

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Reconciled to God

Scripture: Colossians 1:20-23

Code: 2136

We can entitle our study for tonight, "Reconciliation to God," or "Reconciled to God", because that's precisely what Paul talks about. You will note that in verse 20 you see the word, about two or three lines down, "reconcile." At the end of verse 21 you see it again reconciled, past tense. This particular term, reconcile, is the verb reconciled, is the past tense of the verb and the noun is reconciliation, is a very important term in Christianity. You perhaps have heard about it in terms of the divorce courts and perhaps when a divorce is begun there is an effort on the part of the court to try to bring about a reconciliation, that is, to put two warring parties back together again. It also is used that way to speak of marriages that is being put back together in Greek days. It is a word that meant reconciliation, and the Greeks used it when they wanted to talk about their own marriage relationships; in fact, in Chapter 7 of I Corinthians it says, "If she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. Let her husband not divorce her." And now there you have the same terminology that the word finds in our culture today.

But the word reconciliation goes far beyond a relationship between two human beings. It is used in the Bible to speak of a man's relationship to God in terms of the restoration of the right relationship between a man and God. Reconciliation, then, is God being reconciled back to man, or man, if you will, being reconciled back to God either way.

Now the term, the familiar term in the Bible is *katallasso*, and I only mention that because I want to make a distinction in a minute. And *Katallasso* means "to reconcile", among other possibilities. It can mean to change, or to exchange. It has been used in terms of exchanging coins. But basically, in the sense that we will use it in its figurative sense, it means to "reconcile". Now that particular term is used in the New Testament only twice in the reference between God and man; that is, reconciling God to man, that term is only used two times. It occurs in 2 Corinthians Chapter 5 and verse 19. It is used in that sense there, and it occurs in Romans Chapter 5 and verse 10. And in both of those passages the general basic word reconcile is used when a man is reconciled to God, or when God and man end their battle and declare themselves partners again as they once were before the fall. But there is another term for reconcile that is used here in Colossians, Chapter 1. It is not *katallasso* that is used, it is *apokatallasso* and again I point out to you that whenever a preposition is added to the front of a word it intensifies the word, and so what you have here is the word reconciled intensified, so that it means thoroughly recon-ciled, completely reconciled, totally reconciled. And that is the termin-ology that is used here in Colossians; the word is different than the normal word reconcile. It has a greater intensity. And there is a reason for that, and I need to point that out to you.

When Paul is writing in Romans about reconciliation, and when he is writing in 2 Corinthians about reconciliation, he is not fighting against anything. He is not arguing against a false teacher. He is merely making the point of reconciliation, that's all. But in Colossians he is fighting a counterattack from false teachers. The false teachers that were really confronting the Church at Colosse had said that it could not be possible for a man to be reconciled to God by Jesus Christ alone. Now you remember that there were some issues that Paul is hitting in Colossians in relationship to false teachers, and the false teachers that had brought about the problems in Colosse had taught that there were a series of emanating spirits descending from God, that God sort of spawned an emanating spirit and then another one came and another one and another one and they just kept getting lower and lower and lower and lower and lower. And Christ was one of those descending emanating spirits; they were good at the beginning and then somewhere along the line they started getting less good and less good and less good and then bad and then worse and then worse and way down at the bottom is somebody like Satan, and that in order for a man to ascend to God he had to climb back up that escalating ladder of spirits. No one of those spirits could do the job. No one of those aeons, no one of those emanating spirits, no one of those angelic beings, if you will, was sufficient to reconcile man to God. Man had to ascend the ladder of many of those to reach God, and the point that Paul is making here is this: that there is total and absolute and complete and full reconciliation through that one who is Jesus Christ. That's the reason he uses a much more intense word.

So Paul is showing that Christ is God; in verses 15 through 19, and he closes that section: "For in Him should all fullness dwell, because that's what pleased the Father. He is God, He is not a spirit, and He is able, only and without any other assistance, to reconcile men to God." And that's the point that he wants to make. "Having made peace," verse 20 says, "through the blood of the cross, or His cross, by Him." There it is: "By Him, to reconcile all things unto Himself." That is God reconciling all things to Himself by Christ. You don't need to climb an ascending scale of angelic beings. There isn't some kind of escalating ladder of beings that you climb up to get to God. There is only one, and He is able to fully reconcile a man to God. Now we have already seen what Paul is doing here in this particular section in our discussions in the past. They had attacked the deity of Christ, they had attacked the sufficiency of Christ to save. So first of all, Paul has already cleared the area of any doubts about deity, and he cleared that in verses 15 to 19, and now he's going to say not only is He God, but He is able to save, and that was the second point of attack. So, from verse 20 to verse 23 he establishes Christ's sufficiency to save, to reconcile men to God.

Now I want to talk about the theology of reconciliation for just a moment, if I can, because it's needful that you understand it. In the New Testament, I'm trying to sum this down or draw this down to just the simplest way I can. There are probably five terms that summarize our salvation, and you ought to jot them down. Five terms that summarize our salvation. And you can talk about these five terms in various ways throughout the New Testament. They're illustrated and elucidated to us many times.

Five terms, here they are, and I'll go over them again so you don't need to worry about writing them all at once. Justification, redemption, forgiveness, reconciliation and son-ship, or adoption, same thing

All right, let's look at the first one. The first term that's used to summarize our salvation is the term justification. In justification, and I'm just going to say it briefly so stay in there, in justification the sinner stands before God as the accused and is declared righteous. In justification, the sinner stands before God as the accused and is declared righteous.

The second term is redemption. In redemption, the sinner stands before God as a slave and is granted freedom by a ransom. In redemption, the sinner stands before God as the slave and is granted freedom by ransom.

The third term that summarizes our salvation is forgiveness. In forgiveness, the sinner stands before God as a debtor and the debt, having been paid, is forgotten. In forgiveness, the sinner stands before God as a debtor, and the debt having been paid is forgotten.

Fourth, is reconciliation. And this is beautiful. In reconciliation the sinner stands before God as an enemy and becomes a friend. Peace with God is made. In reconciliation, the sinner stands before God as an enemy, and is led to peace as a friend.

Fifthly, the term sonship summarizes our salvation. In sonship, I love this, the sinner stands before God as a stranger and is made a son. The sinner stands before God as a stranger and is made a son. Think of it. We stood before God as the accused and He declared us righteous. We stood before God as a slave and He granted us freedom. We stood before God as a 0 debtor and He forgot our debt. We stood before God as an enemy and He made us a friend. We stood before God as a stranger and He called us a son. Now that sums it up, people. That sums up salvation.

Now let me come back at it again. I'm going to run by those terms again in a different way. Listen. Forgiveness deals with the fruit. Redemption deals with the root. You know what I mean by that? Forgiveness deals with the sins of our lives. He forgives them. Redemption deals with the root, the condition of our nature. As slaves to sin He frees us. We're no longer slaves to sin. Forgiveness deals with the fruit, redemption deals with the root.

Now reconciliation deals with our condition, and sonship deals with our position. Reconciliation deals with our condition. We become His friends, we experience fellowship. Sonship deals with our position. We become heirs and joint Heirs. Now listen forgiveness deals with the fruit, redemption with the root, reconciliation deals with our condition, sonship deals with our position and altogether it spells justification. Now you just had a course in soteriology in three minutes. And you didn't even know it (laughter). So you see, when you were saved, everything was taken care of fruit and root, condition, position. (Laughter) It's all been taken care of. And you call it all justification. It's great, isn't it?

Zinzendorf said, and I agree, "No one is holier than a sinner who has received grace." Fruit and root, condition and position. No one's holier than a sinner who has received grace. Now out of those five glorious terms we're going to pick one. We could pick five and study them. We pick one because it's in the text reconciliation. And let's make it the theme, because Paul makes it the theme right here. And though the section is brief, boy, he covers it well. Four aspects of reconciliation.

Four aspects of reconciliation. The plan of reconciliation, the means of reconciliation, the aim of reconciliation and the evidence of it. The plan, the means, the aim and the evidence. This is exciting because this is like, it's like the song, "I Love to Tell the Story". It doesn't matter how many times you've told it before, and the song that says, "Tell Me the Old, old Story." It's just the reiteration of what it means to be saved, to be reconciled to God. The plan, the means, the aim, the evidence. Let's look at the plan. And we're going to be kind of jumping around in the text here and not necessarily going chronologically through it, and incidentally some of it in the Greek is inverted; that is, some of the Greek form of the verse is different than the English. The words are the same and the translation is basically the same, but some of the phrases have been switched around. So we'll just jump around and get the picture of it in total.

Number one, the plan of reconciliation appears in verse 20: "And having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him, to reconciled all things unto Himself; I say, whether they be things on earth or things in Heaven. And you that were once alienated, or estranged, and enemies in your mind because of wicked works, yet now has he reconciled." Now there you have the basic plan of reconciliation, and the key phrase is this; "... to reconcile all things unto Himself." And you'll notice after the phrase, the word "by him", you'll notice before the phrase the word "by him", and the "by Him" is reference to Christ and to Himself to God. God reconciles all things to Himself by Christ. We'll explain that.

Now I want you to see that that's a big subject, to reconcile all things Pantá all things unto Himself. Now we can't explore all of this. I mean that would be so vast, but we'll just kind of pick out some major truth. Let's go back. God made everything good, right? God created and He looked on it and said, it's good. Made it all good. Made it for His pleasure. And He possessed it all, and He owned it all, and it was not estranged and man and woman walked in the garden in the cool of the day and they walked in the presence of the Lord. It was all very good. But sin entered and the world rebelled and the universe was cursed and alienated from God. And we live in a cursed earth. And our earth occupies a place in a cursed universe. Even the heavens are polluted, did you know that? They're occupied by Satan, they're occupied by His demons. God's going to clean it all up some day, and that's why when the Bible talks about the restoration of everything it calls it a new heaven and new earth. It's got to all be redone. It's in rebellion now. But the Bible says right here that God is going to reconcile everything back to Himself. If you want the simplest explanation, God is going to make friends with the universe again. That's the broad idea or reconciliation. God is going to end rebellion and make friends with the universe. It's going to come back into harmony. How's He going to do it?

By Him. By whom? By Christ. Christ is the agent. He will carry out the reconciliation.

Now I want you to look for a minute at "all things", because that interested me when I read that to reconcile all things? You got to be kidding! You mean everything is coming back to God? That's right. And all of it by Christ, a totally redeemed universe. Fantastic. Listen to Romans 8:19. This adds help to that because it helps us to see what he's talking about; "For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God." Did you know that all of the universe is waiting for us to be glorified because they're going to get in on it? The creation was made subject to vanity, in other words, the created world, plants, animals and so forth, the created world was made subject to vanity, not willingly. I mean, it certainly wasn't any animal fault. It was just man that fell and messed up everything, and it was Satan that fell and messed up everything, and the created world apart from man and angels had nothing to do with it; they were made subject to the curse unwillingly, But they're waiting, because the creation, verse 21 says, "...itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

When we get turned around and reconciled the whole creation's going with us, and the curse of the earth will be halted and there will be the glorious liberty of the children of God extending to the fact that the earth itself and the heavens around us and its planets that occupy it will all be released from the bondage of corruption and decay that they all suffer from. And you know that our universe is winding down, and you know that it's dissipating energy. The sun is dissipating energy, all the planets are dissipating energy, all the stars are, because the law of entropy is in operation in the entire universe because of the curse, and verse 22 the whole creation is groaning and having birth pains until now. They're waiting to be restored, they're waiting to be reconciled to God to know that kind of eternal existence with no loss of energy that they realized before the Fall. In Ephesians 1:10 it says: "That in the ages or the dispensation of the fullness of time He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven and which are in earth, even in Him, again, it is because of Christ and it is by Christ that the whole universe comes back to God. The restoration of the entire universe.

Now this is a tremendous point, because the heretics in Colosse and Laodicea and Hierapolis the cities around that area, the Lycus Valley, those heretics were saying that the true analysis of the universe is dualistic, that spirit is good and matter is evil, and Paul is saying, forget it. Jesus Christ is not only going to reconcile man but He is going to reconcile the material universe to God. It's only temporarily suffering a curse; some day it will be reconciled to God. Sin ruined this universe. It destroyed harmony between one creature and the other, between all creatures and God. But through Christ the universe is going to be brought back, it's going to be restored to the right relationship to God. You can see that if you read the Book of Revelation. What happens during the Tribulation? The plagues that come during the Tribulation, they come out of the bowls and the trumpets and the seals, those judgments that come on the earth are judgments that come out of nature. For the most part,

they come out of the world. Now some of them are demonic, but the majority come out of natural phenomena gone wild, and what happens is that in the Tribulation period the earth begins to disintegrate, the universe begins to fall apart, the stars fall out of the sky, the Heaven rolls up like a scroll, the planets plummet out of existence like plums on an untimely fig tree that is being shaken. The entire universe falls apart. The fresh water turns bitter, the grass burns up. The sun scorches the earth. The sun goes black and people freeze. It becomes totally dark. All these bizarre things that happen as the curse finally reaches its climax, the whole earth falls apart, Christ comes, sets up His Kingdom and at the end of that creates a new Heaven and a new Earth. That's the plan. That's the reconciliation of everything.

And you just need to read your Bible a little bit to find out what it's going to be like when there's a restored world. It tells us. I could give you a few that you're familiar with, but I'll just remind you. Isaiah 11 says, "The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, a little child leads them and the cow and the bear shall feed, young ones lie together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and little babies will play with snakes and so forth and so forth. They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, and no more war, no more killings, all these things in a restored earth. Isaiah 35:9. Furthermore no lion shall be there nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon. That's going to be the end of all ravenous beasts. Not going to be any more of that, any more in the restored earth. Sixtyfive of Isaiah, verse 25: "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the bullock and dust shall be the serpent's food, they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord." You see? There's going to be a total reverse of the curse, they're going to be animals there. Animals that somehow managed to get through the tribulation. And they'll go on into the Kingdom and man when the Kingdom hits they're going to be different animals. There's going to be a restoration of the animal world. And not only that but the earth and the solar system. Outside just the animal world here, the whole thing is going to take on dramatic changes.

The Lord will create upon, this is Isaiah.4:5 "The Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion and upon her assemblies a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For upon all the Glory shall be a defense. There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat and for a refuge and for a covert from storm and from rain." I mean, I don't know what all that means, but it's going to be something. Lights in the sky and things, supergiant heavenly umbrellas that don't let the rain get on you and mess you up, and everything's going to grow like mad; food is going to flourish. In Isaiah 30 verse 26: "The light of the moon shall be like the light of the sun." Now think about that it's going to be just the same at night as it is in the daytime. When will we sleep, you say. (laughter) Well. And the light of the sun shall be sevenfold like the light of seven days. Super light. You know what that's going to do for crops? Oh, man. Just don't plant a garden. (laughter) When's that going to happen? In the day the Lord binds up the breach of His people and heals the stroke of their wound, the day of restoration. It's going to be an exciting world, I'll tell you; I'll be thrilled to be there.

In Isaiah chapter 60 verse 19: "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto me and this of course goes into the eternal heavens; the Kingdom is where you're going to have the sun and the moon; and then in the final Heaven it's going to be the Glory of God, the everlasting light, "Thy God shall be the Glory and then the sun will be no more. So after the sun becomes seven times bright, the moon gets like the sun, the Kingdom ends then they go out of existence and God lights the universe. Fantastic transformation is going to take place. In Zechariah, I think, there's one more here. He talks about in the Kingdom around Jerusalem God says, "I will be a wall of fire, and I will be the Glory in the midst of it." The heavens are going to be different, the earth is going to be different, the animals are going to be different, the people are going to be different. A tremendous dramatic change is going to take place in this world in the reconciliation of the creation of God. When God makes friends with this universe again, things are going to happen like you never dreamed possible. It's going to be a world like it was before the Fall. I

it's going to be a world like it was before Adam sinned. And all of this is going to pass into the new Heaven and the new Earth.

I mentioned I think a week ago II Peter, but I have to go back there for a second. II Peter, 3:13, I love this: "Nevertheless, we look (according to His promises, because we believe His promises) we look for a new Heavens and a new Earth in which dwells righteousness." That's what I'm looking for. A new Heaven, and a new Earth, and if you were to go to the end of the book of Revelation, you'd get a little glimpse of it. John says in 21:1 "I saw a new Heaven and a new earth. The first Heaven and the new earth had passed away, and there was no more sea, and I, John, saw the Holy City New Jerusalem coming down from God out of Heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." I saw it, he says, I saw it. I, John, just plain old me, I saw it. Fantastic thing. "New Heaven and a new earth, and dropping into it was the new Jerusalem, the Crystal Palace of God."

Eric Sauer says in his book, *The Triumph of the Crucified* he says, "The offering on Golgotha, that's the death of Christ, extends its influence into universal history. The salvation of mankind is only one part of the world embracing counsels of God. The heavenly things will also be cleansed through Christ's sacrifice of Himself. A cleansing of the heavenly places is required if on no other ground than that they have been the dwelling of fallen spirits and because Satan their chief has for ages had access to the highest regions of the heavenly world." God's just going to clean the whole thing. The earth is going to be the capital of the universe, the dwelling place of God, the center of eternity. A new earth. Fantastic. Sauer says, and I love this statement, "The other side becomes this side. Eternity transfigures time. The earth, the chief scene of reconciliation, is reconciled itself and becomes the palace of the universal Kingdom of God forever. Fantastic.

Now you say, something bothers me about that "all thing" Colossians 1, What bothers me is "the all things", Now there are some people that say, well that means "all things". And they turn out to be Universalists, who believe that in the end everybody's going to get saved and all the fallen angels are going to get forgiven, and we're all going waltzing into Heaven. What about fallen angels, are they going to be restored, are they going to be reconciled? No. What about fallen men, are they going to be restored, are they going to be reconciled? No. You see, you always have to interpret the Bible in the light of the Bible. When it says all things will be reconciled, it means all things for whom reconciliation is possible. If you read Revelation chapter 19 verse 20: "And the Beast was taken and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him received with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the Beast and them that worshipped his image and they were cast into a Lake of Fire burning with brimstone." They're not drawn to God, they're drawn into a Lake of Fire, chapter 20 verse 10, and the Devil joins the false prophet and the beast. He was cast into the fire, tormented day and night, listen, forever and ever. And whosoever, verse 15, was not found written in the Book of Life was also cast into the Lake of Fire.

When it says all things are reconciled, it doesn't mean fallen angels and unbelieving men, because it can only refer to those things which can be reconciled. But you know something? There is a sense, beloved, in which everything in God's universe will be reconciled, and I believe that Hell, if you can think of it this way, is a place outside God's universe, It is a place where God is not, Is that right? And since God is omnipresent, Hell is some place where God is not. Now that's just a technicality, don't think about that. (laughter) I see Ted over here going "wait a minute". (laughter) But everything that's in His Kingdom is reconciled to Him. The evil beings are stripped of their power, slammed into subjection by Christ's act of reconciliation; Christ's act of reconciliation, Colossians 2:15 says, that He spoiled principalities and powers on the cross. It says in Romans 16:20: and the God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet. The good angels, the redeemed men, will joyfully submit to the rule of God, the evil angels and the evil men will be cast outside the sphere of His rule, stripped of their power. So the reconciliation affects everything physical world, holy angels, holy men. It will even affect evil angels and evil men, as they will bow the knee... believe me... they will bow the knee to God, won't they? Not welcoming it, but despising it, nevertheless having to do it.

Now you know what I believe? I believe this verse teaches, where it says to reconcile all things. I believe the act of Jesus Christ on the Cross provided a forensic reconciliation for everybody. In other words, I think the death of Christ potentially can reconcile the entire universe, every creature in it. That has to be what it's saying. But I think it's only going to be valid to those who believe, don't you? And 2 Corinthians 5:19 says this: "To wit, that God (listen to this) was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," the cosmos. More than just believers. Christ in death made a forensic, that means a forum, a popular announcement, involving everybody. He made a provision for the entire world, and made a reconciliation for all, not just for the elect, but only those who come to Christ can claim that reconciliation. And so he said, that's the plan.

Now look at verse 21, and he stops talking in that generality and he gets very specific and he starts out, "And you (and he wants to show us some flesh and blood reconciled people) so he can get a kind of feeling for the plan) and you that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works yet now has He already reconciled." You want to know what it's going to be like? Look at yourself. He reconciled you to Himself. The living, breathing, reconciled Colossians were evidence enough that Jesus Christ was sufficient to reconcile men to God. You see?

Jesus can do it. Look at yourselves. He's done it to you. What have you needed other than Him? By Him you who were estranged and enemies because of your wicked works yet now has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death. Did you need any other eon, did you need any other angelic spirit, did you climb some emanating ladder back to God? No, You are living, breathing proof that Christ is sufficient to reconcile men to God, and that is essentially what He's going to do some day when He reconciles the entire universe.

Now let's see what it tells us in verse 21 about reconciliation, "And you who were once alienated." You know before we came to Jesus Christ we were alienated. The word means estranged. Before you were a Christian you were alienated from God. You were estranged, you were cut off, separated. Ephesians 2:12 "At the time you were without Christ aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise having no hope without God in the world." But, and I love it, now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off are made near. Beautiful Jesus Christ came and found you, and drew you to God. You're living proof of the power that Christ has to reconcile and if He can reconcile you He can do what He said some day and reconcile the universe. Chapter 4 of Ephesians, verse 17, verse 18, He talks about the gentiles, He says, "They walk in the vanity of their mind (verse 18) having the understanding darkened, alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart who being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness. Unsaved people are alienated from the life of God, cut off from Him.

Now I want to tell you something. It isn't due to ignorance. It isn't due to innocence. There's no such thing as an innocent heathen. There's no such thing as an innocent unbeliever. Look again at Colossians 1:21: "And you that were once alienated and enemies in your mind." Translate it this way: hostile in disposition toward God. Your own fault you were alienated because you hated God. You say, why did we hate God? You hated God vs. 21 because of your what? Wicked works. See what happens? Men love darkness rather than light because what? His deeds were evil. You sin, you love your sin, you hate God, He rebukes your sin, you hate God, you are alienated. Cut off by wicked works. There is nobody who is an innocent heathen. There is nobody who is an innocent unbeliever. Wicked works suppress the truth, create hostility toward God, and that brings alienation, and that's why people are alienated.

In Romans chapter one it says, "When they knew God they glorified Him not as God but were vain in their own imaginations, their foolish hearts were darkened, professing themselves to be wise they became as fools, God gave them up. What happened? They knew God, but they loved sin. Because they loved sin, they became hostile toward a righteous God, and their hostility toward a righteous God alienated them from Him. That's the way it is in life. Such inexcusable, human hostility is a result of the sin love of his own sin. In Isaiah there's a verse that I want to mention. It's I think 59, yes, 59:2, here it is: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and here it is, your sins have hidden His face from you and He will not hear, for your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity. Your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perverseness. It is your sin that creates the hostility toward a righteous God that creates the alienation. Now I hasten to add this: if this is true, and it is in Romans 8:7, Paul says: "The mind of man is enmity against God. If this is true, if men are cut off from God because they are hostile, because they love their sin, then if you're going to reconcile them, what are you going to have to deal with? Sin. That is the root cause of the problem, and so reconciliation, then, as a doctrine, must deal with the sin of man. If sin can be dealt with, then that frees me up from my hostility toward God which frees me from my alienation.

Now something's going to have to happen with sin. And I'm the problem, not God. But God does have a problem. People have often discussed who gets reconciled to whom. Does God get reconciled to me, or do I get reconciled to God? I think I get reconciled to God and God gets reconciled to me. Whenever I can't figure out one of two things I always take 'em both, (laughter) And the reason I say that is because I think there's enough scriptural justification to do that, For example, in order for me to be reconciled to God, now watch. In order for me to be reconciled to God, then I'm going to have to be transformed from being a sinner to being righteous, right? My sin has to, be dealt with, and in order for God to allow me to enter His presence His attitude toward sin is going to have to be appeased. You see what I mean? I've got to be transformed first. That's why it says, 2 Corinthians 5, don't look it up, you'll remember it, 2 Corinthians 5:17 "if any man be in Christ he is a what? New creation, and the next verse: "And all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself. He has to make us new creatures before He can reconcile us.

So man has to be dramatically, transformed, but God also has to have His attitude dealt with because God cannot look upon iniquity and iniquity is going to have to be dealt with, right? Something has got to modify God's wrath. Something's got to deal with God's attitude. The Old Testament, for example, as you read it in regard to the doctrine of reconciliation, you'll find that the Old Testament shows a widespread understanding that man could not be reconciled to God unless something is done to appease God's wrath, as well as change man's nature. So our alienation from God is due to #1, I'm a sinner, and #2, God hates my sin, and requires punishment. You say boy that's a tough problem. How can a holy God and a sinful man be reconciled? You've got to change the sinful man; you've got to appease the wrath of a holy God. You know, that's precisely what God did. God appeased His wrath by pouring it out on whom? Christ. God made us new creations by faith in whom? Christ. If any man be in Christ he's what? A new creation. Christ bore in His own body our sins, Those things, beloved,

and I just thought of this this second, you'd be surprised how much of that goes on up here (laughter) but in II Cor. 5:17 here you have in verses 18 to 20 a study of reconciliation, and on one side of it verse 17: "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation. On the, other side of it, verse 21, for He hath made Him who knew no sin to be what? \$in for us,, Now you have on one side God makes us new on the other side God puts our sin on Christ and appeases His wrath.; those are the two sides of reconciliation in the middle you have the doctrine of reconciliation, Both have to take place.

Beloved, what a fantastic thing occurred at the Cross, He bore our sins in His own body and the power of His own life is poured into our lives and we're transformed. Both are taken care of , fantastic, And you know, you can't reconcile yourself. You can't say, well, I'm going to be reconciled to God. I'm going to go on a spiritual diet, and eat no sin, going to discipline myself to be righteous. Forget it, it will never happen. You know why? Look at Romans 5, I'll show you something interesting, Verse 6. Boy, it's really fun to study the Bible, isn't it? Aren't you enjoying this? Thank you, both of you. (laughter) Romans 5, I mean this is exciting to me.

Now I want you to see, now there are four reasons here why you can't save yourself. -It's a good outline some time if you want to use it with an unbeliever. Four reasons you can't save yourself. Number one, lack of strength. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died." First thing, you can't save yourself; you're not strong enough. No strength. Lack of merit. Lack of merit. "When we were without strength in due time Christ died for the what? Ungodly." You know what you are? You're ungodly. You can't save yourself, you're not good enough. O.K.? Verse 7: Lack of (we might say this is lack of righteousness, for scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die, but God committed His love toward us in that while we were yet what? Sinners. You can't save yourself because you don't have any righteousness. And I'll tell you something else. You can't save yourself because you can't even get into God's presence on your own; you're an enemy. Verse 10. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His son. Four reasons you can't save yourself: Lack of strength, lack of merit, lack of righteousness, lack of friendship with God. You can't even enter His presence.

Now if you're going to be reconciled, you're going to have to go to verse 10, "When we were enemies we were reconciled to God. It was by the death of His son." Now folks, that leads us to point two in the outline. The means of reconciliation. This is really rich. The means. Verse 20 again, Colossians, here's the means hang on, here we come. "And having made peace (listen now) the Blood of His Cross." How did Christ take God and man who were enemies and make peace? He made peace between God and man through the Blood of His Cross, now go down to the end of verse 22, it says it another way: "In the body of His flesh through death." Stop there. Two phrases, two phrases. Number one, the Blood of His Cross; number two, the body of His flesh through death. These two phrases show how God dealt with sin.

First of all, through the Blood of His Cross. Blood is the metaphor for sacrifice. It is His death for sin that saves us. Peter even says we were redeemed with precious blood. But what he is saying is in a metaphorical sense; the blood is the symbol of the sacrifice of Christ. The reason the Bible talks about the blood of Christ is because that connects Christ's death with the entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament and says He is the final sacrifice. You see? He died a violent death, and blood speaks of violent death as a Hebrew metaphor. But even more than that it speaks of the death of a sacrifice. The blood was put on the doorpost and the lintel, the blood was sprinkled. But it was the death that was the atonement, the blood was the symbol of the violence of it. And all of those sacrifices were saying when the final sacrifice comes He will die a violent death, and it wasn't the violent death like an animal where He bled to death. An animal just bled to death, Jesus did not bleed to death, But it was the violent death of sinbearing. That's important. In Hebrews 13:11: "The bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the highest priest for sin are burned outside the camp, wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate, and here it shows the violence of His death and the sacrificial comparison as the sacrifices were shedding blood so shall Christ come and shed blood, not that the shed blood is the literal saving thing, but that it connects His death with the Old Testament sacrifices.

Now all Old Testament sin offerings were bloodshed, that's how the killing was done violently. And the animals were pictures of the coming final sacrifice of Christ, who would die a violent death for sin. That was God's plan. Sin was to be paid for by death. The price of ransom was to be blood sacrificial death. And the reason, and I just want to make it clear the reason it speaks so often in the New Testament of Christ's blood shed is not telling us that Jesus bled to death. He did not bleed to death. You know how He died? He willed Himself dead. Don't ever forget that. He said, "No man takes my life from me... I what? I lay it down by myself." And listen to me. When that soldier came over and pierced the side of Jesus, what came out? Blood and water. The blood was still in His body long after He was dead. He did not bleed to death, And the point that I think the Bible is making there is Jesus was never bled to death as a victim, He died because He willed Himself dead. "Father (what?) into Thy hands I commend my Spirit." He died as the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifice, and that's why it talks about His blood.

And please, I'm not on the first leg of liberalism. I'm not denying the precious blood of Christ. (laughter) And I mean that seriously, I know that whenever you talk about something you should talk about something that's very sentimental to us. I just want you to understand what it means. His blood saves us only in the sense that His death was the sacrificial death of the final lamb, And you want to know something, He never lost His blood the majority if it, Apparently only some of it came out of those wounds, and those would have sealed up pretty fast with nails there. The majority of His blood remained in His body at least a half an hour and maybe longer after His death, and it was His death that was the issue.

And as I say, the blood only connecting it with Old Testament sacrifice and so when we come down to verse 22 we read this, "In the body of His flesh through death. And this is an exact statement. His death as a man, His death incarnate in human flesh, is the thing that reconciled us to God, for what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh. Christ died not just as a sacrifice but a perfect substitution. He didn't die as an animal, nope. He didn't die as a spirit. He died as a man for men. You see, that's what 22 means. He died as a sacrifice in verse 20. He died as a substitution in verse 22. He paid the penalty as a substitute. A perfect substitute. And so you know what happened? God said, that takes care of my wrath. That substitutionary death takes care of my wrath. And then Jesus Christ came flying out of the tomb three days later and moved into the lives of His people so that they might be transformed and that takes care of that side of it. And I can say with Paul, "For to me to live is (what?) Christ." God has been appeased and I have been transformed. All because of the Cross. Our salvation is possible only through the death of Christ,

Now, I'm just going to comment very quickly on the final thoughts here. Now watch. We see the plan and the means of reconciliation. I want to show you the aim of it. Why did He reconcile us? Oh, I love it, verse 22. The middle of the verse: "To present you holy and unblameable and unchargeable in His sight." God said, "Look, if they're coming up here to be with Me, they've got to get cleaned up. They've got to be holy; that means cleansed from all sin. They've got to be faultless, without a blemish, blameless, above reproach," You say, why those three words? Well, I thought about it a long time, and this is what I thought. Holy has to do with our relationship to God. Unblameable, faultless, has to do with ourself, and that last one, unprovable, seems to extend to others. There has to be a holiness between us and God, there has to be a faultlessness within our own selves. We have to be above reproach if you will in terms of others, because who is it that's ever at the throne of God accusing us? Satan. And you know something, when you put your faith in Jesus Christ instantly at that very moment you become holy, unblameable, unprovable in His sight.

Now that little phrase at the end is careful, we want to watch that one, don't come out and say I've just been saved, I want you to meet me, I'm holy, unblameable and unprovable. (laughter) You are holy, unblameable, unprovable, what's the rest of the verse in His sight. Don't you forget it. In reality, you've got some problems (laughter). But you see, who does God see you in? In His sight, you're where? You're in Christ. So He sees you in Christ, so in His sight you are Holy and faultless and blameless, and that's why He says, "There's therefore now (Romans 8:1) no condemnation." And that's why He says in Romans 8:33 "Who shall lay any charge to God's elect, it is God that has declared you just. Is there a higher court in the universe? No. Great truth. That's basically positional, and I think it has a positional meaning right now listen to it: "To present you holy, unblameable, unprovable in His sight," but you know something else? I want to just throw this in free for nothing. I think it also has a future meaning. I think some day when we get to Heaven we're going to become in practice what we are in position, right? We're going to be able to go into Heaven and say, "Hi, I'm John MacArthur, holy, unblameable, and unprovable finally!" (laughter) There's going to be that

aspect of it. What a great reality, and that's what Jesus had in His heart when Paul writes that He wanted to present as he says in 2 Corinthians, a "chaste virgin to the Lord", or as Paul writes, "husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church" that He might make the Church without spot, without blemish. Some day we're going to be in practice what we are in position. That's why He reconciled us, to fit us to meet Him. That's the purpose of it, the aim of it.

Lastly, the evidence of reconciliation. You say, boy, reconciliation is super who gets it? Who gets in on that? How do you know you've got it? How do you know you've been reconciled to God? Verse 23: "If you (what are the next four words?) continue in the faith. Grounded, settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel." Stop there.

You know how you can tell the true Christian? One word, continue. Continue, continue I don't know how many times I've gone over that; I'd go over it again. Who's reconciled? The people who continue. In Luke 8:13 we have the parable, "The seed fell on the rock, they who when they hear receive the Word with joy and have no root, who for a while believe and in time of testing (what?) fall away." You know something? Never saved. True Christians will what? Continue, continue don't forget it. Continue, continue. Jesus said, John 8:30: "Many believed on His name, but He said, if you continue in my Word than you are my real disciples." You can tell the true Christian he continues. True branches in John 15 do what? Abide. Judas branches are there a while and gone. James 1, James says: "Be doers of the Word, not hearers only." You want to make sure that there's more than just listening, but that there's a continuity there. You don't you're not like somebody who's a hearer, who looks in a glass, sees himself, walks away, forgets what he was. There's continuity there there's continuance.

Listen to I John 2:19: "They went out from us, but they were not of us. If they had been with us they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out from us that it might be manifested that they never were of us." Verse 24; "Let that therefore abide in you which you have heard from the beginning, if that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son and in the Father and this is the promise that He promised eternal life. Who gets eternal life? Those who continue. It's repeated many times in Scripture. The person who is grounded, settled, and not what? Moved away from the hope of the Gospel. Contrast John 6:66 after a certain incident, Jesus speaking, it says "And many of His disciples walked what? No more with Him." True Christians continue. And so He says to the Colossians, hey, Jesus can reconcile you. And they might say, but how do we know He has? How do we know who are the reconciled ones, and He nails them down. The ones who continue. And it's almost like a warning don't you fool around with false teaching.

What are we to believe, what is the Gospel we are to continue in, look at verse 23: "The Gospel which you have heard, the apostolic Gospel, and which was preached to every creature what is under heaven, and that is hyperbole, for everybody in your world, the universal Gospel, and the Gospel of which I Paul am made a minister." You know what Gospel the apostolic Gospel, the declared Gospel, the one that I preach that's the one you want to continue in, So the Gospel they've heard, the Gospel

that's been preached, the Gospel that saved Paul, the Gospel that Paul is a minister of, that's the Gospel. The Gospel that made me a minister, he said. The Gospel that redeemed me, the one the apostles preach. That's it. Continue in that one. And Paul said to the Galatians, if anybody preaches any other Gospel, let him be what? Accursed.

Now I want to close by having you look at 2 Corinthians, 5 and this is the key to everything for Christians. II Cor. 5:17; and this summarizes our study, reconciliation, Listen to this! I'm going to give you the simple principles about reconciliation. Number one, it transforms men. Verse 17: "if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation." It transforms men. Secondly, it appeases God's wrath, verse 21; "He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." He bore our sins, and God could give us righteousness. It satisfies God. Thirdly, it comes through Christ. All of it is through Christ, verse 18. "And all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ", verse 19: "to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Stop there. It changes us, it satisfies God, it comes through Christ, I'll add a further thing it is for anybody. Verse 19, He reconciles the world. Back up to verse 14. "The love of Christ constrains us because we thus judge, that if one died for all then we're all dead." You know what that says to me? There's two alls in that He died for all and all are dead. How many are dead? Everybody. How many then did He die for? Everybody. Those alls have to mean the same thing. What do we say then about reconciliation? It transforms men, it satisfies God, it comes through Christ, it's for everybody.

Now I want to add one more thing. It is our ministry. You and I who have been reconciled, look at it folks, verse 18, the end of the verse, "He has committed, or given to us, the ministry of (what?) reconciliation." The end of verse 19:

"... and has committed to us the (what?) the Word of reconciliation," verse 20: "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us, We beg you in Christ's stead be ye (what?) reconciled to God." Listen, beloved, the story of reconciliation won't end till Jesus comes because you and I are carrying it out. We are sent into this world as ambassadors; we represent God in a foreign land, and what's our ministry? To beg people to come to Jesus Christ. That's what it is. To beg people to be reconciled to God. To tell them that Jesus Christ in His death satisfied God's wrath and can transform their lives. And to say that to the world because He did it for the world. That's the ministry of reconciliation. Listen, the doctrine of reconciliation doesn't end when you get saved; it just becomes yours to give away to somebody else.

Father, thank you for our time tonight. Thank you for reconciling us to yourself. Father, right now I pray for anybody who might be in this place who is not reconciled to you, who is estranged, alienated, hostile in their mind, because of wicked works. I pray your Holy Spirit would extend to them that wooing, that gentle love that shall draw them to yourself. I pray that they may somehow begin to experience conviction, that they might begin to understand what it is to face sin, to open their hearts

to the one Who alone can transform them, make them righteous. Father, I pray for them right now that they would open their heart and receive Jesus Christ, and be reconciled to God. And I ask, Father, too, for those of us who are Christians,, that we might know the ministry committed to us, the ministry of reconciliation. That we might go out to the world to carry the message of reconciliation to those who need to hear that God wants to bereconciled to man, and the broader word that God some day is going to make friends with the whole universe again, and you can be a part of that. Help us to be faithful. We pray, in Christ's name, Amen.

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