

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 (NIV)

18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

47-05-04-Reconciliation with God

Lent, hostility, atonement, peace, righteousness

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

Because God's nature is *love*, His salvation plan is *relational*.

INTRODUCTION:

–The purple of Lent stands for *heart preparation*. One great way of preparing to celebrate the victory of Easter is to contemplate the mystery of the Cross. Crucifixion isn't mysterious. It was Rome's way of torturing criminals to death. [*Strangely, non-Christians may wear crosses as jewelry! Imagine a miniature guillotine dangling from your neck as a decoration!*] But Christians often wear crosses because, on Christ's Cross, the mystery of salvation was accomplished.

–With our finite brains, we *can't fully grasp* what took place spiritually in the death of Jesus. But the NT reveals many wonderful aspects of what His work on the Cross accomplished. As we approach Easter, we will look at 7 of these, starting with “*Reconciliation with God*” (**title**).

–**HOM.idea**. This is clear in this passage on *reconciliation* (our **text**)– **2 Cor 5:18-21**, *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. First, let's explore the concept....*

I. What Exactly Is Reconciliation?

A. The word itself [*katallage*] means to exchange equivalent values, as in *money-changing*. [In bookkeeping, the goal is *bringing the books into balance* or “*reconciling accounts*” – insuring that each category and transaction has equivalent values of *inflow* and *outflow*.]

1. *Creation* was God's great business enterprise, which He meant to work in *perfect balance*, based on His true, divine values.
2. God chose *humanity* to use those values to manage that business. But human *sin* created a spiritual deficit that put us and creation *in the red* spiritually. (God didn't scrap the business and get rid of the sinful manager.... He sent His Son to reconcile accounts.)

B. The concept of *reconciling monetary differences* made this term useful in describing the *reconciliation of relationships*: settling

differences that divide people, restoring *peace* between enemies.

1. Again, sin brought disruption to a peaceful harmony in our *relationship* with God. (Some see God as an *angry Judge*, quick to condemn the lost to destruction, but just the opposite is true— **Rom 5:8**. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. — God wants to balance the books!)
2. God *is* angry... at sin! He hates what it does to sinners and to its victims. He may intervene, but His ultimate plan is *reconciliation!*

TRANS: **Col 1:21-22**, 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. *Does this look like an angry God ready to cast lightning bolts at the mismanagers of creation? Because God's nature is love, His salvation plan is relational.* [**Wm. Barclay**: "It is not that God is estranged from man but that man is estranged from him. God's message, the message which Paul brought, is an appeal from a loving Father to wandering and estranged children to come home where love is waiting for them."] If this appeal is valid...

II. How Did Christ's Death Bring Reconciliation?

- A. In order "to present [us] holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation," God made a personal business transaction involving "Christ's **physical body** through death." (Jesus wasn't an outsider. His incarnation into Adam's race paved the way for reconciliation.)
- B. This went beyond just Adam's fallen race— **v.19a**, *God was reconciling the world [kosmos] to himself in Christ* (He wanted His whole *original business enterprise* back again; same Owner, but under new human management: Jesus Christ—*Son of God* and *Son of man*.)
- C. This *reconciliation* meant somehow setting the records straight, balancing the divine books: canceling the deficit of death by "*not counting men's sins against them*" (**v.19b**) ("*Show me the math on this!*")
- D. Here's the divine formula— **Rom 6:23**, For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.—Now the equation:
 1. Humanity + SIN = DEATH ("For the wages of sin is death") BUT...
 2. Humanity + Jesus Christ = LIFE ("the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord")
 3. SIN's presence in the 1st equation results in DEATH, but when Jesus is substituted for SIN, the original equation turns out a new

result— **v.21**, *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

TRANS: This **loving Trinitarian God** paid a **heavy personal price for His relational salvation plan**. When Jesus became "*sin for us*" in this divine equation, it meant a *death sentence*. The incarnate Christ, as both God and man, could "taste death for every man" (**Heb 2:9**), and feel what His own wrath falling on human sin felt like. Our minds can never fully fathom the Cross of Christ, where this *divine spiritual transaction* took place—where God became *our sin* so that we could become His "*righteousness*." But what we must understand and respond to is...

III. What Accompanies This Reconciliation?

- A. Once *reconciled* to God, a gift accompanies our *reconciliation*— **v.18**, *God... reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation*. (Jesus the *Reconciler* is also the *Restorer*, giving us back our managerial positions in God's earthly enterprise.
- B. Right now, in *salvation history*, God's business target is getting His managers back on the work force, and He calls those already *reconciled*—to be His agents for the task— **v.20a**, *We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us*.
- C. This word "ambassador" in the Greek means an official authorized by a ruler to act in his behalf. (That's the kind of *authority* we have spiritually as God's agents— **v.20b**, *We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God*.)

CONCLUSION:

—Among world religions, the phrase "**God is love**" rings true only for the Bible's *Trinitarian God*. The eternal, co-equal Godhead of *Father, Son* and *Holy Spirit* is the ultimate pattern of relational harmony. From that divine, loving relationship comes a salvation plan that's relational, not just for us but for all creation— **Col 1:20**, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. When we come to that Cross, we join that Triune God in His great mission and ministry of reconciliation. —But that's just one aspect of the marvelous work Christ did for us on the Cross. There is more to *explore*, more to *understand*, more to *share*.