

Reconciled and renewed * 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

May 12, 2020 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

We all love a good story of reconciliation, don't we? Whether it's Fred and Betty or Homer and Marge or William and Kate, we love to see people overcome conflict and re-establish broken bonds of friendship.

We love that. We love to see relationships restored.

And it just so happens that God does too. God loves reconciliation.

And here in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Paul tells us all about *God's* brand of reconciliation.

He writes in verse 18 - 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: (ie., the job of telling people...) 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ...

Twice in two verses, Paul says the very same thing – God is reconciling the world to himself through Christ. God is reconciling the world to himself through Christ. That's so important that you have to say it twice.

Now somebody might ask, 'why do I need to be reconciled to God? I try to be a good person and I think that my relationship with God is all good.'

Well – I know where you're coming from – and being a good person is awesome – but are you a good person ALL THE TIME? Are all of your thoughts and actions good? And are you actively pursuing your relationship with God or are you acting as though God doesn't really mean that much? If He even exists.

When we put ourselves before God, we create a breach between us and Him. He created us, He provides for us, He sustains us day by day, and when we act as though we are better than Him – that causes a relational breach. Our sin separates us from God.

Our God though loves reconciliation so much that He pursued it before we were even willing to be interested.

And here's how – verse 19 – God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, *not counting men's sins against them*. And then down in verse 21, Paul expands on that idea - 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Our sin separated us from God, but God is so rich in mercy that He chose to bear than sin Himself, and forgive our trespasses. On the Cross, God made sinless Jesus to be sin so that we could become the righteousness of God. Jesus died to repair the breach between us and God so that we could be restored to Him.

And not only that, I skipped a verse, didn't I? Back up to verse 17 – here's what happens when we receive this gift of forgiveness and reconciliation – we become brand new people.

Paul writes: 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

The old way of living, of ignoring God and living for self, the way that causes relational breaches is gone. It's gone. If you are in Christ you are a new creation – a sparkly new iPad coming out of those fancy boxes apple makes. The old is gone, the new has come; when God reconciles us to Him, when we receive this reconciliation, we become brand new people, living for God.

And of course, verse 18 - 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ... This is all from God. His gift to us.

And so what does Paul say we should do about this? Verse 20 - 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf (as though God were making his appeal through us): Be reconciled to God (2Co 5:17-21 NIV).

If you're watching this and you've never really thought about a breach between you and God – that ignoring Him separated Him from you - then I appeal to you exactly as Paul does – be reconciled to God. **Admit** the ways that you have set yourself above Him; turn from them and **receive His forgiveness** and then **live in light of it**. That's what reconciliation to God means. And you get a brand new start.

Now if you have trusted God, you may be wondering, 'well, how does this apply to me? I'm already reconciled to God.' Well, good question, and it's one that Paul himself I think wrestled with. Because, think about it – Paul is writing to the Corinthian CHURCH. He's writing to believers and he tells them to be reconciled to God. What's that all about?

I really think it comes down to what it means to be reconciled to someone. Like I just said – when you are reconciled to someone (at least when the dynamic of forgiveness flows this way), you confess your sin, you turn from it to receive forgiveness and then live in light of it.

I think that Paul tells believers to be reconciled to God because sometimes we can be a little indifferent to that last one. Sure, we're willing to praise God for redeeming us in church, but through the rest of the week, are we living like the brand new people that God has made us to be?

We are reconciled and renewed and we gotta live like it.

It's all too easy to go back to those old sinful patterns of living, but we are restored to God, brand new people remade to be like Christ. We are reconciled and renewed and we gotta live that out in our lives.

So on one hand, we turn our backs on the sin that made us need reconciling in the first place; on the other, we become agents of reconciliation in the world. I like how David Garland puts it: "[This] requires that [we] become active reconcilers [ourselves]. Like Christ, a minister of reconciliation plunges into the midst of human tumult to bring harmony out of chaos, reconciliation out of estrangement and love in the place of hate (Garland, *2 Corinthians*, NAC, 292).

I know that some of you are involved in work or family conflict and I know that you are doing your best to do this – lovingly pouring water on the flames rather than gasoline. Keep it up. Extend the same reconciling grace to those in your midst as Christ gave to you.

We are reconciled and renewed; we gotta live in light of it.