

Driven: Things that Enable, Empower and Inspire Believers

The Power of Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

June 28, 2020 am

HDBC

We are getting close to the end of this series. Exploring things in 2 Corinthians 4-5 that **drive** us to live as faithful disciples of Christ. These are things that enlighten, inspire and empower us to be all that God wants us to be. These things drive us to rise above mediocrity, realizing that we have limited time to serve Christ and fulfill our callings. We are now looking at 5:18-20. In these verses we see ***The Power of Reconciliation***.

Not referring to reconciliation between two people or two groups of people, but the reconciliation that happens between a person and God. That is the most important reconciliation of all for it will extend beyond this life into eternity. **This is the ultimate** New Testament passage about reconciliation. The word is used five times in various forms in these three verses. ***Katallage***

It was used in accounting. *To change or exchange*. It was used of **exchanging various denominations of money**. Like exchanging a dollar bill for four quarters. When you give the bank the dollar they must give you four quarters in return. If they give three the amounts are not equal. There is a difference, a **disagreement**. When they equal there is reconciliation.

The word came to be used in relationships. **When two people have a disagreement and they work it out and restore fellowship, they have reconciled**. Married couple who are separated or even divorced but then come back together and restore their relationship. That is reconciliation.

History tells of a very unlikely illustration of reconciliation. For years two ladies were on opposite sides of a bitter conflict that threatened to destroy this nation. When the Civil War ended they could easily have remained bitter enemies. But Julia Grant and Varina Davis became lifelong friends. Julia was the wife of Ulysses S. Grant and Varina was married to the former president of the Confederate States of America. After the deaths of their husbands they met in a chance encounter and became great friends. That is reconciliation!

That's reconciliation between individuals. As wonderful as it is to see reconciliation between people or parties, it is far greater to see reconciliation between individuals and God. **Notice 4 Things.**

1. **Reconciliation is the work of God (18)**

The Bible makes it clear that God is the one who initiates and makes possible our reconciliation with Him. This is surprising and shocking. When two people need to be reconciled, almost always both are at fault. **Marriage. Politics. Friendships.** Not so with God.

God does not need to be reconciled to us, because God shares no blame in our separation. It is our sins that have separated us from God, as it says in Isaiah 59:1-2. Therefore, we are the ones in need. So, God does not need to be reconciled to us. We need to be reconciled to Him.

All these things are from God . . .

Were it not for the decision of God to bring us back to Himself, there would be no reconciliation.

Who reconciled us to Himself . . .

He did not need to be reconciled to us, but we desperately needed to be reconciled to Him. There is nothing in our relationship that He needs, but there is so much in the relationship that we need.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (19). God was actively involved in the process of reconciliation. It was His personal mission.

The need for reconciliation is with us alone. We need it. He doesn't.

The process of reconciliation starts with God. He reached out to us.

The power of reconciliation rests with God. Only He can pull it off.

The success of reconciliation depends upon the power and pleasure of God. There is nothing that I can do to make myself reconciled to God.

2. **Reconciliation involves the forgiveness of sins (19)**

We need to be reconciled to God because our sins have caused a rift between us and God. Our sins have pushed us away from God and caused a fracture in what was intended to be a sweet and intimate relationship.

As Kent Hughes so clearly expresses it . . .

When Adam sinned He sinned willfully, eyes wide open. Adam had watched Eve take the fruit, and nothing happened to her. So when he took the fruit from her, he sinned willfully against God, assuming there would be no consequences. The rebellion turned everything up-side down. Eve followed the snake, Adam followed Eve, and no one followed God. Cosmic rebellion!

The sins of Adam and Eve plunged all humanity into a cycle of sin that has resulted in universal alienation from God. Every person is a sinner and is separated from God. Unless reconciliation happens, that separation will extend beyond this life for all eternity. There is one thing that stands in the way of our being reconciled to God. That one thing is our sins.

For reconciliation to occur, our sins must be forgiven. Paul addresses that in verse 19, ***not counting their trespasses against them***. How? He clearly reveals in this passage how He could forgive our sins. Note the phrases:

Through Christ (18). ***In Christ*** (19). We will unpack this much more clearly when we look at verse 21 in the next sermon. This was accomplished through the work of Christ. His death on our behalf paid for our sins, satisfying the requirement of the law that sin must be punished. The wages of sin is death. We are sinners. Therefore He died for us.

There is no reconciliation where there is not forgiveness. This is true when it comes to **individuals**. It is true when it comes to **groups**. It is true when it comes to **nations**. It is absolutely and unconditionally true when it comes to our reconciliation with God. As long as our sins remain unforgiven, there is no reconciling us to God.

King David understood this. ***How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*** (Psalm 32:1)

*Not long before she died in 1988, in a moment of surprising candor, Marghanita Laski, a well-known secular humanist said, **What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness; I have nobody to forgive me.***

3. Reconciliation requires a response of faith (20)

While it is true that reconciliation is an act of God that involves the forgiveness of our sins, it is also true that it does not happen apart from the individual's faith response. Note the phrase in verse 20.

We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

If the individual had no need to respond there would be no need to beg.

Jesus said, *he who believes has eternal life.*

The Bible indicates that a person is justified (reconciled to God) by faith.

Rom 5:1 says ***peace with God*** only comes to those who are justified by faith.

God provides an opportunity for reconciliation through the finished work of Christ. We are going to examine that in more detail next time. But each individual must respond in faith to the offer of salvation.

4. Reconciliation is the ministry of every believer (18-20)

Three phrases in this passage point to the part we play.

Ministry of Reconciliation (18)

Word of Reconciliation (19)

Ambassadors of Christ (20)

We have been commissioned to join God in the act of reconciling the world to Himself. He has done the necessary work. We are simply telling the story..

This is a high and holy ministry that we have for its aim is the salvation of souls. Let us never forget as we are sharing the Gospel that we are not simply trying to get people to believe a certain thing, we are attempting to bring them into a right relationship with the God who created them and loves them.

Ambassador is the common word used to describe a person who is representing the king or the emperor. He speaks for someone else who is higher and more noble. The ambassador does not do his own will, but the will of Him who sent him. **We are the** vessels through whom God is reaching out to the world. It is our job. And it's a great job.

Takeaways:

1. Reconciliation with God is every person's greatest need.
2. Reconciliation with God is provided by God to every person.
3. Reconciliation with God requires a response of faith.
4. Once reconciled, you are on God's team to help others get reconciled.

There is a Japanese word, *kintsukuroi*, that means "golden repair." It refers to a specific art of restoring broken pottery with gold so the fractures are illuminated and highlighted, rather than obscured. In Japan this reflects a philosophy that celebrates imperfection as an important part of one's story. The philosophy says that the brokenness of one's life actually can add meaning and beauty.

That is a man-made philosophy that is only a reflection of a divine reality that we learn from the Bible. God loves us in spite of our brokenness and reconciles us to Himself just as we are and brings us into His family. The brokenness of my life will not always be evident in me, but the restoration and reconciliation performed by God, will most definitely be evident in Christ.

Think about this. He will bear the scars of the cross for all eternity. Those scars on his hands, feet, side and head will forever bear testimony not only to my sinfulness, but to His act of reconciling me to God. Those scars on his body are like the golden seams in the Japanese pottery. They remind us that what was broken is not only restored but is better.

God received glory from the original creation of Adam and Eve as perfect, spotless, innocent beings. But how much more glory does God get from the work of reconciliation that He does for those broken by sin. The signs of repair, renewal and restoration will forever reflect his love, grace and goodness toward those of us who have been reconciled to Himself.