

The Cost of Reconciliation

Peace Among Brethren

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In 1939, Germany (under the National Socialist or Nazi Party) went to war against its neighbors in an unbridled quest for total domination of Europe. The blitzkrieg warfare that the Germans employed quickly put Poland, the Low Countries, and much of France under Adolph Hitler's power. He had ambitions to grind England under his heel next, as soon as he could get across the channel; and it was only a miraculous retreat from Dunkirk that saved the British to fight again — and whatever Allies remained with the British forces there.

It took a while for Hitler to put his war machine together to the point where he could take England on, and go across the channel. So he started bombing. This was the famous 1942 attack on Britain from the air. Well, that space of time enabled the Allies to put together a fighting force and to begin to fight back. Thus it was the Normandy Invasion that the Allies put together, which spelled the beginning of the end for the Nazi Regime.

But even then there was a great deal of fighting, and death, and destruction that had to take place before victory was won for the Allies. When that finally happened in 1945, Germany was a defeated, humbled, exhausted nation. Its people were scorned and reviled by the rest of the world for what they had done — not only in the doing of the atrocities that Nazi Germany was found to have done, but also for supporting them (whether actively or passively) or just not doing anything at all.

Well, almost 57 years have passed since then — almost 3 generations. Germany is once again one of the leading nations of Europe; and, frankly, it is one of the leading nations of the world — especially economically. It has surged to the top tier of nations. It has a good deal of power and clout that it can yield — not just in Europe, but in other places (as we've been finding out, in the Middle East).

But even now it fears flexing its political and especially its military muscle. Almost 60 years later, it still has to think two or three times before it will allow itself to do anything that could be taken by the other side (whatever that would happen to be) as aggression. And all of this is because of its Nazi past, almost 60 years in the past. Even now, Germany is still not trusted by its neighbors, who do their best to make alliances and whatnot to keep Germany in check — just in case they break out and do what happened nearly 60 years ago.

To be reconciled to the community of nations, Germany has constantly had to take a back seat. To put itself in the lower seat, let's say; and to bow to the sensitivities of other peoples, of other nations. To concede, or to compromise, a point when its first impulse is that "Assyrian attitude" — to press on to get its way, to take on the nations front and center with all of its force and strength.

In a way, Germany's story of the past 60 plus years is similar to the course individuals must

take to be *reconciled to each other*. Usually troubles between people, though, are not as egregious to begin with as what Germany did. Normally we don't take each other's people and put them in concentration camps. But there are some things that cause rifts between people. Whatever the original cause, they cause a separation that needs to be reconciled. But the cost — of bringing contending parties together — is somewhat analogous to what it has cost Germany to be reconciled to the rest of the world. It may be on a smaller scale, but they are somewhat analogous.

And that is kind of what I would like to take a look at today. I am going to look at reconciliation and focus on *what it cost* to reconcile two parties who are at odds. If you'll recall my last two sermons—the first one was THE REALITY OF EVIL, and the second one was THE POTENTIAL FOR GOOD — they made the point that God called us, and Christ died for us, while we were still sinners. And once that happened, we were equipped to practice "good." That is, we could begin to live God's way —*the give way*, as Mr. Armstrong always called it.

However, just because we have been justified and have been given the Holy Spirit—given the gift to do what it is that we need to do as God's children, as Christians — we are not perfect. We sin from time to time. And, for many of us "time to time" is very short. It's time and time and time again — because, like I said, we are not perfect. Especially as we have just been justified, just received God's Holy Spirit, probably the incidents of sin are more regular (more often) — but maybe not? Maybe you are more on top of things than later on. I don't know. But I would think that, as we would grow, the time between sins would lengthen; and we would begin to be more and more righteous in our daily lives.

But sometimes this sin is against one another. Sometimes we sin against one of our brethren. And then the process of reconciliation between two warring parties has to come into play, and we need to know what it takes to achieve reconciliation — because we can't just let it go.

Now, the heavy lifting has already been done for us. That has been done by God — by Jesus Christ. What we find difficult is following through on it. That is, *doing our part* to make sure reconciliation actually takes place. So we are going to look at several scriptures that deal with reconciliation, and we are going to start in a really weird place — Daniel 9.

If you have memorized your Bible by chapters, as some people have in times past, chapter 9 of the book of Daniel is Daniel's prayer of supplication to God for forgiveness and repentance for the nation of Judah (which was in exile in Babylon at the time). Remember that Daniel had figured out that the 70 years that Jeremiah had prophesied were about up. So he decided, as pretty much the leading man there in Babylon (especially at the king's very court), that he would take it upon himself to say this prayer on behalf of the rest of the nation. But we are not going to read the prayer, because what we want is what happens after the prayer.

Daniel 9:20-24 Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man [angel] Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. And he informed me, and talked

with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision: 'Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.'"

The answer to Daniel's prayer of repentance was the Seventy Weeks Prophecy. Now, it's very interesting what the Seventy Weeks Prophecy is. When it all comes down to it, the Seventy Weeks Prophecy is God's plan of redemption from Daniel's time forward. This is put into a very neat 70 weeks time period — meaning 490 years; and we won't go off into all the ways that works out. But the first thing that God had to take care of, to make sure the plan went on, was to take care of this matter of *sin*. And one of the things that was said here is to make *reconciliation for iniquity*. That was the third thing there.

These three things of verse 24 — (1) to finish the transgression, (2) to make an end of sins, and (3) to make reconciliation for iniquity — are basically all the same thing. They are what are covered by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He was the One that made the atonement for sin by the giving of Himself — the perfect, sinless Being — Our Creator.

So, these three clauses look like they say exactly the same thing. "Finish." "Make an end." "Make reconciliation for sin." But they are actually kind of a progression. The first one— *to finish the transgression* — means to restrain it, to hold it in check, to confine it so that it can't break out. The second one — *to make an end of sins*—means to put a seal on it. Not only, let's say, that we use the term that sin is imprisoned. But you put a seal on it, so that it can't get out. And then the third one — *to make reconciliation* — is actually the word *kaphar*. You may have heard the word in times past. It's the word that actually, in the way that all the languages work, comes down to us as the word "cover." That's what it really means — to cover over.

So, let's put this in a real dumb illustration. Let's say that we get pure sin, and we put it in the form of a bird. This bird represents sin. First, we open the door of the birdcage; we stuff it in there; and we shut the door. We are now finishing the transgression. We have imprisoned it. We've confined it. We've restrained it. Then we take a little lock, and we put it on the cage door so that it can't get out. Now we've sealed it. That's the second clause. And then we take the cover of the birdcage, and we plop it on top so that it is totally hidden. That's the process that God used to eradicate sin. Obviously, this hasn't been finished completely at this time; but the first step has been taken. It's a dumb illustration, but it works.

Let's go back to this word *kaphar*, which means *cover*. Because of the way the Hebrew language is, this word doesn't just mean cover. It came to represent an offering of *atonement*. You have also heard the word *propitiation*. That is, that Christ is our propitiation. That means the offering, or the sacrifice, that brings favor — that puts us back into a right relationship with God. There had to be something given in order to bring us back into harmony. Well, that's what *kaphar* is. It's an offering that covers everything and makes it almost as though it doesn't

exist. That's this word.

So it really doesn't mean to make reconciliation. It is actually talking more about *propitiation*—atoning for. Reconciliation is what it produces. This is a major point; and I want you to get this, because it is very necessary for understanding what is going on here. The sacrifice is the propitiation — the atonement. It causes reconciliation. So what the translators have done here is — instead of saying "make atonement for iniquity" (which would be actually a more precise way of saying what was done) — they have stepped ahead and shown what it actually brings about. That is, what it causes. It *causes* reconciliation. But what we are looking at here is the actual *sacrifice* that brings about reconciliation.

In a way, what we have seen here is a step in the process to bring reconciliation about. The major point is that reconciliation is a product. It is an end result. It is an end of a process that must include (Listen to this!) some sort of atonement — some sort of sacrifice — that causes pacification of wrath or hostility. There has to be some sort of *act of sacrifice* that takes place so that the person who has been offended, or whatever — who is at odds with the other — is pacified, is satisfied. And then friendship and harmony can recommence. But it is very important that you understand that atonement — or some sort of pacifying sacrifice — has to occur before reconciliation can come about. Some *act of humility* must break the stalemate between the two parties, and then they can return to friendship.

If you will remember, that was a big part of my last sermon. To do "good," we have to sacrifice. We have to be able to give up something. We have to yield. We have to submit. "Doing good" is basically putting yourself below the other, and being willing to serve.

Now we are going to another strange place. Please turn to I Samuel 29. This is the account of David with Achish, the Philistine. But it mentions reconciliation, so I thought I would go to it.

I Samuel 29:1-7 Then the Philistines gathered together all their armies at Aphek, and the Israelites encamped by the fountain which is in Jezreel. [They are up in the northern part of Israel, right around Megiddo.] And the lords of the Philistines passed in review by hundreds and by thousands, but David and his men passed in review at the rear with Achish. Then the princes of the Philistines said, "What are these Hebrews doing here?" And Achish said to the princes of the Philistines, "Is this not David, the servant of Saul king of Israel, who has been with me these days, or these years? And to this day I have found no fault in him since he defected to me." But the princes of the Philistines were angry with him [with Achish]; so the princes of the Philistines said to him, "Make this fellow return, that he may go back to the place which you have appointed for him, and do not let him go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become our adversary. For with what could he reconcile himself to his master, if not with the heads of these men [meaning, their own men]? Is this not David, of whom they sang to one another in dances, saying: 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands'?" Then Achish called David and said to him, "Surely,

as the LORD lives, you have been upright, and your going out and your coming in with me in the army is good in my sight. For to this day I have not found evil in you since the day of your coming to me. Nevertheless the lords do not favor you. Therefore return now, and go in peace, that you may not displease the lords of the Philistines.

This is just another simple illustration of the process of what was going on here. In verse 4, the word "reconcile" is *ratsah*. It means "to be pleased with, to accept, to favor, to satisfy." The Philistine princes themselves named what David would have to do to be acceptable to Saul. That is, to regain Saul's favor. What they said was that he would have to change sides in the middle of the battle. Then, once he would do that, he and his men would slay a large number of the Philistines in a kind of sacrifice to Saul — to show Saul that he [David] was on his side, and therefore be accepted.

So here we have another instance where a sacrifice would have to be made. And the sacrifice that David would have to make was (1) he'd have to turn traitor, and (2) he would have to slay a lot of Philistines, and (3) he would be putting his own life on the line in doing so. In effect, if he would have done this, he would have made himself unacceptable to either side! By doing this, he would have sacrificed just about everything. And this was one reconciliation that David didn't want to do! Even though he argued a little bit with Achish (throughout the rest of the chapter), saying, "*I don't want to go. I want to stay here with you*" — he and his men went back to the land of the Philistines anyway, and did not fight in that battle.

I wanted you to see that, even in something like this, there would have to be some sort of sacrifice made in order to bring about reconciliation. Sometimes the sacrifice that is made has *consequences* itself. We have to make sure that the sacrifice that we make is not going to put us into deeper water with God. So when we talk about the subject of reconciliation, it's something that we must think deeply about. It's not something we can do nimbly, facilely, easily. It is something that we really have to take to heart — and understand what it is that we are doing. We have to try to predict what is going to happen, so that it doesn't cause greater problems down the road. It's not an easy subject. It's not an easy thing to do — one way, or the other.

Let's go into the New Testament and see where reconciliation is talked about there. Let's go first to Matthew 5 — the Sermon on the Mount. This is Christ preaching on 'the spirit of the law' in terms of murder.

Matthew 5:21-24 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder [meaning, the commandment], and whosoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore [He's summing this up, and he's giving an illustration about how all this works.] if you bring your gift to the altar,

and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

This "be reconcile" here in verse 24 is a word that is used only here, in this sense. It is used in another sense elsewhere. But the word is *diallasso*. This is a very interesting word. The word has its roots in the moneychangers — remember [like those] Jesus kicked out of the temple. The root is "to exchange" — meaning "*You give me one currency, and I will give you the other currency of an equal amount.*" So, it would change from one to the other. And the word *diallasso* came to mean "to change, or to alter." Specifically, to alter the outlook of another person. Or "to renew friendship" would probably be the easiest way to say it (other than "to reconcile").

This word has links to, let's say, accounting — or your bank statement. You "reconcile" your bank statement up against your checks that come back. What you are doing is looking at one form against another form, and you are seeing that they are equal. This is part of the process of reconciliation. You are trying to bring these two warring parties back to an equal basis — back to equal footing with each other — so that they can move forward like Amos 3 says. "*Can two walk together unless they be agreed?*" They can only be agreed and walk together when they are on an equal footing. Right? Sounds clear as mud to me.

Let's go through this just a little bit. First I want you to notice who is at fault here, in verses 23 and 24. Jesus specifically says that your brother has a fault *against YOU!* Evidently, in this situation, He's talking about something *we* have done to make someone else upset at us — to make him or her hostile towards us. Even if we don't have any problem with the other fellow (who has a problem with us), there is still a problem. Even though we may think, "*Oh, everything is copasetic between us*" — but you know that he actually has still a problem (with the way that you have acted towards him, or whatever it happens to be). Well, there is still a problem that must be resolved. There won't be peace between the two of you until that problem is resolved.

The second thing here, that I want to point out, is that He says, "Leave your gift." He doesn't say, "*Take it with you, and come back and bring it later.*" He says, "Leave your gift there before the altar." This is kind of code for *continue to do your duty to God*. You don't drop everything in terms of your relationship with God to go reconcile with your brother. You must continue that relationship with God, because that's a number one priority. You must continue with your duty towards God.

But (and here's the ironic part) He won't accept it *until* you have reconciled with your brother. That's what He goes on to say. In the Model Prayer it says that, IF you don't forgive others, THEN God will not forgive you. It's the same sort of thing. We still must continue doing our duty towards God. That should give us impetus, or motivation, to get our relationship with our brother back in gear *fast* — because, if we are not, our gift is still there before the altar and it has not been accepted. Then we are soon going to be on the "outs" with God Himself, and we don't want that!

It might not seem real logical to do it that way, but that's what must be done. We must leave the gift there. We must continue doing our duty towards God. But we must also then reconcile with one another as quickly as possible. And then come back and offer your gift, and then it will be accepted. Now, I'm not going to say here dogmatically that God won't accept anything you do while you have a rift with your brother. I'm not God, so I can't make that decision. It looks pretty black and white here (and in other places), and that should motivate us to reconcile quickly — which is the next thing that He says, in verse 25.

Matthew 5:25 "Agree with your adversary quickly..."

For one thing, you are flirting with having a problem with God. He's the Judge in this verse, a little bit later; and He says that He'll make you pay everything if it has to come before Him. And that's not something we want to have done. In a way, it's like the Nike advertisement, "Just do it!" It doesn't matter what it is that needs to be done to reconcile with your brother, *just do it* because you are flirting with problems with God.

Remember what it says there in I John, where it says that IF you say you love God and you hate your brother THEN you really don't love God. "*You are a liar*," he says. So all of those things come into play here. But notice that He says here to *agree quickly* with him. In other words, He means concede early. And it says, "while you are on the way with him." That's kind of an interesting thing. It's like you are walking towards the judgement seat. "While you are on the way with him" make sure that you do whatever you can to bring this relationship back into line.

Don't let a problem linger and grow until it becomes unsolvable, because then you'll really have a problem. If we let it continue and worsen, we are going to pay dearly for it. So we need to nip any kind of offense — or any problem between two brothers—in the bud. That means owning up to mistakes, apologizing, humbling ones self, seeking to repay for any harm that one has done —anything — to be reconciled, because it's not worth it. It's not worth the problems one might have with God down the road — to keep a grudge against another, or to keep hostility between brothers going. It just doesn't help matters at all.

Now, I do want to go back a little bit to the word that is translated here "reconcile," *diallasso*, because it is a very interesting word. It is especially applicable to conflicts between brethren in the church, because it implies mutual concession after mutual hostility. It does NOT mean at all that any one person in the party is at fault. It means just the opposite. It means that *both* are at fault — at some point, in some things. *Both* parties have to have the spirit of sacrifice. *Both* parties must be humble. *Both* parties must give in, submit to the other, and approach the reconciliation with humility and offers of personal sacrifice. And let's not forget — *both* parties have to be willing to loose (as we mentioned in the last sermon).

As we often say in marriage counseling, there never was a divorce where only one party was at fault. It's probably very rarely that it was not this way — that there were not problems on *both* sides. It's the same thing with squabbles amongst brethren. It's very rare that only one is at fault. And so *diallasso* fits well. There are problems on *both* sides, because *both* sides are human. *Both* sides have human nature. *Both* sides sin. And so there must be a *mutual*

humility and a *mutual change of heart* for there to be successful reconciliation.

Another place that we can look about reconciliation is I Corinthians 7. This is the chapter on marriage. There needs to be a great deal of reconciliation in marriages, all the time. That's just the way it works. A husband and a wife are two different people. They approach things somewhat differently. So, for there to be a good marriage, the principles of reconciliation must be put to use. Notice, this one is specifically about divorce.

I Corinthians 7:10-11 Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord [He's saying that this comes from the very lips of God.]: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

The word "reconciled" in verse 11 is *katallasso*. It is specifically talking about mutual reconciliation. But the force here is a little bit different. He's talking specifically to the wife. In this case, the way it is working is that she has decided to leave the husband. And what Paul is saying here is that *the onus of reconciliation* is on the one who departs — the one who leaves. If you read between the lines, the scenario here is that the husband was not willing [or, wanting] to divorce. The wife separated on her own. She took the initiative to separate.

Paul says that she should either make every effort to reconcile. That should be her initiative, and her number one priority. Or, she must determine then to remain alone until the marriage is dissolved by death. That's what he says here. But the big part about this is that she is the one — because she left — that she should be the one to pursue reconciliation the greatest. That's the stress here on *katallasso*. That's a new word here. I used *diassallo* before, but this is *katallasso*. It means basically "return to harmony." It's not the same word as in Matthew 5.

Another thing here — it doesn't imply that she is at fault. I just want to let you know that. The husband might have been, in this case, the one who caused her to leave. But, because she decided to leave, she is the one that must take the initiative to be reconciled.

It's really significant to me — very interesting — that every time the Bible speaks of the reconciliation of people, the responsibility (the onus) to reconcile is always on US. It's not on the other person. It's always on US. We should be taking the lead in reconciling ourselves to our brethren. It's never the other person's job. YOU are the one that is reading the Bible. YOU are the one that is supposed to do the reconciling. And if two brethren are reading the same scriptures, they should be taking the commands the same way — and both having the same initiative to solve the problem, and wanting to get it done.

So God never gives us an "out" that it is the other guy's responsibility. In this marriage case, it's put mostly on the wife *because of what she did*. It's almost assumed that the husband desired it [reconciliation] himself. He wasn't the one who left the marriage. She was. So he's already doing what he's supposed to do. And Paul is emphasizing here that *the party who has left* should try to reconcile.

So we see here that the responsibility to do this sort of thing is *a very large responsibility!*

It's something that we need to do. Enmity between brethren — especially as close as mates — should not be shrugged off at all. This is something that really needs to be taken care of. It takes a lot of effort. It takes a lot of determination. But it must be done! These things just can't lie around. IF they lie around, THEN they will get worse. The gap between the two is going to get wider. And we don't want what comes with that.

Believe it or not, we have gone through the entire Bible — of all the passages that speak about reconciliation between people. That is, using the word reconciliation. There are other passages, like Matthew 18, which tell us how to go about doing these sorts of things. They give us step-by-step ways to deal with things like offense. But, rather than go to something like Matthew 18:15, I prefer right now that we look closely at how God and Christ handled this problem of reconciliation — because They are the ones (Christ especially) that we are supposed to imitate. IF we can see how He did it, THEN maybe we can take the clue from Him; and begin to put His character — His traits — into practice in our own lives, in our own attempts to reconcile.

We are going to go to I Peter 2 — to a set of scriptures that I referred to in one of my two previous sermons.

I Peter 2:19-25 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit [guile] found in His mouth." Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

I begin here for two reasons. It reminds us that we are to imitate Christ. Very plainly, that's what he says. *"He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps."* It's very clear. He's talking specifically in His approach, or attitude, towards hostility from others. That's the first reason. It reminds us that we are to imitate Christ — specifically in His approach, or attitude, towards *hostility from others*.

Secondly, the reason I have come here is because it begins to show us what He [Christ] did to make reconciliation with mankind — specifically us. Peter here mentions the component parts of how the process of reconciliation works. Here's the process:

First, it says that though He had done no wrong ever — He had never sinned! He had never done anything that would approach to true offense to these people — He took His abuse patiently. He suffered, rather than to fight back in either action or words. He never said

anything. He never did anything as the result of the beatings that He took, or the revilings that were made against Him. He answered not a word.

He restrained Himself from escalating the conflict to open warfare. He took it! He took the beatings. He took the reviling. He took the cursing. He took everything. And that's as far as it went. He didn't "tit for tat." He didn't shoot spitballs. He didn't give them the finger. He didn't do anything like that! He took it! That's the first step of dealing with hostility. You *take it patiently*. You don't get angry. You don't want to fight back. You take it. Remember what He said about turning the other cheek? He lived it.

The second thing — the second part of the process: He *committed Himself to God and to God's righteous judgment*. Do you know what this means? He *set His will to do what was right*. He said, "*I will follow God, and I will follow God, and I will follow God come whatever.*" And He did — as He was beaten, as He was nailed to the stake, as He was raised up, as He hanged there, and as He died. Even His dying words were, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He was totally committed to doing what God had sent Him to do. And that's the second step. He determined that He would behave in a way that would please God, no matter what the consequence to Him.

The third thing: He *sacrificed Himself for the good of the other party*. His own persecutors! He gave His life for those who were taunting Him, for those who were nailing Him up, for those who had scourged Him, for those who never knew Him but sinned (all the way down to us). Every one of the people who have walked on the face of this earth, He died for — so that reconciliation could occur.

He so much wanted peace and the ultimate benefits of reconciliation that He was willing to give His life to bring that about. That's how much He wanted to be reconciled with mankind — and for His Father to be reconciled with mankind. And so He put Himself through this, so that there would be peace between men and God.

If you noticed, each one of these steps cuts against the grain of human nature. We always want to fight back. We rarely want to commit to God. And who among us wants to give ourselves to the very people who are making us mad? But God says, "*This is the way. Walk you in it.*" This is the way that brings about reconciliation. It's always give, give, give — and give in.

These are the things that it takes to make peace. And if these steps are not taken *in humility*, the very best that will be produced is an uneasy truce. There will not really be peace, but just the cessation of war. We might even call it "cold war," in which the hostility remains — just the fireworks, and the slings, and the arrows, desist for a time. But who knows how long that is, before it starts again into a "hot war"? That's the very best that will happen without this *humility* and the *love* and the *sacrifice* being put into it. That's NOT reconciliation. That's just a cease-fire.

So, what did Jesus' actions produce? We find that in verse 25. "For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned..." That word *returned* could just as easily be translated, you have been *reconciled* "to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." It worked! Christ's way worked! The relationship was restored *with those God has called*. Thus, we have here the pattern to follow to bring about reconciliation. But you see the high cost that it took to bring that about. Reconciliation is not something that comes easy.

Let's go now, please, to Romans 5. We came to this last time, and we emphasized the love of God. This time we are going to be emphasizing the reconciliation with God.

Romans 5:6-11 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Christ's sinless sacrifice resulted in reconciliation with God. His sacrifice enabled God to justify us. That is, to consider us sinless in a legal sense. We were still sinful; but because we accepted Jesus Christ's sacrifice, His blood covered us. (There's that word "cover" again — that we saw earlier.) His blood covered us. And so, under His righteousness, we are allowed now to have access to God. Having access, God would forgive us; and we are made clean. And so, because of that, we have the opportunity now to have eternal life. And we are saved then by His life being lived in us.

So do you see what reconciliation produced? It didn't produce just justification. *Reconciliation produces LIFE*. If it is really followed through, reconciliation becomes more than just bringing us back to equal footing. It then enables us to go on — to perfection let's say. To go on to the type of life that God lives.

IF we are not reconciled, THEN we have stalled our salvation process. That's not good. We never want to *stall* the salvation process. We always want to be moving forward. So reconciliation becomes very important. We see here a principle that WHEN we become reconciled, we can THEN *move on* in life — and, in a spiritual sense, towards eternal life. That's how important reconciliation is — especially in this sense. That is, in the spiritual sense of our eternal salvation. But it works in principle in the same way with our own personal problems.

Now we have gone from being *enemies* (hostile to God) to being *children of God* — and, thus, able to be saved through Christ living in us. And, as Paul says there in verse 11, that should bring us great joy. That's another result — another fruit — of reconciliation. Joy! We are no longer under the cloud of being enemies with someone. It's nice to finally be able to breathe clearly and without stress — [as when] there was antagonism going on.

Let's now go to II Corinthians 5. These are kind of easy to remember — Romans the fifth chapter and II Corinthians the fifth chapter. By the way, if you are interested, "reconcile" or "be reconciled" or "reconciliation" are all forms of *katallasso* in these verses in Romans 5 and II Corinthians 5.

II Corinthians 5:17-21 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new

creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then [Therefore], we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

This picks up right where we left off in Romans 5. Once we accept Christ's sacrifice, that reconciles us to God, and the old person dies — meaning that life that we lived before we were baptized and received God's Holy Spirit is like a dead man. We were buried in the waters of baptism. We are raised to a new life. We are a new creation. We might say that we are given a clear, fresh start on life. We have a new lease on life. (There are all kinds of clichés of that sort of thing.) Our old life is past. God's justification has wiped those past sins away. With God's forgiveness, He doesn't remember our sins as far as east is from the west.

Verse 18 is kind of poorly translated here in the New King James. "Now all things are of God." A modern paraphrase might say, "*All of this is God's doing.*" Up to this point, God has pretty much done everything for us. He's the one that initiated our calling. He's the one that gave us knowledge. He's the one that revealed our sin. He's the one that led us to repentance. He's the one that forgave us. He's the one that justified us. He's the one that gave the Holy Spirit — etc., etc., etc. And last of which — is that He's the one who gave His life so that all of this could happen.

What did we do? We followed. We followed the lead — and even this was difficult for us. Anyone should remember that coming into the truth was not necessarily an easy thing. There were a lot of things in our old life that we had to put away. We had to learn a whole new way of life. We had to wrap our minds around theological concepts that maybe many of us had never even considered before. And those sorts of things are hard for a human person to do.

But God did the heavy lifting for us. (I used that phrase before.) God did most of it. We had our part to play, sure; but God did most of it. And that's what Paul is saying here in verse 18. Our part in accepting it, and committing to it, and now even living righteously (to conform to Him) is comparatively minor to all the work that God does in our behalf. Yes, we have work to do; but God has graded on a curve greatly.

He lets us slide by, in a way. I don't mean that literally. But He has allowed Christ's sacrifice to cover over our sins in such a way that it almost seems like we have gotten away with something. We haven't. Those sins were paid for by Jesus Christ. But, because He has allowed that to happen — because He has had such great mercy upon us that He allowed the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to cover over those sins — we are here. We've been given this. And that's a great gift.

But it doesn't stop there. What happens next? Paul says that because all of this has happened

— because God has done these things — He has also committed, particularly to the ministry, *the work of reconciliation*. At the end of verse 18, he calls it here "the ministry of reconciliation." That's one of the primary duties of the ministry — to continue to preach reconciliation.

Now, we might think that this means that we need to preach the gospel and have as many people converted as possible. Paul does mention that. He mentions reconciling the world to God; and that is part of the ministry of reconciliation — preaching the gospel to the world so that more can be called. But notice what he says:

II Corinthians 5:20 We [meaning the apostles, the ministry] are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us.

We are the mouthpiece that God uses to plead to people to be reconciled to God. But notice who he says here that the ministry is talking to.

II Corinthians 5:20 We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

That's very interesting. Then he backs it up with verse 21. And what he says there is that, even though reconciliation has been done in terms of justification, there is still a great deal of reconciliation that needs to be done. So when we preach sermons to you, when we write articles for you, when we counsel you, or whatever — we are preaching the word of reconciliation, reconciling you to God.

That means that our job is to help you reconcile *your way of life* to *God's way of life*. Remember the ledger thing that I told you about earlier, with the checks being reconciled — where you are trying to show that one listing of checks equals the other listing of checks. And that process is called reconciliation. Well, we reconcile our life to Christ as well. That's the reconciliation that happens after the reconciliation.

The reconciliation that happens at the beginning of our conversion merely wipes the slate of our sins clean. Then we are brought before God sinless — like Christ — covered by His own righteousness. But from that point on, it is our job to begin analyzing our lives versus Jesus Christ's life and seeing how they match. And then, making up the difference so that by the end of the time of our sanctification the ledgers equal one another.

That's why the ministry has been given the word of reconciliation. Our job is to preach to you so that your life looks exactly like the life of Christ, and that's a huge responsibility. "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become..." It doesn't say that we *have* become. There's a bit of a qualifier on there — it hasn't quite happened yet. But His sacrifice started the ball rolling.

"...That we might become the righteousness of God in Him." That is, that through His life in us, we can reflect the righteousness of God. That's the best way I know to explain it. This is a lifelong endeavor. You are going to be *reconciling yourself to the life of Jesus Christ* until

the day you die, or are changed. We won't be completely reconciled until we are completely like Him, and that won't happen until the resurrection.

I do have a minute or two to go through a few more scriptures. I just want to back this up. In Colossians 1, a new word is going to be added to our vocabulary here — *apokatallasso*. Do you know why Paul puts the prefix *apo-* on there? *Apo* means *from*. But when it is used in this sense, what it means is that it heightens the intensity of the word. So *apokatallasso* means *completely reconciled*. It's not just reconciled, but *completely* reconciled. It is only used here in Colossians 1: 20-21 and in Ephesians 2: 16.

Colossians 1:19-20 For it pleased the Father that in Him [Christ] all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile [*apokatallasso*, to completely reconcile] all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

We can see right there that what we are talking about is the whole process of reconciliation of everything, for all time. This was done through Christ — to completely reconcile everything to God.

Colossians 1:21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has [completely] reconciled.

That might seem somewhat like a contradiction, until you see what [comes hereafter].

Colossians 1:23 If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

What he is saying is that, IF we follow through on our part — in believing, in being grounded, in being steadfast, in being committed to God and His way of life — THEN we are already on the road to being completely reconciled to God, *apokatallasso*. So he can say very confidently that Christ's work did the trick, that it will end in complete reconciliation.

Let's go next to Ephesians 2. This is also *apokatallasso*, here in verse 16; but it is broadened out here.

Ephesians 2:14-22 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation [division between us], having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile [completely reconcile] them both to God in one body through

the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. [He's speaking in terms of Jews and Gentiles here.] For through Him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place [habitation] of God in the Spirit.

This passage here brings everything that I've said in this sermon together. He's speaking about Jew and Gentile — two different ways of life — being brought together under the auspices of the work of reconciliation that Jesus Christ Himself did. Let's get this. God and Christ began the process of reconciliation by Christ's sacrifice. Actually, They started it a long time before that; but this is what happened. Christ's sacrifice got the ball rolling for the whole shebang.

That sacrifice killed, or destroyed, the enmity between *God and man*. It also destroyed the wall, or the division, which separated *men from other men*. In this case, we are talking Jew and Gentile; but it could also be black and white. It could also be man and woman. It could be slave or free. It could be whatever it is that separates one man from another man, or a man from a woman, or a woman from a man — however you want to say it. Christ's sacrifice did the work to break down all those walls. Once we accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, those divisions — those demographics — don't mean a hill of beans.

Now our demographic is Christian! And the way of life that we live is Christian! It's not Jewish. It's not Gentile. It's not male. It's not female. It's not black, not white. Our life is *Christ's life*. Our identification is as His disciples, or as God's children. And so those differences between us should fade into the background. They should fade away for all time, once the resurrection comes — because we are now brothers and sisters. We are all part of the same Family. The way that he says it here is that we are now part of the same building — the habitation of God in the Spirit. God wants to live in us. We are now being built into one temple, and all we are is individual bricks in the wall.

Maybe it's easier to show, in the other way of looking at this? We are now all one Body. We are all cells in the one Body that is Jesus Christ's Body. It says in Ephesians 4: 4 that there is *one Body*. And IF there are divisions between the cells of that one Body, THEN the Body has become divided; and the Body cannot be divided, because it is one Body.

And that's why reconciliation between brethren is so important! IF it doesn't occur, THEN something is going to happen to that Body; and it is not good. One, or the other, or both are going to have to be ejected from the Body *if* it doesn't get resolved — because the Body can't take it. The Body must grow together into unity! And that's what the middle part of Ephesians 4 talks about. "The whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies."

That's why there can't be schisms between *true members* of the *true church*. This is why it is so vital for brethren to be reconciled to one another — because it is important to the growth of the church that we learn to get along and to put these 'things that offend' behind us. And now maybe these verses that we read all the time (We read them at least once a year, at the Passover.) will have more meaning now.

John 15:11-13 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."

John 15:17 "These things I command you, that you love one another."