

Reconciliation
2 Corinthians 5:19
Part Two

It is very difficult for us to sometimes be tolerant with the sins of others. We look at them with disgust. But we need to remember but there by the grace of God go I.

It is good thing that we never forget our roots. It is a good thing that we do not forget that we, like everyone else in this world, was once dead in trespasses and sins alienated from God and without hope.

What do we learn about reconciliation from 2 Corinthians 5:18-20?

The first thing we learn is this: The ministry of reconciliation proceeds from and returns to God (2 Corinthians 5:18).

So, what is the second thing we learn? The second thing we learn is this: The word of reconciliation needs to be extended to everyone in this world without making distinctions (2 Corinthians 5:19).

The word “namely” (HOS HOTI) is used by Paul to introduce a quick summary of the message associated with the ministry of reconciliation.

So how does he begin this summary? He begins this with these words, **“Namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.”** The thought contained in these words is not a new thought. In fact, it is a repetition of the same thought that Paul had just shared with the Corinthians in the previous verse. The only difference is that he uses a few different words. So rather than saying, **“who reconciled us to Himself through Christ”** as he did in **2 Corinthians 5:18**, he now says in **2 Corinthians 5:19**, **“namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.”**

So even though we see a little bit of difference between the wording in **2 Corinthians 5:18** and the wording in **2 Corinthians 5:19**, basically the same thought is being communicated in both of these verses, and what is that thought? As we have already noted it is this: that reconciliation proceeds

from God and returns to God. Or once again using the using the words of our text it is this: that God **“has reconciled us to Himself through Christ”** as we have seen in **2 Corinthians 5:18**, or **“that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself”** as we will see this morning in **2 Corinthians 5:19**.

It is this thought that was presented to us in **2 Corinthians 5:18**, and Paul will now in **2 Corinthians 5:19** will make clear to us as those who have been reconciled by God to God through Christ the need to carry forth into this world and to proclaim with boldness.

Knowing that the peace that we are now enjoying with God is not because we somehow through our own personal efforts and self-determination reconciled ourselves to God. Such a thing would have been impossible. But rather it has everything to do with us being reconciled to God by God through Christ.

We saw the emphasis on Christ being God’s agent in bringing about this reconciliation in **2 Corinthians 5:18** when Paul used the phrase **“through Christ”** to refer to the means that God used to reconcile us to Himself. And we will again see the emphasis on Christ being God’s agent in bringing about this reconciliation in **2 Corinthians 5:19** when Paul uses the phrase **“in Christ”** to refer to the means that God used to reconcile us to Himself.

So once again how does one come to God **“through Christ?”** We come to God through Christ when we, seeking to be set free sin, exercise faith in Christ and are joined to Him by the baptizing work of the Spirit making it possible for God to view us as being **“in Christ.”** This is something we talked about in some detail last week.

Therefore the only people who can be reconciled to God by God are those people who, in desiring to be set from sin, have exercised faith in Christ and have therefore been joined to Him. These are the ones, and the only ones, who can be reconciled to God by God for the simple reason that there can be no reconciliation to God and by God except through Christ who is God’s agent in reconciling individual people to Himself.

This is the message that we, as those who have been given the ministry of reconciliation according to **2 Corinthians 5:18**, are to proclaim as we shall see as we continue on through **2 Corinthians 5:19**.

So now we come to a very interesting question. If this is true, that it is only the only ones who can be reconciled to God by God are those who have exercised faith in Christ and have become joined to Him, then how could Paul have said in **2 Corinthians 5:19** “**that God was in Christ reconciling** [not all those who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation but rather] **the world to Himself?**”

Isn't that what the verse says? Absolutely! Now Paul's use of the word “world” to describe who exactly was being reconciled to Himself in Christ might be rather shocking to some.

Did he mean that God was in Christ reconciling every person in this world regardless of how they had responded to Christ? And what is the answer?

The phrase “reconciling the world” in 2 Corinthians 5:19 does not teach universalism, or in other words that all people in this world have been reconciled to God, or in other words saved.

And why is this? The answer is very simple. The Scriptures are clear that there is a heaven and there is a hell, and there will be people occupying both (Revelation 20:11-15). So if this is true that the Scriptures do in fact teach this, then we would have to conclude that Paul's expression in **2 Corinthians 5:19**, “**that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,**” could not possibly mean that God was in Christ reconciling all the people of this world to Himself. For if God was in fact in Christ reconciling all the people of this world to Himself then all the people of this world would be saved and therefore conversely none would be lost. But this is not what the Scriptures teach, for the reality is most people will in fact be going to hell rather than heaven.

And if there is any doubt about this all we have to do is to go to **Revelation 20:11-15** and listen to the Apostle John's account of the Great White Throne judgment, which is a judgment that will take place just prior to the new heavens and new earth being established. And what did he tell us? “**Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence**

earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. (12) And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. (13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. (14) Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

So is everyone going to be saved because God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself? No! Absolutely not! For it is very clear from this passage that there will be a vast multitude of people at the final judgment who will be cast into the lake of fire, a place that is described in **Mark 9:48** as a place where the worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched, and in **Matthew 13:42** as a place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, and in **Revelation 14:11** as a place where the smoke of their torment will go up forever and ever. This is the place that we commonly refer to as hell.

So when Paul said, **“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,”** he certainly could not have been communicating to his readers or to us that God was in Christ reconciling every person in this world to Himself, or in other words God was saving every person in this world, for if this were true we would not be seeing many people being cast into the lake of fire in **Revelation 20:11-15**.

So if, when Paul said in **2 Corinthians 5:19** **“that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,”** he did not mean that He was in Christ reconciling every single person in this world to Himself, then what did he mean?

When Paul referred to “the world” in 2 Corinthians 5:19, we must understand that his reference to “the world” is a reference to the world as mankind in general and not to all of mankind in its totality. In other words, in this context Paul's reference to the world refers to the sphere in which reconciliation takes place. It refers to classes of human beings with whom

God seeks reconciliation, which of course would include people from every national, racial and ethnic group, without any distinctions.

And it is because of this truth that the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders in **Revelation 5:9-10** are able to sing the following song to the lamb, when He in the future will take a book from the hand of His Father so that He might break its seals. **“And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. (10) You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.’”**

So hopefully now, having eliminated any thought that when Paul said that, **“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself”** that he meant that God was in Christ reconciling the whole of the world in its totality, we are now free to consider the correct answer.

When Paul spoke of God reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, he was only referring to those in the world who, because of their **faith** in Christ, had been joined to Christ through the baptism of the Spirit.

And now Paul will point out to us why those who have exercised faith in Christ and who have therefore been joined to Christ through the baptizing work of the spirit can know with absolutely certainty that they have been reconciled to God by God.

So let us continue to read the verse and what does it say? **“Not counting their trespasses against them.”** When we exercise faith in Christ and are reconciled to God by God through Christ, it means that God is no longer counting our sins against us (2 Corinthians 5:19, cf. Colossians 2:13-14). And why is this? Let me read for you **Colossians 2:13-14**. And what do these verses say? They say this. **“When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our [what?] transgressions, (14) having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”** So why is it that once we exercise faith in Christ and are reconciled to God by God through Christ that it means that our sins are no longer counted against us?

Our sins are no longer counted against us when we exercise faith in Christ because the debt of our sin has been paid in full when Christ, on our behalf, died our death on the cross of Calvary. And once again why was He able to die our death? He was able to die our death because when we exercised faith in Christ, and we through the baptism of the Spirit were joined to Him in such a way that when He died, we died, thus satisfying God's righteous demands against us, and making it possible for Him to cancel out the certificate of debt against us, having taken it out of the way having nailed it to the cross.

What an amazing thing this is. King David, in consideration of this very thing, wrote in **Psalms 32:1-2**, "**How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! (2) How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity.**" The Apostle Paul shared in that same exhilaration when he repeated this same thought in **Romans 4:8** when he said, "**Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.**" And how can this be? It is because God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, or in other words not counting their trespasses against them for the purpose of judgment.

Praise God! If you are here this morning and in your desire to be set free from your sin you came to Christ by grace through Faith in order to be reconciled to God "through Christ" or "in Christ," you can know for a fact that nothing can ever separate you from the love of Christ for your debt has been paid by Him fully and completely and forever having been nailed to His cross.

But once again, as Paul did at the end of **2 Corinthians 5:18**, Paul reminds his readers and us that such a great privilege of having been reconciled to God by God through Christ is also accompanied by a great responsibility. So let us continue to read the verse and what does it say? It says this. "**Namely, that God was in Christ**

God has committed the word of reconciliation to those whom He has reconciled. Notice Paul has shifted from speaking of the ministry of reconciliation that they, as those who had been reconciled to God by God, had been given to the "word" associated with that ministry that he calls the "word of reconciliation."

The word associated with the ministry of reconciliation is the gospel and all the truths associated with the gospel, for it is through the gospel that people are reconciled to God through Christ.

May God give us the grace, as those who have been reconciled to God by God through Christ, to give Him the praise that He is due and to faithfully proclaim the word of reconciliation that we have been given.