

# Reconciled To God

**Introduction.** The word "reconcile" is one of the most significant and descriptive terms in all of scripture. It is one of five key words used in the New Testament to describe the richness of salvation in Christ, along with justification, redemption, forgiveness and adoption.

In justification, the sinner stands before God guilty and condemned, but is declared righteous (Romans 8:33). In redemption, the sinner stands before God as a slave, but is granted his freedom (Romans 8:19-22). In forgiveness, the sinner stands before God as a debtor, but the debt is paid and forgotten (Ephesians 1:7). In adoption, the sinner stands before God as a stranger, but is made a son (Ephesians 1:5). Finally, in reconciliation, the sinner stands before God as an enemy, but becomes His friend (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

The term "reconcile" means "to change" or "exchange." Its New Testament usage speaks of a change in a relationship. The word used in Colossians 1:20-23 is one that has been intensified and it means "thoroughly, completely or totally reconciled." Inasmuch as Christ possesses all the fullness of deity (1:19; 2:9), Jesus is able to fully reconcile sinful men and women to God. We are going to discuss four aspects in which Paul defends Christ's sufficiency to reconcile men to God.

## I. ***The Plan Of Reconciliation***

- A. God's ultimate plan for the Universe is to reconcile all things to Himself through Jesus Christ. Paul does not mean that "all things in heaven" need reconciliation because they were alienated from God, but that there was alienation in the Universe which affected heaven, and the objective was to again produce harmony (Ephesians 1:10).
  - 1. The expression "all things" refers to mankind in sin.
  - 2. The Holy Spirit revealed that Christ made atonement for man (Hebrews 2:16).
- B. To impress upon them Christ's power to reconcile men to God, Paul reminds the Colossians of what they were like before they were reconciled.
  - 1. "Alienated" means "estranged," "cut off" or "separated" (Ephesians 2:12-13). Non-Christians are detached from God because of sin; there is no such thing as an "innocent heathen."
  - 2. "Enemies in your mind" could also be translated "hateful." Unbelievers are not only alienated from God by condition, but also hateful of God by attitude. They hate Him and resent His holy standards and commands because they were engaged in wicked works (John 3:19-20). Their problem is not ignorance, but a willful, deliberate and purposeful love of sin.

- C. From God's perspective, His just wrath against sin must be appeased. Far from being the harmless, tolerant grandfather that many today imagine Him to be, God takes vengeance on His adversaries (Nahum 1:2; Jeremiah 10:10; John 3:36; Ephesians 5:6). Man and God could never be reconciled unless God's wrath was appeased. The provision for that took place through Christ's sacrifice (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9).

## II. ***The Means Of Reconciliation***

- A. Two phrases in our passage sum up the specific means whereby Christ effected our reconciliation with God. Paul says first that Christ made peace between God and man "through the blood of His cross."
1. Blood speaks metaphorically of His atonement. It connects Christ's death with the Old Testament sacrificial system (1 Peter 1:18-19). It is also a term that graphically notes violent death, such as that suffered by the sacrificial animals.
  2. The countless thousands of animals sacrificed under the Old Covenant pointed ahead to the violent, blood-shedding death the final sacrificial Lamb would suffer (Hebrews 9:22; 13:11-12).
- B. Second, states that a critical element in salvation is that our reconciliation was "In the body of his flesh through death."
1. The shedding of His blood was the visible manifestation of His life being poured out in sacrifice.
    - a) Scripture consistently uses the term "shedding of blood" as a metonym for atoning death (Romans 5:9-10).
    - b) Bloodshed was God's design for all Old Testament sacrifices. Sacrifices were never clubbed or strangled.
  2. Christ's blood was precious -- but as precious as it was, only when it was poured out in death could the penalty of sin be paid. So in a sense, it was not just His blood but His death that saved us.
- C. Christ died not only as a sacrifice, but also as our substitute. He has now reconciled us in His fleshly body through death (Romans 8:3). He took the place of sinners, dying a substitutionary death that paid the full penalty for the sin of all who believe (Isaiah 53:8). This death satisfied God's wrath.

## III. ***The Aim Of Reconciliation***

- A. God's ultimate goal in reconciliation is to present His elect holy and pure before Him (2 Corinthians 11:2; Jude 24). Such purification is necessary if sinners are to stand in the presence of a holy God.
1. "Holy" means to be separated from sin and set apart to God. It has to do with the Christian's relationship with Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

2. "Unblameable" means without blemish. It was used in the Septuagint to speak of sacrificial animals (Numbers 6:14). It is used in the New Testament to refer to Christ as the spotless Lamb of God (Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19). In reference to ourselves, reconciliation gives us a blameless character.
  3. "Unreproveable" goes beyond blameless. It means not only that we are without blemish, but also that no one can bring a charge against us (Romans 8:33). Satan, the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10), cannot make a charge stick against those whom Christ has reconciled.
- B. The result of Christ's reconciling work is the presentation of the Colossians as "holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight."
1. Both the present and the future seem to be in view here. In reconciling Christians, God brought us into His presence, no longer as stained by sin and bearing the burden of guilt, but as "holy and unblameable and unreproveable."
  2. This is our standing before God by the death of Christ. But on the day of Christ's return, we will be officially presented as perfected in glory. In the meantime, we are "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

#### ***IV. The Evidence Of Reconciliation***

- A. One of the most sobering truths in the Bible is that not all who profess to be Christians are going to be saved (Matthew 7:22-23; Hebrews 10:39; 2 Peter 2:20-22). This verse is one of the many denials in the New Testament of the erroneous proposition euphemistically described as the "perseverance of the saints."
- B. Salvation is conditional, both for the alien sinner and the sanctified Christian. God has written that chilling word "if" over against every name inscribed in the Lamb's book of life (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19).
  1. If men truly hope to receive eternal life, let them "continue in the faith" (Luke 8:13; John 8:31).
  2. Another way of stating this is that it is impossible to be saved unless we continue to lead lives that are becoming of the gospel (Philippians 1:27).
  3. "Grounded" and "settled" means a firm foundation, like a building that is founded on a rock (Matthew 7:26-27; Ephesians 3:17).
- C. However, if they do not continue in the faith, they are lost (1 John 2:19). Perhaps the greatest hindrance in our day and time to the gospel is the lukewarm and indifferent character of professed Christians.

**Conclusion.** It is no wonder Paul could serve God without despairing (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). He was gripped by the truth of what God had done for him in Christ, and he felt honored beyond words to be His ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20-21). Can we see the benefits of reconciliation and obey the gospel? Can we see the benefits of reconciliation and go tell others?