

## RECONCILIATION

What is the major problem with our world? When I goggle this.- These were the top world's biggest problem on the UN list – Climate change, Wars and military conflicts, Human rights violation

Most of these issues are directly or indirectly related to relationships. It is basically about how we relate to each other and the world. The problems have arisen out of **broken relationships**. The solution to the problem will require restored relationship - reconciliation to seeing a way forward.

In its broadest sense 'reconciliation' means '**coming together**'. The dictionary defines 'reconciliation' as a situation in which two people, or groups of people, become friendly again after they have argued.

In Australia, we will soon have the voice referendum and at its heart, it's about reconciliation and the **strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, for the benefit of all Australians**.

It is important to seek reconciliation as God desires, we are to live with peace with everyone as much as it depends on you. However, in the context of God's word, we have bigger and more important issue – our reconciliation with God.

Last week Pastor Clinton reminded us that we are justified and are in the right relationship with God because of Jesus and we can rejoice even in suffering. God can use all of life's difficulties to bring us even greater blessing to accomplish his purposes. We can be confident in the hope of the glory of God that heaven awaits those we are reconciled with God.

In the passage before us, the apostle Paul open more of how this right relationship with God (reconciliation) is achieved and what it means for us.

We will look at this under 3 headings

- Still helpless, Christ died for us
- God proves his love for us as Christ died for us
- Saved from God's wrath and reconciled to God through Jesus death and resurrection.

1. While we were **still helpless**, at the right time, **Christ died for ungodly**

Think of a time when you had a disagreement with someone. How did you come to a resolution? Normally you and the other person will need to come together to work through your side of the story and his/her side of the story and contribute to a part in the process of a reconciliation.

However, what we see here in these verses is one sided as verses 6-11 tells us about our condition before God with regards to the reconciliation.

This is how the Apostle Paul describe our human condition.

When we were still helpless (6), ungodly (v6) sinners (v8), God's enemies (v10)

We sometimes hear that God helps those who help themselves. This is not what these verses teach. Romans 5 teaches that God helps them that cannot help themselves.

This idea is offensive to the people who are non-religious and religious.

Our atheist friends will say we need to grow up and take responsibility for ourselves. They say in the past, we needed to depend on the gods when we did not understand how the world works but now, we know better, and we do not to seek approval from anyone.

Our religious friends will also tell us that we need to come to God by some form of good works so we can be acceptable to him.

The apostle Paul had to deal with this in his day when some say that you can be a Christian, but you have to add this or that like obeying the law of Moses. Here the apostle Paul said that we contribute nothing to our right relationship with God – to be reconcile to him.

There is no way we can do anything to contribute to the reconciliation for we were ungodly, sinners and God's enemies.

This might be shocking and offensive to those moral people who think that somehow, we can come to God because we are not that bad.

In Luke 18:9-14 – Jesus told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else: <sup>10</sup> “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one

a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee was standing and praying like this about himself: [d] ‘God, I thank you that I’m not like other people—greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I give a tenth [e] of everything I get.’ <sup>13</sup> “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, ‘God, have mercy on me, [f] a sinner!’ <sup>14</sup> I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

How does this apply to us?

The only way to come to God is to be like the tax collector in humble repentance saying God, have mercy on me, a sinner. If we do not know our true condition before God, we will not seek for a solution. If we still think we can come to God on our own merit, trying to do our best getting our life together, we do not understand our true condition before God or the grace of God for us.

## 2. While we were still sinners (V8) – God **proves his love for us** – Christ died for us

Imagine you had a big disagreement with someone close to you, who is the one who normally come to make the peace. Is it you or the other person?

Here we see the main initiator of the restoration of this relationship comes from God himself as he proves his love for us by sending Jesus to die for us.

In verse 7, For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. The Apostle Paul contrast how we would lay down our lives for those who we consider worthy.

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man probably (referring to someone whose uprightness is rather cold clinical and unattractive) though for a good man sometimes might possibly dare to die (whose goodness is warm, generous, and appealing)

We can be very generous in giving to those we consider worthy of our affection and respect. The uniqueness of God’s love is Christ giving himself even to the horrors of sin bearing death and doing it for undeserving sinners. V 8 But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This is the objective demonstration of God’s love – Jesus was born in a certain time and space now dies a real death upon a real cross. Christ offered his life as a supreme sacrifice for us (on behalf of) – Jesus took our place.

Isaiah 53: 5 But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds.<sup>6</sup> We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and the Lord has punished him for the iniquity of us all.

2 Cor 5:21 - He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

We have sinned and are justly under God's condemnation as we have openly rebelled against his good plan for our lives, and we were all heading in sin and death to an eternity in hell. Jesus took our place by taking on our condemnation by dying on the cross for us so we can be reconciled to God.

What does that mean for us?

There have been many times when I have experienced God's love for me as I become aware of how much he loved me as I am forgiven when I confess my sin. This is confirmed by his word in 1 Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

However, in the storms of life, we sometimes can get disoriented and when we are doubtful in our experience of God, there is an objective side to God' love for Jesus died a real death on the cross so we can be sure that no matter how we feel. Christ truly died for us.

Our feelings go up and down, but the truth of God remains.

Imagine you are on a plane and there is fog all around and you cannot see where the runway is. What does the pilot do? The pilot does not panic because he cannot see but he relies on the instruments on the plane flying in the midst of the fog to guide the plane to land safely on the runway.

We should be like the pilot trusting his instrument in the fog as we need to walk by faith, trusting on God's word relying on his word and not by sight relying on our subjective feelings for what we cannot see in the fog in our lives.

When we feel God is distant and we feel alone, it is good to pray and turn to God's word, and we remember that Jesus died for us 2000 years and rose again so what he said about himself is true and we can trust him.

Listen to some of what Jesus said.

Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest – Mt 11:28

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep – John 10: 11

In my father's house are many rooms. I go away and prepare a place for you – John 14:2-3

Our God is the main initiator of our reconciliation with him. He proves his love for us when Jesus died for us in history so we can trust him although we might not always feel him near to us.

**3. We are **saved from God's wrath** and **reconciled** to God through **Jesus death and resurrection**.**

Our relationship with God was broken on our side because we were ungodly, sinners and in fact enemies with a deep hostility to God's authority. We have departed from God's way and fallen short of God's standard and missed what God created us to be.

But our relationship with God was also broken on God's side because God hates sin and even if we could our very best to mend the relationship, it is still broken on God's side.

Rom 2:5 Because of your hardened and unrepentant heart **you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath**, when God's righteous judgment is revealed.

In the previous chapters in Romans, the Apostle Paul showed how God has already done the really difficult thing of justifying rebellious sinners through the death of Jesus on the cross for us.

Jesus took the wrath of God against us on himself and mended the broken relationship on God's side so we can now receive this reconciliation. We have received this because we were helpless to mend this relationship.

More than that, the Apostle Paul encourages us and reminds us that If God reconciled us to him while we were his enemies, how much more we will be saved on judgement day and be raised to eternal life and glory now that Jesus has been raised to life. We can be confident that Jesus' death and resurrection will give us the reconciliation with God now and forever with a place in the new heaven and earth.

10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. 11 And not only that, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.

What does that mean for us?

We started out by asking what the major problem in our world and we saw that broken relationship being the main reason. That is why God's word sees Jesus' death for us as the main solution to the broken relationship between God and humanity.

In 2 Cor 5:19, we see that this reconciliation is the solution for humanity's problem.

19 That is, in Christ, **God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them**, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us.

That is the big picture of what Jesus did on the cross - God was reconciling the world to himself not counting their trespasses or sins against them.

What is your response to God's word today? To make this personal, let me share my story - I was brought up as a devout Roman Catholic and was very serious about my faith but I was never sure if I was good enough to be able to get to heaven. I always thought it would be the height of arrogance for anyone to be able to say they are sure they can get to heaven. Of course, my assumption was I needed to be good enough to gain a place in heaven.

I remember on Good Friday kneeling before the crucifix pondering on Jesus' suffering on the cross. I have been taught that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, but I did not appreciate this personally until I believe he also died for me.

Even after I believe Jesus died for me, I still did not appreciate God's mercy and grace in what Jesus achieved on the cross and would always try to live a life as perfectly as possible. I would not be sure whether I am in God's good book as I would sin and ask for forgiveness but then would sin again.

I am not sure whether you ever felt this, but it is really tiring to try to live a good clean life before God by trying to do your best. My focus is not on Christ but on my trying very hard to do my best before God.

I did not appreciate that I have been justified before God and have been declared not guilty not because I am sinless but because Jesus took my place and died in my place. I did not appreciate that I am now reconciled before my heavenly father and if I have a place in the new heaven and earth, it is not because of who I am and what I did but who Jesus is and what he did.

I now know that my reconciliation with God is from the start to finish initiated by God. While I was helpless, God proved his love for me by sending Jesus to die for me. I do not need to try to live a perfect life so I can be accepted by God. I only need to trust that Jesus has died for me. Jesus has taken my place on the cross so I will not suffer God's wrath on judgement day. I thank God that I can receive God's reconciliation. I know God is interested in changing me to be more like Jesus, so I need trust and obey my heavenly father who is sovereign, loving, and wise for whatever comes my way. I can be confident that God who has started the good in me will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus – this was the verse given to me in my baptism.

I have shared my story in response to what Jesus has done. What is your response to God's gift of reconciliation?

If you are not a believer and would like to find out more about who Jesus is and what he did, you can come to talk to me or our pastors or you come also enrol in a Christianity explored course we will be running soon.

If you are trying to come to God based on doing the right things to be accepted by God, you will know how tiring this is. You will notice that some days you will be proud about what you achieved and some days you will be depressed about your failure. Maybe you should consider what Jesus has done in reconciling us to God not on you doing the right thing.

If you are a Christian who think God will only accept you if you can continue to do the right thing then you need to remember that God took the initiative before you did and Christ died for you while you were a helpless, ungodly sinner – so put your hope not in doing the right thing but on Jesus who loves you and has reconcile us to God while we were his enemies. We can be confident that that God who started his good work in you will bring it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus.

Jesus has died to reconcile us to God so we can have certain future hope and glory.

What is your response to God's gift of reconciliation? Let us pray.