to everyone, Jew and Gentile. The whole world.

That no one is reconciled to God because of the Law. That no one whether by the Law or by becoming a law unto themselves will be able to Reconcile themselves to God.

Have you ever considered that you are or at least at one point have been an **enemy of God**?
Are you an enemy of God?

Have you been reconciled to God?

These are **legal terms**. These are **terms of war**. Are you still in court with God? Are you going to war with God?

Friends, you do not have to live that way!

You can settle out of court! You can accept the peace treaty!

Some people have not come to reconciliation with God through Christ and they are enemies of God.

But instead of acknowledging the common depravity of man, they reduce the Holiness of God, they decline His transcendence and elevate their own.

They justify themselves, saying surely I'm not that bad. Certainly God is pleased with how I've turned out!

I can tell you this much, God did not send His Son, from Heaven to earth, to Die for those who are smugly satisfied with their self-established standards of righteousness.

V. 6 'For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.'

That point in time, when Jesus Christ was nailed to a Roman cross was an appointed time.

It was a rendezvous with destiny. It was not an accident. It was not random. It was not arbitrary.

It was pre-ordinate, pre-planned, determined before the foundation of the world.

The reason that this plan was developed is because there are people that are helpless.

They are ungodly, helpless people.

They blind. They are deaf. They are mute. They are dead in their trespasses and sins.

They are incapable. They cannot do anything good.

Helpless.

ασθενων/asthenon. Weak, sick.

It means to be ill.

It means to be weakened by a sickness.

It means to be without strength.

It means to be incapable of accomplishing anything meaningful.

Matt. 5:3 'blessed are those who are poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'

Christ died.

He gave His life.

He performed all of His active obedience to God, while we are living in active disobedience. He then passively obeyed, like a sheep led to slaughter.

They did not take His life, Christ gave His life.

We must understand that Christ's death was God's plan.

In the famous song by the Rolling Stones, Sympathy for the Devil, Mick Jagger sings that the Devil made sure that Pilate sealed Jesus' fate.

Well that's just like the unregenerate to get the Doctrine of the Crucifixion wrong!

The Devil didn't have anything to do with the plan that played out on that day.

Those plans were God's plans. Those plans are to God's glory. That was God's plan for reconciling us to Him.

'Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins' Heb. 9:22

Don't give the devil credit, for what God demands our praise for!

This is God's love to us. That while we are yet sinners Christ died for us!

While we were. This is a Present Active Participle.

This action of Christ's death didn't take place at a point in time when we were good. It didn't happen while we were doing somewhat well. It happened when we were completely separated from God.

The right time.

καιρον/kairon.

In the NT greek there are two words for time, Kairon and Kronos. Kronos speaks of a chronological time frame.

Kairon speaks of a season of time.

This action of God to put Christ to death was a proper and set time by God.

That time that you were smoking and joking. It was at that time.

That time, when you were schmoozing, boozing, and cruisin'. It was at that time.

It was at that time, that God looked at you and me and said, I love them just as they are, BUT far too much to leave them as they are.

At that time, God determined that He would interrupt world history.

And that from that moment forward, all of the world system, all of the world calendars, all of time would now orient itself off of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Ungodly.

Impious. The Irreverent. The Wicked.

V.7 'For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.'

Q: Is there a good man among us by which we would be willing to die? Hardly.

There are stories of people who will die in extreme circumstances for other people that are good.

During the sinking of the Titanic, men gave up their positions on the lifeboats for women and children and husbands of families.

During times of war, men give their life for other good men.

But when Paul is talking about 'righteousness' here, Paul is not talking about our human standards of right and wrong.

Paul has God's view of Righteousness in mind.

V. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us; in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

When God demonstrates something we must take Him seriously and sincerely.

When the Bible says that God sent His Son, you must not reject His Son.

Psalms 2 says 'Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry'

God shows us that He loves us by this action.

It is by the life and death of Jesus Christ that we begin to have some grasp of how much God loves us.

Rom. 8:32 'He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things'

Everyday is a holiday, every meal is a banquet when you are in Christ. To be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ is the reward in itself.

V. 9 'Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.'

The justification for our unrighteousness is the blood of Christ.

There is nothing inherent special in the blood itself, but the blood of Christ is indicative of the life of Christ.

It was not merely a blood offering, it was a life offering. It was an offering of the fullest extent.

This is the only means of being reconciled to God. The life of Jesus Christ.

When you wonder about your confidence of being Reconciled to God, consider these two points; **Yourself and Your Savior.**

Are you confident of your reconciliation to God because of yourself? That's self-righteousness. Are you confident of your reconciliation to God because of Jesus Christ? That Divine Righteousness.

This is God's first means of Grace to us. That we can be reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ.

Today, I want to invite you to be Reconciled to God.

Not by what you do, but by what Christ did.

V. 10 'For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more'

Enemies.

There are some who were enemies and there are some who remain enemies. But the reality is we were all at some point enemies.

It was only through the love of God that we could be made friends with God. Reconciled to God.

V. 11 'And **not only this**, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.'

'Not only this.'

Let me take the time to make a big deal about this statement.

Q: Is church about presenting the Gospel? Yes. But it is 'not only this'!

Church is not only evangelism, it is also discipleship. And discipleship does not happen without membership!

It is not enough to just do evangelism, we must also make disciples.

It is impossible to make disciples if they are not committed members.

It is not possible to have a meaningful discipling relationship with a person who you do not grow in a committed relationship with.

My goal is 100% conversion rates. Oh that's too much, lower the bar, reduce the standard.

Why?

If it is God's desire that 'none should perish but come to repentance' that is my desire as well (2 Pet. 3).

That all would come to Christ. Then all would grow in Christ.

How much does God love you?

This is how much God loves you, that His sinless Son died for you. That's the extent of the explanation.

IF that is the extent of the explanation, HOW would you take casual the application?!?

Could you imagine if you are a Father, and make the decision, that you love people so much that you are going to sacrifice your own Son for those people AND as a response instead of coming to worship you for your sacrifice, they go mountain biking? They go salmon fishing? It doesn't make sense to me.

Would you maybe think, goodness couldn't they just do that on the other 6 days? Or maybe just in the afternoon?

I remember when I was a kid, we had some family friends that would also go to church with us and the mother of that church stopped going and had her family stop going to church.

It was a pretty sad scenario, but they fell away.

I remember her response to missing church was, 'that's our family time.'

Let me get this straight, the hours of 9-noon on Sunday are the only meaningful hours you happen to spend with your family? Am I supposed to take that seriously?

How about this, that isn't your family time, that's your disobedience time.

Now that was nearly 30 years ago. Do you think that motherly decision helped her children or harmed her children?

That woman's son is one of the vilest, arduous, skilled haters of the Christian church.

It was as if I had given to me from God, the first hand witness of a 3 decade fall from grace and it was completely unnecessary.

How do you understand the Extent of the Atonement and then it results in contempt for the day we worship God for the Atonement?

But here's the reality, Self is what the sinner loves. Self is the sinners worship service. But self is the very thing God is calling you to submit.

**Reconciliation requires the death of Christ.
Church Membership requires the death of self.**

Church membership is not... access to a country club.
Church Membership is not the gateway to new found personal power.
It is not the opportunity to exercise your own personal opinions or let the Good Idea Fairy run rampant.

Church membership is re-learning the tenets of the Gospel on a weekly basis. It is participating in the work of the Kingdom of God here on earth. It is becoming a detailed, deliberated, dedicated, and disciplined disciple of Jesus Christ.

That requires a selfless commitment.

It requires a commitment where you might lose house, and property, and family, and friends, and wealth and riches, BUT don't worry, you will be repaid 100 fold in the life to come.

Reconciliation.

Reconciliation is mentioned specifically in 4 places in the NT.

Reconciliation is mentioned twice in Romans and twice in 2 Corinthians 5.

The point of its mentioning is that the **Ministry of Reconciliation** is a Ministry given to the Church.

You can put this another way, '**The Keys to the Kingdom**' have been given to the Christian church.

Peter puts it this way in John 6 'where would we go, you have the words of eternal life'

In closing there were only two questions to consider.

Q: Have I come to reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ? That's the first invitation to come to Christ.

Have the accounts been reconciled.

Debts, left! Credit, right!

Do I have any outstanding debts with the Creator of Heaven and Earth?

Have I made a theological assumption that my physiological assumption Can't pay off?

It's one thing to have too much consumer debt, it's another thing to have Cosmic debt.

The accounts can be reconciled.

'Behold, now is the accepted time, behold today is the day of salvation' 2 Cor. 6

The next question is...

Q: Should I be a member of this church and regularly participate in the means of grace with these other Christians?

That is a decision that I want you to take deliberate time to think about.

Don't make a rash decision. Don't run off and get eloped. We should see our church reconciliation like marriage and family.

The love expressed, the intimacy enjoyed, the development established, the trials endured, the marriages united, the families built up, the sicknesses prayed through, the memorials honored. All of these things are natural outworkings of church membership.

Take the time to think about it. **'Choose today whom you will serve.' Josh. 24**

Small Group Questions.

1. What does it mean to be reconciled to God? Why is it important that we have confidence in our reconciliation with God through Christ?
2. Are you scared or ashamed (Rom. 1:16) to invite people to be reconciled to God through Christ?
3. Why is church membership the logical outcome of saving faith in Jesus Christ?
4. Should a church have a strong membership process or should the church just leave membership and the outcomes of membership alone altogether?
5. Is it possible to actually have a church and perform the duties of proclaiming the Gospel, making disciples, loving one another, praising God, bringing Him glory...is it possible to do these things without membership? Why or why not?

