

RECONCILIATION

TEXT: COLOSSIANS 1:20-23

INTRODUCTION:

1. I want to preach tonight on the doctrine of reconciliation (cf. 1:20, 21). The word *reconciliation* as it is used in the Bible means "to cause to conform to a standard, to be adjusted to a specified standard."
2. Man needs to be reconciled to God; God does not need to be reconciled. God does not need to conform to any accepted norm – God is propitiated, and the sinner is reconciled.
3. Man needs to change; for God cannot change, and does not need to change. In the work of reconciliation man lays aside his hostility to God, and makes peace with God.
4. The *Scofield Study Bible* says this about "reconciliation"-- The Greek word signifies "to change thoroughly from," and occurs in Romans 5:10; 11:15; I Corinthians 7:11; II Corinthians 5:18-20. Reconciliation looks toward the effect of the death of Christ upon man, as propitiation (See Scofield note on Romans 3:25) is the Godward aspect, and is that effect of the death of Christ upon the believing sinner which, through divine power, works in him a "thorough change" toward God from enmity and aversion to love and trust. It is never said that God is reconciled. God is propitiated, the sinner reconciled (cf. II Corinthians 5:18-21).
5. Reconciliation is not limited to sinners. It includes "all things" (Col. 1:20; cf. Romans 8:18-23). Sin has affected all of God's creation.
6. Back in the garden of Eden, the LORD said to Adam, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field" (Genesis 3:17, 18).
7. Reconciliation affects only those "things in earth, or things in heaven" (1:20). Albert Barnes said, "For those only are specified. Nothing is said of the inhabitants of hell, whether fallen angels, or the spirits of wicked men who are there."
8. Barnes goes on to say that "the blood of the cross was fitted to secure entire reconciliation between heaven and earth. There was no enemy which it was not fitted to reconcile to God...It cannot mean that all things are actually reconciled for that never has been true. Multitudes

on earth have remained alienated from God, and have lived and died his enemies."

I. RECONCILIATION -- THE PAST (1:21)

1. "Sometime alienated and enemies" (1:21) refers to our condition before we were reconciled to God; before we were saved; before we were born again.
2. "Sometime" means we were once alienated, but not now because we have been reconciled to God.
3. The Greek word translated "sometime" is often translated, "in time past" or "in times past."
4. Romans 11:30 says, "For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief."
5. In Galatians 1:13 the apostle Paul says, "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it."
6. Paul says something similar in Galatians 1:23, "But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once (same Greek word) he destroyed."
7. In Ephesians 2:2 & 3, Paul says, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."
8. And in Ephesians 2:11, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands."
9. Referring to the runaway slave Onesimus, Paul writes to Philemon, "Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me" (Philemon 11).
10. First Peter 2:10 says, "Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God."
11. All these Scriptures draw a contrast between our condition before and after we were reconciled to God. We were "alienated" from God. We were God's "enemies." Our minds were "wicked," and our "works" were wicked, but now we have been reconciled (1:21).
12. "Alienated" means we were strangers to God's grace. We did not know God -- we were strangers. The word means "to be shut out from one's fellowship and intimacy."

13. We often hear the term "illegal alien" in the news. Some people say the term is too harsh. They prefer to use the term "undocumented visitors" or "undocumented workers."
14. Well, God says before we were saved we were "illegal aliens." We were "alienated and enemies" (1:21). One could say we were "undocumented visitors" because when God opens up His books, only those whose names are recorded in the Book of Life are going to be admitted into heaven.
15. We were "undocumented workers" because our "wicked works" (1:21) would have kept us out of heaven, but thank God we were reconciled by the blood of Christ (1:20).
16. Being "alienated" from God is bad enough, but being God's "enemy" is even worse (1:21). The word suggests being hostile to God, and actively opposing God. Sinners actively oppose God's program.
17. That is why Romans 1:30 describes certain sinners as "haters of God."
18. Sinners go from cold and indifferent to hostile and hateful.
19. To stir up this hatred, Satan uses the media, the entertainment business, the government, the educational system, and organizations like the ACLU and other atheist/communist groups.
20. A group called "American Atheists" spends a lot of money putting up billboards mocking Christianity. Their latest one features a picture of a young girl writing a letter to Santa Claus. The letter says, "Dear Santa, All I want for Christmas is to skip church! I'm too old for fairy tales."
21. Note the word "mind" in Colossians 1:21. Satan confuses peoples' minds. Second Corinthians 4:4 says Satan, "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not."
22. When the mind is wrong, the conduct is wrong.
23. Barnes says, "Sin has corrupted and perverted alike the moral and the intellectual powers, and thus the whole man is arrayed against his Creator."
24. Romans 8:7 says, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God."
25. Romans 1:28 says, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."

II. RECONCILIATION -- THE FUTURE (1:22)

1. The purpose of reconciliation is to present us holy and unblameable and unproveable in God's sight (1:22).

2. The word "present" is used to describe a bride being presented to her husband.
3. Second Corinthians 11:2 says, "For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."
4. Ephesians 5:27 says, "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."
5. The idea is that the Lord, having redeemed us by His death on the cross, is going to present us "holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight" (Col. 1:22).
6. "Holy and unblameable and unproveable" (1:22) reminds us we have been delivered from the penalty of sin, and the power of sin, and someday we will be delivered from the very presence of sin.
7. Jude 24 says, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."
8. "Unblameable and unproveable" (Col. 1:22) means, "blameless, and above reproach." First Corinthians 1:8 says, "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is our future because we have been reconciled to God. These Scriptures refer to when we get to heaven (cf. Eph. 5:27).
9. In that day when we stand before God, we will not stand as condemned sinners, but as reconciled saints. No charge will be brought before us because of "the blood of his cross" (1:20-22; cf. I John 3:1-3).
10. *On the happy, golden shore, where the faithful part no more,
When the storms of life are over, meet me there;
Where the night dissolves away into pure and perfect day,
I am going home to stay—meet me there.* -- Henrietta Blair (Fanny Crosby)

III. RECONCILIATION -- THE PRESENT (1:23)

1. Verse 23 emphasizes the importance of continuing in the faith, grounded and settled, and being unmoveable.
2. Or, as Paul says in I Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
3. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "The true Christian life means yielding everything to God (Romans 6:13 -- "Neither yield ye your members as

- instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God") and then remaining in that attitude" (*Studies in Colossians*).
4. "Holy and unblameable and unreprouvable" (1:22) describes an inward change ("holy"), an outward change ("unblameable"), and an upward change ("unreprouvable").

CONCLUSION:

1. I suppose my favorite Christmas song is "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" written by Charles Wesley.

Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"

2. That is the real story of Christmas.