

From Enemies to Friends  
October 14, 2018

In a recent sermon (7.1.18), I spoke about word pictures that we use to describe our Christian salvation. There are different word pictures in the New Testament, each communicating some aspect of our salvation. We are going to look at one of these word pictures this morning, and see the riches it holds for us.

To introduce this word, let me ask you to use your memory. Perhaps you have had this experience. You once had a good relationship with someone. And then something happened to disrupt your relationship. He said something that hurt you. You did something that hurt her. Anger was expressed by one or both. More bad feelings were experienced. And one or both of you started avoiding the other. The relationship was broken.

Maybe you eventually patched things up. Or maybe you are still at odds with each other, no longer hanging out, talking, texting, exchanging emails. You have drifted apart. When you encounter each other, there is a polite coldness towards each other.

If somehow you could come back together, that would be reconciliation. Reconciliation comes from the Greek for "to change". Reconciliation involves a change in a relationship between two persons. It may be a relationship between two people or between God and a person.

**Reconciliation means to change a broken relationship into a restored one.**

This is a high value of God. Reconciliation is important to God. Jesus commands us to seek reconciliation with each other.

**Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV) Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.**

Many people think God wants worship from us more than anything else. They hold worship, especially public worship, as the main thing of the Christian life. And yet Jesus here says that reconciliation is more important. We are to first go and seek to be reconciled with the one we sinned against before we come to God in worship.

Since reconciliation is so important to God, it must be as important to us. So we must know how to seek reconciliation. So...

**How to seek to be reconciled to someone if you are the offender.**

This will not be hard to imagine for many of us. It certainly isn't for me. I have often said things without thinking that hurt another. I have often tried to be funny and said something that no one thought was funny, least of all the person the comment was about. I have often acted selfishly with only my desires in mind and ended up hurting someone else. Perhaps the same is true of you.

So what would you have to do to be reconciled to the one you sinned against?

**1. Go to the other and admit everything you did wrong.**

Admit your responsibility for the problem. This is not easy to do. Our prideful hearts loath to be humbled. Our prideful hearts loath to be humbled. This is so true of us that even while apologizing to someone we will try to justify ourselves. We will try to downplay how bad our sin was. We will try to mitigate the effects of our sin. We will make excuses.

But the other person knows full well all we did in our sin against him or her. That person has replayed the offense in his mind many times. She has recounted it to others in processing the hurt. Therefore if you leave anything out of your confession, the other will know you are not as sincere as you ought to be.

So admit to everything. Do not downplay it. Do not minimize it. Do not make excuses for it. Do not paint yourself as a good person who was deceived into doing wrong. Do not make out like your sin was an accident or a misunderstanding. Admit fully how you created this problem between the two of you.

**2. Describe how you imagine it affected the other person.**

Put yourself into the shoes of the other person. How would you have felt if someone had sinned against you in the same way? Describe how you think your sin probably affected the other person. Express your sorrow over the pain you caused. Speak the words, "I'm sorry." Some people need to hear those words.

Some of you have heard of Dr. Gary Chapman, who wrote the best seller, The Five Love Languages. In his personal experience as a family counselor, he noticed that couples often miss-communicated their love for each other. For example, the husband might express his love one way, and his wife a different way. And they were not communicating well their love of each other.

Dr. Chapman also noted that even when couples tried to apologize to each other, their apology was not always accepted as sincere. Evidently people have different things they are looking for in an apology. And if that thing is missing, they are apt not to accept the apology as sincere.

The things I am sharing with you are similar to what Dr. Chapman mentions as different elements of an apology. Some people need to hear you say the words, "I'm sorry."

**3. Ask them, "What can I do to make things right?"**

And then do what they suggest. You may need to publicly apologize. If you said insulting things to the other in a public place your apology may need to be just as public.

You may need to make restitution of some kind. If you borrowed or stole something you need to give it back. If you misused and broke something of theirs, you can seek to repair or replace it. This is what making restitution is about.

**4. Commit to repentance. "I promise not to do it again."** They need this assurance of your sincerity.

**5. Seek their forgiveness. "Will you forgive me?"**

Different people expect different things in an apology that are necessary for them to be reconciled. These five include what most people are looking for. One or the other will connect with most people. All of these may be necessary to make things right and bring about reconciliation with the other person.

These are the steps to take if you are the guilty party, if YOU were the initial offender. But what if you were not? What if the other person sinned against you and caused this break in your relationship. Then what are you to do?

As Christ's follower, you still seek reconciliation.

**Matthew 18:15 (NIV) If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you.**

Yes, you make the first move. Even though you were the one sinned against, you make the first move. You do it because God values reconciliation. So how do you seek reconciliation with someone who sinned against you?

**1. Go to the other and explain that you wish for a restored relationship.**

You might find that they other also wants to be reconciled but is assuming you do not. This gets you past that impasse. If the other responds in humility with some or all of what we have already detailed, then great. Reconciliation can take place.

But you might find that whereas you want a restored relationship, the other person does not. They are indifferent to your desire for reconciliation. Or they doubt your sincerity. So what do you do then?

**2. Forgive the offender.**

If the other person does not want to be reconciled, you can still forgive. Forgiveness is something you do as much for yourself as for the other person. It takes a burden off of you when you forgive.

Reconciliation is not the same as forgiveness. Forgiveness must come first for reconciliation to be possible. But reconciliation may not occur, even if you offer your forgiveness. You can forgive even if the other does not admit or repent of their sin. But reconciliation requires both of those.

**3. Do what will make peace, even if you have to bear the whole price yourself.**

Let's say the other borrowed something of yours without permission, or had permission and misused it and it got broken, stolen, etc. Let us say they can't repair or replace it. They don't have the money or whatever it will take. You can replace it yourself and write it off, cancelling the debt. They owe you nothing. And you tell them that. Tell them you have canceled their debt by covering the cost yourself. You paid it for them.

This may be enough mercy and grace to bring them to reconcile with you. Or it may not. But either way, you have done what God wants you to do. We know this is what God values because this is what God has done.

In our relationship with God, God is the one who was sinned against by us, not once, but over and over and over. We have a habit of sinning against God. With each sin, we compound our offense against justice. With each sin we compound our insult of God's honor. With each sin we tear away at his glory.

And yet... God has invited us to be reconciled. To show us how much God desires reconciliation He paid the price. He paid our sin debt. It cost a lot to do so. It cost Jesus His life. Jesus died in our place, for our sins. This is how much God wants to be reconciled to each man and woman, boy, and girl. God has expressed in a powerful way how much he loves us and how much he desires to be at peace with us. He reconciliation, not just peace. He expresses this to us in Paul's letter to the church at Colossae.

**Colossians 1:19-22 (NIV) For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (Jesus), and through him (Jesus) to reconcile to himself (God) all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his (Jesus) blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation...**

**(Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20)**

### Invitation

Christians have been reconciled to God. They are at peace with their creator. Through Jesus God has provided for us to be reconciled to Himself. We sing of this each Christmas.

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

Every sinner can be reconciled to God. Until you do so, you are described as God's enemy. We just read of that.

But there is the same offer to you of forgiveness and reconciliation. God is making this offer. The only roadblock is your refusal. But you can turn that around today. You can accept His offer.

If you will admit to God your sinfulness, your great load of sin against Him, if you will admit this affront to what is right, this insult of the creator's glory, if you will believe that God has paid the price with the death of Jesus, if you will repent of your sinful ways, and if you will ask His forgiveness, He will say yes. Jesus will send the Holy Spirit to live in you and will be Lord of your life. Your sins will be forgiven. And you will be at peace with God.