***Reconciliation, No. 2

Colossians 1:15-20

COL-148***

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Our subject is "Hymn in Honor of Christ, number 38 in Colossians 1:15-20.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul has been repeatedly demonstrating, is the Preeminent Person of the universe, in part, because He is the Head of the body of Christ, the church. The reason that Christ is the Head of the body, the church, he points out, is because He is the origin of the church – the originator. Jesus Christ is the beginning of the church in that He is the Firstborn from the dead with a glorified body, and the Christians who make up the church are to follow in the same manner. The resurrection of Jesus Christ confirms the acceptance of His payment for the sin guilt of all mankind by God the Father. We Christians are covered. Positionally, Christians now have bodies through which surges immortal life – bodies which eventually will be transformed into the glorified body of Christ. With the removal of the sin nature, they will be bodies which can never die.

So, it is exciting to realize that our bodies, even now, positionally, have eternal life in time that will be true in our experience. The preeminence of the Lord Jesus in the universe declares Him to be above all angels and all people. It pleased God the Father that the fullness of deity should reside in the incarnated Son of God as the God-Man. It is through the death of Christ for the sin of mankind that God has reconciled the world to Himself. We learned this morning that the word "reconciliation" means changing a lost sinner to meet the standard of God's absolute righteousness, which is necessary for entrance into heaven. This change is entirely in the unsaved, who are at enmity with God (they are God's enemies), and who need to have an about-face from turning their back upon God to facing Him as those who share His absolute righteousness. God Himself, of course, does not need to be reconciled to absolute righteousness. He is absolute righteousness. But what God does need is to be propitiated; that is, satisfied, relative to His justice, which demands death for moral guilt. That is what Christ has done for us all.

In Colossians 1:20, where we begin this morning, he states, "Through Him (through Jesus), to reconcile all things to himself." And the word "reconciliation" there, we pointed out to you, is a compound verb. That is one of the most intensive forms of the idea of reconciliation in Scripture. It adds two extra prepositions to it to intensify the idea. And what it intensifies is the completeness of God's work of reconciliation. There is nothing more that needs to be adjusted. And secondly, it's irrevocability – can never be undone again.

We have been looking at this more precisely in Romans 5:9-11. Please turn back to Romans 5:10, where we read, "For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled." And that "reconciliation" here – the object of it is God the Father Himself. We were reconciled to God. In the Greek language, it is *"~the* God" (definite article not in English verse), which indicates that God the Father (Who needs to be propitiated), has been satisfied relative to our sin. So, all that is necessary now is for us to be changed relative to our absolute righteousness toward God.

Now, unsaved people make a monumental mistake. They know instinctively that they're out of step with God. They know instinctively that they lack a quality of holiness. They know instinctively that they need some adjustment to Almighty God. And the mistake they make is trying to reconcile themselves to acceptability to God by efforts of their own. When they do that, the standard that they follow in man's lost condition is only relative righteousness: "Will God accept me? Yes, if I'm better than other people. If my righteousness, relative to somebody else's righteousness, is better, and at a higher level. So, this is why, especially for very moral people – it is very hard for them to understand that their morality will not adjust them to the demands that God has for being able to enter heaven. Whole denominations, such as Mormonism, are built upon this basic concept: "How good I am determines where I will spend my destiny."

Churches that stress water baptism for salvation, along with it, inevitably, have the fact that you must prove yourself worthy by your lifestyle to go to heaven. And if you sin, you step out of the lifestyle of godliness, you immediately change your destiny back to the lake of fire. The problem is to know how much sin is acceptable, and when there is too much sin, there's no certainty in that whatsoever.

This is often signaled, if you ask such a person: "Are you going to heaven?" They may say, "Well I hope so. I'm doing the best that I know how. And that is the problem that people have. If they understood the doctrine of reconciliation, they would understand that the adjustment has already been made for them, to the holiness of God, and only God could make that adjustment. Only God could bring about the standard. And only God can enable us to apply that standard.

This was the problem with Adam and Eve. Once they had fallen into sin, it was very clear to them that they were out of adjustment with God. And they immediately proceeded to bring themselves into a relationship that would be acceptable by their judgment, and that's why they made their fig-leaf aprons. They felt that they needed to cover themselves, because of the sin which was now upon them, and of which they were so guilty. And what they did was assumed that if they were able to come up with something to cover themselves, that they would be acceptable to God, and all would be well.

Reconciliation to man does not indicate reconciliation with God. And you can find yourself on good terms with people, but that doesn't mean that you are on good terms with God. It means just the opposite.

In Romans 5:10, then, Paul goes on to point out the price of this reconciliation: "When we were enemies (haters of God), we were reconciled to God," meaning to His standard of absolute righteousness: And this was done through, or by means of, the death of His Son." Here, this refers to the payment of Christ on the cross for the sins of the world to provide justification for sinners. Justification means that you have received absolute righteousness. When you believed in the Savior, then to you is imputed the absolute standard of righteousness that characterizes God. When you have absolute righteousness, you are now justified. Specifically, it was the death of His Son.

Therefore it is no wonder that this is the one thing that Satan likes to attack. What happens in liberal theology with the death of the Son (with the death of Christ? It is removed. It is an offense to man because what that says is that man was so totally depraved (even though he might act morally) – he was so totally depraved that he could not do anything for himself. And the unsaved person considers that an insult. It is because of the Son (because of His death) that the groundwork has been provided for reconciliation. It was the Son who made this possible. No one else could have done it.

So, here you have the unique sinless God-Man, who was full deity, and full humanity, providing the ground of reconciliation by providing justification. And as a result of having absolute righteousness, God could now adjust the believer to His own standard. The death of Christ, in the atonement, was physical and spiritual. It is important to remember that Jesus had to die physically and spiritually. He was in the state of spiritual death, which was the basis of making this reconciliation possible. He was in the state of spiritual death from noon to 3:00 PM, because that's when the Scripture says that God the Father and God the Holy Spirit turned their back upon Him because, at that moment, He bore the sins of the world.

Now, what if, between high noon and three o'clock, Jesus Christ had died physically. From other Scripture in theology, what would've happened? The same thing that happens to anybody who dies in spiritual death. You die physically while you are in spiritual death, and you'll go to the lake of fire. If the Lord Jesus Christ had died while in the state of spiritual death, he too would've been doomed to the lake of fire, and the atonement would've been frustrated. This is why Satan did everything he possibly could to try to hasten the death of Christ. What the devil wanted to do was have him die when he was bearing the sins of the world, and was in spiritual death, because he was now separated from the Father and from the Holy Spirit.

So, on the cross, Christ declared that the spiritual death phase of the atonement for sins had come to an end. He did this before He died physically. He said, "Finally, it is finished." When He was bearing the sins of the world, and He was in spiritual death, he said, "My God, My God," speaking to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, "Why have You forsaken Me?" But when he was spiritually now restored that the payment for sin that spiritual death required was completed, then he said, "*Father*, into Thy hands I commit My Spirit:" "Father" is the word of fellowship. And that indicated that now he was back spiritually alive. He was back in fellowship with the Father. And the physical phase of the atonement, death, took place after He was spiritually alive again. Then is when he died physically.

**Justification**

Up in Romans 5:9, it says, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him." Because of the death of Christ (we have been justified by His blood), we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. That's the only thing that will preserve a person from the lake of fire. And Christ paid the spiritual and the physical death necessary. The sins of the world poured out on Christ. The Father's justice judged them all; imposed the penalty of spiritual and physical death; and, thus God was propitiated. And when God was satisfied, now reconciliation could be put into effect.

**Reconciliation**

Here's the illustration of reconciliation. . . . In creation, man was in innocence. Man and God were at peace. So, here they are, facing each other, holding each other's hands. Man and God are friends. Then when sin entered the picture, they fell into sin. Now, they're at enmity. They're at conflict with God. God has had to turn away from man because of the judgment of death. Man has turned away from God because he is in rebellion against Him. And between them stands this horrible, horrible wall. Man is the enemy of God, and God is in wrath. They are back-to-back. And there's a wall separating them. This wall is made up of man's sin. It's made up of the fact that he is spiritually dead. It's made up of the fact that he produces human good, which is evil. It is made up of the fact that divine justice has condemned him to death. It is made up of the fact that he is in Adam. Every one of these blocks condemns man forever to sin. And as long as this existed, there was no way that God and man can get together.

Now what the Lord Jesus Christ was remove this wall. We won't go into detail how he removed each block, but one-by-one, these blocks were removed by Christ in His process of atonement, so that the result was that this wall was gone, and the condition that now existed was that the atonement of Jesus Christ made sinners "savable." "Savable" is not a word you get out of the Bible, but it is a word that theologians try to find to describe biblical principles. I got this word from the founder of Dallas Seminary, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, who, in talking about propitiation, and what it is that God had done for Christ when the wall was removed, he said he was lying on his bed one night, and all of a sudden, into his mind pop the word "savable." And he said, "That's it." Once the wall has been removed by being replaced by the cross, man is now "savable." God can save him.

**Propitiation**

So, man, who is the enemy, is on this side, but now God has turned back toward man, because God has been propitiated. The sinner here does not believe the gospel. Therefore, the death of Christ is of no value to him. He cannot be reconciled. But objective reconciliation is there. This is for the whole world. Then the final happy result: when the sinner believes in Christ as Savior, he, in effect, turns and faces the cross, and God has been propitiated – the sinner trusts in Jesus Christ, and they can reach across and hold each other's hands again, because they are once more friends. And what is the condition of man now? Reconciled. What is the condition of God? Propitiated.

Now, what was objective reconciliation, becomes personal reconciliation. Absolute righteousness has been imputed to the believer because of his justification. He is now totally adjusted to the holiness of God. Now that person can walk into heaven.

So, you can see how ridiculous it is for people to try to think that somehow they can create a relationship to God by some ritual; some religious activity; or, some personal good works. It takes these enormous provisions that only God could do.

So, from innocence, through falling into sin, through the atonement that satisfied God through faith in Christ, that now brings them back together. And this is the picture and the progression of reconciliation.

**The Mission of Reconciliation**

Now, the mission of reconciliation – we looked at this this morning. Let me read it again. 2 Corinthians 5:18-21: "Now all these things are from God, Who reconciled us to Himself (through Christ), who gave us the ministry of reconciliation; namely, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." This was objective reconciliation. It covered the whole world, "not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us this good news about reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us, we beg you, on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." That is our message to the unsaved.

Then we have the famous verse here: 2 Corinthians 5:21, which declares the basis of that reconciliation, "He made Him, Who knew no sin, to be sinned on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Reconciliation is the fact that our absolute righteousness has been given to us. We are now justified, and since we are justified, God is now able to adjust our lives to His standard and to Himself. Our message is to plead with people to accept this reconciliation.

In the process of doing that, one thing you have to be very careful about is not to give the wrong message. There are a lot of false gospel messages. Supposedly, what is it that you're going to (as God's ambassador) invite people to do? To become reconciled to God. Now, how would you say that? How will you get people to be reconciled to God? It is amazing how many pop-Christianity we have that completely divert people from reconciliation. For example, it's not asking people to give their heart to God. The moment before you are saved, your heart; your mind; and, your life is a cesspool. Why would you give that to God to get you into heaven? It is not inviting Jesus Christ into your heart. To an unbeliever that's a meaningless, stupid phrase. He doesn't know how to do that. It is not walking down an aisle in order to make a public confession. In many churches, this is what the end of the service is: "Come on down the aisle, and make your public confession, so that you can be saved." It is not praying to be saved. Nobody gets saved by praying to be saved. How can you pray? You're not even a believer. If you're not a Christian, who's going to listen to you? God does not listen to the prayers of unbelievers.

It is not joining something like a local church, or the Kiwanis Club, or the Y M C A. It's not getting into a religious organization. And yet, that is the impression that people get when they are asked to walk down an aisle, because usually that's connected with joining the church. It is not doing something good or avoiding doing something bad. It has nothing to do with your conduct. And it is not through the outpouring of emotion and sorrow for sins. That is a favorite one – to get people weeping and crying, and to have them come forward to express the sorrow for their sins.

When I first came to Berean Church, and we used to meet in that unfinished library room, my predecessor had a bench up there, covered by an army blanket. And when you wanted to be saved, you came back, and you kneeled before this little altar (this was the prayer altar). You would kneel before this altar, and plead with God to save you. It was wild and mindless to watch that service while that was taking place.

One particular exciting service, one lady came up afterward and said to me, "Didn't you just feel the Spirit here this morning?" And I said, "No, I don't think I heard anything. I thought I did smell something, but I don't think I heard any spirits." And here are these sincere people thinking that they're getting with God by an outpouring of their emotion.

What God wants you to do is come in all of your filth and evil, and let Him do the cleaning up. He cannot reconcile you until you say, "I'm ready to accept the covering for my sin. I'm ready to accept the substitute of Christ. Then you can give me the reconciliation that adjusts me to Your standard of absolute righteousness.

Now it's amazing how the concept of human doing is always thrust upon people. And the simple concept of Scripture, of believing, is always downgraded in some way. You may remember that the end the gospel of John, John says, "This book was written in order to demonstrate to you that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ (is the living God). And by believing in Him, you might have life eternal." In other words, this gospel was written to focus particularly upon the subject of salvation. And something like 125 times, it tells you how to go to heaven. And every time it has to do with believing the gospel: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." And John 3:16 of that gospel is the classic example: "As many as believed (believing on) Him are the ones who are saved.

I heard an evangelist one time (of considerable fame) who said, "Believism is not enough. It is not enough to just believe. You have to receive Christ as your Savior." Now, right away, I knew what his problem was. He was struggling with the fact that some people are Christians, but they act very much as if they were children of the devil. But I understand that the reason for that is that they have a sin nature, and they have not been given the equipment of the knowledge of the Word of God to be able to control the sin nature by maintaining temporal fellowship, and having a knowledge of doctrine that the Spirit of God can apply in their experience.

So, he said that the Word of God says, and then he goes to the gospel of John, designed to tell you how to go to heaven. And he quotes John 1:12. I'll read it, so you won't think I'm making it up. John 1:12 says: "But as many as received Him" (received Jesus Christ). And the evangelist's point was that you have to receive Christ: "As many as received Him, to them, gave He the right." And the Greek word there is "the authority" ("exousia") (ex-oo-see'-ah) (power to act – authority) to become children of God." And then he stopped. And I'm waiting for him to finish the verse. His point remember is that believism is not enough. It is not just enough to believe. You have to receive Christ. The reason he didn't read the rest of the verse is because it countered everything he'd been preaching in that vast stadium, because the end of the verse says, "even to those who believe in His name." So, it contradicted everything he said. The way you are saved, the way you receive Christ, which indeed is what you have to do (there's only one way you can receive Him, so that He can reconcile you to God's standard of righteousness) is by believing the gospel. When you believe the gospel, you are believing in Him.

One of the greatest expressions of God's love toward the reconciled, and of preserving us in our salvation is this passage that we've been looking at in Romans 5:9-11, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him." Paul argues in these verses, that God has, first of all, Himself provided, by the death of Christ, the basis to deflect His wrath from us.

Verse 10: "For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, have been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Here, the apostle Paul says, "Since God has satisfied His justice by sacrificing His Son, thus enabling Him to reconcile sinners to His absolute righteousness, He will do the less thing of preserving believing sinners and their salvation." The hardest thing that God had to do was the justice, to make us acceptable in heaven, with absolute righteousness. Now, He has done that. He did that through the death of Christ. Logic, therefore, demands, Paul said, that if He has done that for us (the hard thing), the easier thing, now that Jesus is alive, is that He will keep us saved. That's why He intercedes for us in heaven when the devil attacks us because of our sin. And he makes it clear that we are under His protective custody.

Christianity, remember, is a logical religious system. It's a logical faith. And Paul was a brilliant logician, and he reasoned. But he reasoned on the basis of doctrinal principles. The Christian is not to live the spiritual life on the basis of his feelings, but on the basis of what God has taught. If you go with feelings, you're in Satan's manipulations.

John 4:24 says that those who believe the Father, concerning His Son Jesus, now have everlasting life, and they will never come into condemnation, because He has already permanently passed them from eternal death into eternal life."

So the doctrine of reconciliation deals simply with the adjustment of a lost sinner to God's standard of absolute righteousness. The word, as we pointed out, means "to make a change." The change is in the sinner, not in God. The change is in view of man adjusting from relative righteousness to absolute righteousness, and from incompatibility to compatibility with God. And man only needs reconciliation. God does not need that. The problem in reconciliation is removing that wall, and God has done that through Christ. This has been accomplished by Him. Now, man is savable. And the happy result is that God can reconcile us to Himself. And the divine provision of reconciliation becomes effective the moment you trust.

So, every Christian has been entrusted with this message. This is the great thing that we have to tell people.

Then in Romans 10, we're also told that, because we have this reconciliation, something else is obvious: that because Christ is alive, we are going to be saved by His life. And what that is telling us is that, having been reconciled (that was the major thing that has changed from hatred and hostility toward God, to friendship and submission), thus, we have now been related to God in a provision that ensures that we shall be saved. Because God has reconciled us, we'll never be undone. This is one of the great passages that ensures the truth of absolute salvation – a salvation which cannot be changed, and cannot be lost again: "We shall be saved."

Please notice up in Romans 5:10, it says that we shall be saved from the wrath of God. In Romans 5:10, it says, "having been saved by his life, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Jesus Christ, and we shall be saved (that is, from the lake of fire) through His life." So, because Jesus, lives, as he said, you will live also.

The idea is that Christ has provided the basis for our reconciliation by means of His death, and this is the logical conclusion then. God has promised certain things to us. He has promised to make all believers, therefore, because we are reconciled to Him, the beneficiaries of a fantastic inheritance in heaven. And we should encourage ourselves by the realization (or memory) of what it is that we have before us.

Romans 8:17-18: "If children, heirs also; heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Chris. If indeed we suffer with Him, in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us."

Whatever the sufferings; whatever the burdens; whatever the trials; and, whatever the hard things in life that we have now, it's nothing compared to the happy, wonderful experience that will be ours someday in heaven with Him. That is what is before us.

Take a look at 1 Timothy 6:17. This is another consequence of reconciliation: "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited, or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy." What a verse that is. Do not become materialistically oriented. That is not where your life is. Your hope is not on the uncertainty of riches. Sooner or later, you're going to find out in life how quickly your good times and your good bank account can disappear. But what God has for eternity – that will never be lost.

Then there's Hebrews 9:15: "And for this reason, He is the Mediator of a New Covenant, in order that, since the death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." God has a great eternal inheritance for us.

Notice again Hebrews 9:15: "For this reason, He is the Mediator of a New Covenant (Jesus)." For what purpose? So, that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance." God has promised a believer an eternal inheritance.

Furthermore, Hebrews 9:16-17 which follow, point out, that for a will to be of benefit, the person who made the will, and who possesses the wealth, has to die. You don't get your uncle's riches until your uncle dies, if you are in his will.

Verse 16: "For where a covenant (a will) is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant (or a will) is valid only when men are dead. For it is never enforced while the one who made it lives." And what this is telling us is that Jesus Christ, through His death, has secured for us the wealth of eternal life. He had the wealth to give us, but he could not give it to us until He Himself had died. Like anybody who makes a will, He cannot pass good things on to His heirs until He Himself dies.

So, the riches of the grace age, because are reconcile to God, this is what is before us in heaven. God has made a multitude of promises for time and for eternity, to the believer, but none of them would've been worth anything if it had not been for the death of the testator Jesus Christ.

Now we have spiritual assets (assets of God that are credited to every believer's account). Every believer has that huge power of God with which to carry through his life. He has a vast inheritance in heaven, made eternally secured by the fact that Christ is now alive, protecting what He died to provide us with. Since Jesus Christ Himself is managing our spiritual affairs, it is impossible for our assets of reconciliation ever to be dissipated. Our Lord protects it all. Since He died to provide our eternal inheritance in heaven, since He now lives, He will much more see to it that what we have is preserved.

Hebrews 7:22-25: "So much the more, also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. And the former priests, (in Levi's family line) on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Hence also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since he always lives to make intercession for that."

This is the whole principle of reconciliation. We are the beneficiaries of all that God has for us. And nothing will ever interrupt that destiny for us. If the Lord Jesus Christ had not paid for the sins of the world: past; present; and, future in full, He would not have been raised from the dead. If He had not been raised from the dead, He could not reconcile us to God. Since we are reconciled, all of the inheritance, all the riches, and all of the things that God has for us, we have in perpetuity – in absolute certainty. And we can never lose it again. The doctrine of reconciliation is an inspiration and a comfort if there ever was a truth in the Word of God to carry us through.

Shall we pray?

Father, we want to thank You for this time in the Word, and for the fact that You have honored us by caring for us in such a marvelous way. We thank You that all of the things that we have needed to be brought into alignment with You have been provided by You. We are thankful to You that it is because of our reconciliation to You, that we are able to walk with You with confidence and without fear. We look forward, our Father, to the day when our objective reconciliation becomes subjective in our personal experience. Thank You for this night. Thank You for this Word. And may it be a great comfort to us. And we pray that we will have a great sense of importance now of the adjustment of a human being to God's standard of righteousness. That is our message. That is what people have to understand must take place in their lives, if they are to escape the horrors of an eternity in the lake of fire. May we make that message clear to them? We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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