

The Ministry of Reconciliation

The apostle Paul wrote of being reconciled to God by Jesus Christ and being given the ministry of reconciliation (2nd Cor. 5:18). The word, *“reconciliation”*, as it is used in the Word of God, means to change from a position of enmity, or hostility, to one of friendship. It is God who accomplishes reconciliation, between Himself and mankind, through His grace on the grounds of the sacrificial, atoning death of the Lord Jesus on the cross.

It is interesting to note that the first mention of reconciliation is found in the Old Testament, in the book of Leviticus. The Lord gave instruction regarding the sin offering, *“no sin offering, whereof any of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of the congregation to reconcile withal in the holy place, shall be eaten: it shall be burnt in the fire”* (Lev. 6:30). In this occurrence of the word, *“reconcile”*, the meaning is to make atonement.

This thought is found a number of times in the Old Testament Scriptures and tells us of God’s divine purpose in providing a means of reconciliation through the sacrifice of another. All of the animal sacrifices pictured and pointed forward to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, who made reconciliation between God and man through the shedding of His own precious blood.

It is good to remember that, while God and man are met together, it is man that is reconciled to God. God does not need to be reconciled. It is man who has alienated himself from God through wilful sin and rebellion against Him. The Lord reproved the people of Israel though the words of the prophet, Isaiah, *“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear”* (Isa. 59:1-2).

In spite of our sin and rebellion against Him, God has moved toward us in love and in reconciling, redeeming grace, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, His beloved Son. The wise woman of Tekoa said to King David, *“For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him”* (2nd Sam. 14:14).

The means that God has devised is in the person of the person of the Lord Jesus and His sacrificial atoning death and precious blood shed on the cross. Because of our sin, we were estranged from God. We needed someone to bridge the distance between ourselves and God. Job understood the predicament and said of the Lord, *“For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both”* (Job 9:32-33).

The Lord said through the prophet Ezekiel, *“I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none”* (Ezek. 22:30).

What could not be provided from amongst men, God has provided in the person of His Son. The apostle Paul wrote, *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all”* (1st Tim. 2:5-6). As the Mediator, the Lord Jesus stood between God and man, taking our place and bearing our sin and the judgment our sin deserved.

Paul tells us in the book of Romans, that when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Rom. 5:10). Now, we are no longer enemies, but have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, being justified by faith in Him (Rom. 5:1).

We learn through Paul's letter to the Ephesians, that not only has man been reconciled to God through the death of the Lord Jesus, but also that Jew and Gentile have been reconciled together (Eph. 2:12-22). The law of commandments had created a wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, so that they were at enmity (hostile) with one another.

The work of reconciling Jews and Gentiles together was accomplished through the cross. Through His sacrificial death, the Jesus abolished the enmity that existed between Jews and Gentiles. Paul wrote, *"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us"* (Eph. 2:14).

Through the blood of His cross He came and preached peace to those that were far off and those that were nigh. Now both Jews and Gentiles have access to the Father by one Spirit and are builded together, a holy temple in the Lord, for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

The scope of the reconciling work of the Lord Jesus, through His sacrificial, atoning death and His precious blood shed for the remission of sins, is beyond our ability to comprehend. We praise God for His matchless grace, bestowed upon undeserving sinners, knowing that the burden and guilt of sin have been removed.

Paul wrote, *"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them"* (2nd Cor. 5:19). *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 8:1).

*Blessed cross of reconciling,
Atoning work by Christ is done;
All the sin of man defiling,
Laid upon the sinless Son.*

*Gone the wall of separation,
Christ, the Lord made up the hedge;
God and man in new relation,
Holy Spirit, seal and pledge.*

*Jew and Gentile, now in union,
Reconciled through precious blood;
Builded thus for sweet communion,
Holy temple for our God.*

*All enjoy a new position,
Through such reconciling grace;
Bow our hearts in deep contrition,
Til we see Him face to face.*

Bernie Payne