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“Reconciled to God”

Colossians 1:19–23

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Ever since the fall of man, after man sinned against God in the garden of Eden, mankind has been estranged from God. But what was broken by man in the garden was reconciled by God on the cross! God pursued us to restore that relationship through Jesus’ sacrifice, through which He invites us to be reconciled to Him and then to spread that message of reconciliation to others. In this study, we will discuss what all this means.

1. **Colossians 1:19–23** – “[19] For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, [20] and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. [21] And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled [22] in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— [23] if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”
2. Three types of reconciliation
 - a. In accounting
 - i. Reconciliation in the context of accounting means making sure that numbers in financial records add up.
 - b. In interpersonal relationships
 - i. Wherever you have relationships, you have the potential for things to sour or break down.
 - ii. Reconciliation in relationships requires that the parties seek restoration and harmony.
 - c. Between God and man
 - i. God desires to restore the harmony, unity, and fellowship that He and mankind once shared.
 - ii. God’s desire for reconciliation implies the relationship between Him and man was broken.
3. Everyone is born separated from God.
 - a. To understand the need for Biblical reconciliation we must understand that man broke the fellowship between man and God.
 - b. The relationship between God and man was not always broken.
 - i. Originally, God walked with man in the cool of the day (**Genesis 3:8**).

- ii. God offered man every tree from which to eat in the Garden of Eden except one—the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (**Genesis 2:16-17**).
 - 1. God put this tree in the garden to give man the free will choice to love and obey God, or rebel against Him.
 - a. Choice allows us to have a loving relationship with God rather than a legal or robotic one.
 - iii. **DISCUSS:** Each day, we have a choice to let God be lord of our lives, or to dethrone Him and go our own way. What choice have you made this week, and why? What compels you to submit to the lordship of Christ?
 - c. Adam and Eve broke fellowship with God when they rebelled against His command in the Garden of Eden (**Genesis 3:1-7**).
 - i. Mankind had only one law, and they broke it.
 - 1. Satan distorted God’s Word and deceived Eve into breaking God’s command.
 - 2. She ate fruit from the forbidden tree and then gave the fruit to Adam who was with her, and he ate too.
 - 3. Once they chose to rebel against God, the fellowship between God and man was severed, this is known as the fall of mankind.
 - 4. Even though Eve sinned first, God placed the responsibility of the fall on Adam, the spiritual leader of the home and the one who directly received His instruction.
 - i. Adam was with Eve when she was deceived but he stood idly by and did nothing to intervene.
 - ii. **DISCUSS:** What are some ways you can lovingly intervene when you see a fellow believer being deceived?
 - d. Because Adam and Eve sinned, and all mankind are their offspring, we are all born with an inherited sin nature and are estranged from God.
 - i. **Isaiah 59:2** – *“Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”*
 - ii. **Romans 5:12** – *“Through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”*
4. Since every person is born separated from God, every person needs to be reconciled to God.
- a. Reconciliation means restoring harmony.
 - b. Biblical reconciliation is the restoration of relationship and fellowship between God and man through Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

- i. When we humble ourselves, confess our sins, and come into agreement with Jesus that we have done wrong, we can now be reconciled to God.

- 5. Four points about reconciliation:
 - a. Reconciliation was accomplished on the cross.
 - b. Reconciliation was initiated by God.
 - c. Reconciliation means that God does not count our sins against us.
 - d. Reconciliation is a message God wants us, as ambassadors of Christ, to share with the world.

- 6. Reconciliation was accomplished on the cross.
 - a. **Colossians 1:19–20** – “[19] For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, [20] and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”
 - b. As sinners, we cannot, in our own effort, ever restore our position with God, so a holy God sent His holy Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve.
 - i. Jesus traded His peace for our punishment.
 - ii. Jesus traded His righteousness for our sinfulness; by responding in faith for what Christ has done, a sinner can be reconciled to God—this is the great exchange.
 - 1. **2 Corinthians 5:21** – “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
 - 2. When God sees a repentant sinner, He sees the righteousness of His Son.
 - 3. **DISCUSS:** What does the great exchange reveal about the heart of God for us?

- 7. Reconciliation was initiated by God.
 - a. God is the innocent party in the broken relationship.
 - b. We are the guilty party who betrayed and disobeyed God, yet God pursued us and initiated reconciliation.
 - i. **Colossians 1:21a** – “You, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works . . .”
 - 1. All people think, say, and do wicked things by nature.
 - 2. Despite our sinfulness, God initiates the reconciliation process out of His love for us.
 - ii. **Colossians 1:21b–22** – “[21] . . . yet now He has reconciled [22] in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight”

1. God seeks to reconcile every person to Himself who is willing to respond in faith.
 2. God pursued us not because we were worthy, but because He is merciful.
 3. **DISCUSS**: How does God's treatment of us despite ourselves reflect His character? How does your treatment of others reflect your character?
 4. **DISCUSS**: When has God pursued you despite yourself? How did you respond?
8. Reconciliation means that God does not count our sins against us.
- a. **2 Corinthians 5:19a** – *“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.”*
 - i. Reconciliation is more than God overlooking our sins.
 - ii. Reconciliation is God expunging our record and giving us the righteousness of His Son.
 1. **DISCUSS**: How does knowing your standing with God allow you to seek to please God from a place of victory rather than fear?
 - b. **Psalms 103:12** – *“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”*
 - i. No matter what you've ever done, said, or thought, Jesus died on the cross for your sin.
 - c. **1 John 1:9** – *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*
 - i. Jesus forgives the repentant sinner, which is why, when Jesus dies on the cross, the last words He utters are *“It is finished”* (**John 19:30**), which means **tetelestai**.
 1. **Tetelestai** was often written on prison doors to indicate a sentence fully served.
 2. Shipmen would write **tetelestai** on receipts when someone's cargo was paid in full.
 3. Jesus used this word on the cross to indicate that He'd served our sentence and paid the full price for us to come to the Father.
 - ii. In the NIV, **Colossians 1:22** says *“free from accusation”* because when we receive what Christ did for us on that cross, we are reconciled to and our fellowship is restored.
 - iii. **DISCUSS**: Knowing God does not revisit our past sins, how should we treat those who have sinned against us? How can you become more like Jesus in this area of forgiveness?

9. Reconciliation is a message God wants us, as ambassadors of Christ, to share with the world.
- a. **2 Corinthians 5:18–20** – “[18] All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: [19] that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. [20] We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (1984 NIV).
 - i. In a government, an ambassador represents the sending nation or sovereign to a foreign country.
 - ii. It’s as if we’ve been sent to a foreign country because this world is not our home, our ultimate citizenship is in heaven (**Philippians 3:20**).
 - b. God has commissioned us to share the message of reconciliation by ministering to the lost people of the world; this is our mandate.
 - i. **DISCUSS**: How are you acting as Christ’s ambassador to the world? What is something that you need to do or stop doing so that you can represent Jesus well to your family, friends, and the rest of the world?
 - c. God wants us to live in a way that represents His holiness.
 - i. **1 Corinthians 11:1** – “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (NIV).
 1. Being an example is a high calling because people are always watching our witness.
 - d. God’s desire for reconciliation illustrated in the letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.
 - i. Elizabeth Barrett, a famous poet, became Elizabeth Barrett Browning when she married fellow poet Robert Browning against her father’s wishes, in 1846.
 - ii. Her father disowned her, but she sent her parents a letter each week, for about 10 years, seeking reconciliation.
 - iii. Unfortunately, her family sent back Elizabeth’s decade’s worth of unopened letters, even though perhaps reading just one of her letters would have changed their hearts toward her.
 - iv. In the same way, God has sent you a love letter: the Bible.
 1. When you read the Bible, you understand the heart of the Father for you and His desire to reconcile with the lost people of the world.
 2. **DISCUSS**: How have you recently been changed by spending time in God’s Word?

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)