



## ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

March 2022

### The Ministry of Reconciliation

“We Must Continue the Work that Jesus Began”

#### SCRIPTURE READINGS

**Main Text:** 2 Cor. 5: 17 - 20

**Devotional Readings:** Isaiah 59:2, Matt 18:20, Rom. 4:8, Col 1:20 - 22 and 2: 13 - 15,

#### 2 Cor 5:18-20

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. KJV

#### The Consideration

All of the orthodox Christian world agrees that the events that happened on Calvary's cross involving the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and His subsequent resurrection is perhaps one of the most important occurrences in all of the bible. I Peter 1:18 - 19, explains that we were not redeemed or “bought back” from our sinful incarceration in exchange for silver or gold, but our salvation was accomplished through “the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without spot or blemish.” Therefore, without debate we can agree that the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ marked a crucial and decisive point of change. The question that I want to pose is this.. “exactly what did Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection change?” Let’s consider this question a bit further. Did Jesus’ death and resurrection change God? The prophet Malachi tells us the God doesn’t change (Mal. 3:6), and the Apostle James informs us that there is no “variableness or shadow of turning” in God. (James 1:17). So, consider this question, “Did God love the world any more after Calvary than He did

before Calvary?” The apparent answer is “no.” God already “so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.” So, the work of Calvary didn’t change God. The second question is, “Did Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection change man?” Well, let’s think about this. Before Calvary, man was lying, stealing, killing, raping, robbing and just sinful in general. And, after Calvary, man is still lying, stealing, killing, raping, robbing and just sinful in general. So, it doesn’t appear that Calvary changed the nature of man. So, if Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection didn’t change God or man, what did it change? The answer is revealed within the message expressed in 2 Corinthians 5: 17 - 20. Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection changed the “relationship” between God and man!

#### QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways did Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection change the relationship between God and man?
2. How do we as Christian show this relationship change in our daily lives?
3. What responsibility do Christian’s have to the unsaved regarding this relational change between God and man?

#### The Discussion

While visiting a church, I took a look at the bulletin that was handed out. On the back there was a list of the various ministries that were currently active in the church. I read that they had a men’s ministry, a women’s ministry, a ministry for youth and so on. But one very important ministry was totally absent from the list; that was the “Ministry of Reconciliation.” Exactly what does the bible mean by “reconciliation?” In this sense, the word reconciliation means “to be returned or restored to favor with God.” This raises the question: “how did man lose favor with God?” The simply answer is that the sinful disobedience of Adam and Eve’s actions in the Garden of Eden led to the cataclysmic fall of all humanity in to a sinful state of sinful rebellion against God. The prophet Isaiah correctly described this condition in Isaiah 59:2 when he informs us that our “iniquities has brought separation between us and our God” and that our sins has caused God to hid his face from us and God will not even hear us.

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## The Study

### 2 Cor 5:18-20

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Isaiah's description of man's spiritual condition recorded in Isaiah 59:2 describes the extremely dire spiritual state of mankind. God's word plainly states that "the soul that sinneth shall die..." Ezek. 18:20. When Adam fell into sin, he took all of mankind with him. Mankind was powerless in this regard and could do nothing on his own to restore the glorious relationship that he once shared with his creator. Furthermore, it was impossible for an infinitely righteous God to embrace an infinitely sinful human race. This current state of affairs was hopeless. In order to solve this matter, God sent His Son Jesus. The bible says the "God" himself was "in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." This act of reconciliation was an act accomplished on our behalf by God alone.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What must we do in order to benefit from God's offer of reconciliation?
2. Why was Christ's death, burial and resurrection necessary for us to be reconciled with God?

#### A Little Deeper

According to scripture, we as believers in Christ have been given this "ministry of reconciliation." This ministry of reconciliation is not some lifeless human derived philosophy but is in reality a great work handed down from God to man. It is a great work because it is the continuation of the ministry and work that Jesus began when he was here on earth. (Read: Col 1: 21-23 Heb. 2:17). It is important to understand that the Apostle Paul writes these two letters to the Corinthian church to address some

issues within the church that appeared to be "irreconcilable." Some issues included: Lawsuits (I Cor. 6:1 - 11), Sexual Practices (I Cor 6: 12 - 20), The Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11: 17 - 34), Spiritual Gifts (I Cor. 12:1 - 14:40) and The Bodily Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1 - 58).

God has given us as believers in Christ both the power (through the Holy Spirit) and the responsibility to operate in this ministry of reconciliation and promises to bless us when we operate in it. (Read Matt. 5:9).

In addition, this scripture calls us "ambassadors for Christ." As Christ's ambassadors, we have one primary message to bring to the nations and that is "be ye reconciled to God." This is accomplished by sharing and showing the world that complete forgiveness of sin is available through and by Jesus Christ alone. This message is literally a matter of life and death!

#### QUESTION:

1. How does the presents of "irreconciliation" among believers serve to undermine all that God is trying to accomplish among the unsaved?
2. Read (Matt. 18:15 - 20). How is this passage about "reconciliation?"
3. What are some examples of the ministry of reconciliation present in the work of Jesus as recorded in the four gospels?

#### FINAL WORD

The bible tells us that "perilous times shall come." One of the greatest perils of our present time is the lack of the ministry of reconciliation operating among believers. In many ways we have traded the ministry of reconciliation for the ministry of "amputation." Such behavior results in the spiritual and emotional mutilation of the body of Christ. In addressing this matter, everyone of us must fully own how Christ rescued us from the depth of our own spiritual depravity and how God extended grace to us through the reconciling work of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross. When we honestly reflect on the ministry of reconciliation that God provided for us "while we were yet sinners" then perhaps we will have a much easier time extending that same ministry of reconciliation to others.



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