

GOD

Our Ministry of Reconciliation

When we got **born again**, we became **God's children**. We are **redeemed** from the curse of the Law, we are **set apart**, and in God's eyes we are **justified** and **righteous**. We have **eternal life** to look forward to when Christ returns. With all that God has given us, we **could** just sit around and wait for the Return of His Son, **but** He also gave us a **ministry** that we have the privilege to operate: the **ministry of reconciliation**:

II Corinthians

5:18 **And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;**

Before we can understand what is meant by “ministry of reconciliation” we first need to consider what it **means** to be **reconciled**, **who** needs to be reconciled **to whom**, and **how** this reconciliation is accomplished. To “**reconcile**” basically means **to bring back together** what has been separated or broken. Here we are referring to reconciling, bringing back, men and women to **God**. Mankind was given a spiritual connection with God, but due to sin **lost** that connection; and since then all are born spiritually dead in trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1), having no hope and without God in this world (Ephesians 2:12). **God never changed** in His love toward man (Malachi 3:6). God never became man's enemy due to man's sin and sin nature; rather, **man** became at enmity with **God**, separated from Him and His blessings, with no spiritual connection. But God's desire is for man to become **reconciled** back to **Him**.

Let's consider this word “**reconcile**” more closely so we can get an understanding of **how** men and women can get reconciled to God. There are three different Greek words translated “reconcile” found in the Bible.

The first, *diassomai*, is used for reconciliation where **both** parties undergo a **change** to be brought back together: in other words, a **mutual** change. Even though this word is common in profane literature, often used for people offering sacrifices to appease an angry god, it is **never** used of the one true God, because **God never changes**. The only Biblical usage of this Greek word is in Matthew 5:24, which refers to a man becoming reconciled with his brother with whom he had a disagreement.

The Greek word **usually** used when referring to man being reconciled to **God** is *katallassō*, with the noun form, *katallagē*, used for “**reconciliation**.” This word, literally meaning **to change thoroughly**, involves a change by only **one** party (in this case, **man**). When a man becomes reconciled to God, the **man** changes, and this allows God to lay aside any enmity and to withhold all wrath and judgment that would have resulted from man's sin nature.

The third word, *apokatallattō*, is only used three times, and each of its usages occurs in the context **not only** of man being reconciled to **God** but the two major **groups of people**, Judeans and Gentiles, being reconciled **to each other** as well. We'll just look at one usage, in **Ephesians Chapter 2**, beginning in **verse 11**:

Ephesians

- 2:11 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by them which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;
- 2:12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens (*estranged*) from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:
- 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes (*once*) were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.
- 2:14 For he is our peace (*our peace treaty*), who hath made both (*both Judean and Gentile*) one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*;
- 2:15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace;
- 2:16 And that he might reconcile both (*both Judeans and Gentiles*) unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

But, in order to be reconciled **together** into one body (*apokatallattō*), people must **first** be reconciled back to God (*katallassō*). We can begin to see the greatness of **how** it became available for mankind to be reconciled to God in **Romans, Chapter 5**, beginning in **verse 8**:

Romans

- 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (*Jesus Christ was our substitute for sin*).
- 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood (*by his giving of his life*), we shall be saved from wrath through him.
- 5:10 For if, when we were enemies (*at enmity with God*), we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.
- 5:11 And not only *so*, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.
- 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned:
- 5:15 But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.
- 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

Not only is the word “**reconciled**” used **twice** in verse 10, but the word “**atonement**” in verse 11 (...by whom we have now received the **atonement**) is translated from the Greek word *katallagē*, so should be rendered “**reconciliation**.” We see that God was able to make it available for man to be reconciled to Him by the accomplishments of His Son, Jesus Christ. Man, at enmity with God due to sin, could do **nothing** to become reconciled to God. **But** it became available for man to become reconciled to God by the death of His only begotten Son as the **perfect sacrifice** and payment in full for sin, followed by his **resurrection** from the dead.

Even though Jesus Christ accomplished mankind's redemption and made reconciliation to God **available**, it is **still** up to each individual person. All one has to do to be reconciled to God, to become saved, to escape the wrath and judgment, and to re-gain that spiritual connection, is to **confess** Jesus as Lord and **believe** that God raised him from the dead (Romans 10:9). **However**, in order for a person to **believe** so they can be saved and reconciled to God, that person must first **hear** the truths of God's Word regarding Jesus Christ's accomplishments. **Romans chapter 10, verses 14 and 15** tell us: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not **believed**? And how shall they **believe** in him of whom they have not **heard**? And how shall they **hear** without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?"

Here is where our **ministry of reconciliation** comes in. Look at **II Corinthians, Chapter 5**, beginning in **verse 17**:

II Corinthians

- 5:17** Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
- 5:18** And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
- 5:19** To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world (*a figure of speech for the people living in the world*) unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.
- 5:20** 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.
- 5:21** For he hath made him (*Jesus Christ*) to be sin (*a figure of speech referring to "a sin offering"*) for (*in place of*) us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The Greek word for **reconcile** in these verses is *katallassō*, and *katallagē* is the word used for "**reconciliation**." Jesus Christ's accomplishments made it available for a man or woman to **change**, by hearing and believing God's Word to the point that they are **reconciled to God**, who does **not** change. And, **verse 18** tells us **how** people can **hear** enough to believe and get saved and reconciled: by way of those with **the ministry of reconciliation**: that's **us**, God's children who are **already** born again of His spirit.

When **Jesus Christ** was present on earth, **he** was the one who brought people back to God, and **those** people were the **Israelites**. Jesus Christ was building his Church (Matthew 16:18), the Church of Israel, also referred to as the Church of the Bride. In order for him to **do** that, he had to **make God known** to the people:

John

- 1:18** No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

This verse says that Jesus Christ "**declared**" God. The Greek word for "declared" here is *exegeōmai*, which literally means "**to lead out**." By making God known, Jesus Christ **led** people **out** of spiritual darkness to **God**, who is **light**. In order to **do** this, he didn't just say a couple

words: to **declare**, or to make known, God, Jesus Christ **spent time with people**, who not only heard his **words** but observed his **actions**.

Today, in this **Administration of Grace**, Jesus Christ is **not** physically present on earth to make God known so people can learn enough to get to the point that they can make the decision to get saved and reconciled to God. **In his place**, there's **us**, Jesus Christ's brothers and sisters: **we** have the ministry of reconciliation.

Let's return to **II Corinthians 5:18**:

5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

It's a **ministry**, a way of **servicing** as a committed *doulos* bond-slave. Just like Jesus Christ, **we** have the God-given right and privilege to **make God known**, to *exegeōmai*, to lead people out of spiritual darkness to the light of God's Word. We bring people to the point that **they can believe** and become **reconciled to God**. An important point is that **we are not** the ones actually reconciling men and women to God: **Jesus Christ** by his accomplishments made this available, and the individual being reconciled is the one who changes. Then, **God** gives the increase (I Corinthians 3:6 and 7). It's our ministry of reconciliation **not** because we ourselves do the reconciling, but because what we do brings people to the point that **they** can get reconciled to God. We **could** think of it as our ministry that **leads to**, or **facilitates**, reconciliation.

In order for us to **declare God**, to *exegeōmai*, we, like Jesus Christ, need to **spend time with people**, not only sharing with words but with actions. God **equipped us fully** to do this so we can carry out our ministry of reconciliation. Look again at **verse 19**:

5:19 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.

We have **the word of reconciliation**: we have **God's Word**, not only the written Word but also, when needed, revelation. **We** are the ones to tell others about the accomplishments of Jesus Christ and what they made available. As we operate our ministry of reconciliation, we are acting as **ambassadors for Christ** with a message to deliver, as we see in the next verse:

5:20 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.

We are God's **ambassadors**. The word "**for**" (ambassadors **for** Christ) is from a Greek word meaning "**in place of**." Jesus Christ is **not** currently present physically, but **we** are. We are here **in place of Christ**, or as the verse later says: "**in Christ's stead**." And, it is our God-given right as His children and **ambassadors** to carry out this ministry, making God known so others can be reconciled to God.

One thing should be **clarified** in this verse. The way it's written it almost looks like Paul was exhorting the **Corinthian** readers who were **already** born-again believers to be **reconciled to God** ("...we pray **you**...be **ye** reconciled to God"). The confusion comes from the uses of the word "**you**" in this verse in the King James Version. They are in **italics**, indicating that they were **added**. If we **remove** them, this verse becomes much **clearer**: "Now then **we** (including the Corinthians) are **ambassadors** for (in place of) Christ, as though God did beseech (earnestly implore) **by us** (his ambassadors, speaking to those not yet saved): 'Be reconciled to God.'" This verse is saying, then, that **our operation of the ministry of reconciliation** is **how** God is "beseeching" men and women to be reconciled to Him.

As we **serve** as ambassadors in place of Christ, operating our ministry of reconciliation, we are **fellow-workers** with other believers in the household. Look at **Chapter 6, verse 1**:

6:1 **We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.**

The words "**with him**" were **added** and are **not** in the text. The words "**workers together**" are from the one Greek word *sunergeō*, the **same** word translated "work together" in **Romans 8:28** where it says "all things **work together** for good." It's basically the same word used in **I Corinthians 3:9** where it says "For we are **laborers together** with God." The *Companion Bible* points out that the phrase "laborers together with God" ("God's fellow-workers") in that verse is a **figure of speech**, the Genitive of Possession, in which we, as *doulos* bond-servants, **work together** with **each other**, with God as our **Master**. As we operate our ministry of reconciliation, we are **co-workers with one another** in the household. God's **not** the one operating the ministry of reconciliation: **we** are.

Being **workers together** with our brothers and sisters in Christ as we fulfill our **ministry of reconciliation** is a privilege and right, and we recognize great **benefits** and **blessings** as we do this. Not only do **we** and other members of the household **grow** in wisdom and spiritual understanding, but **the household** itself grows as more are **reconciled to God** and new members are added. We also can look forward to **future rewards** when Christ returns.

So, let's joyfully operate our **ministry of reconciliation** as we bring others to the knowledge of the accomplishments of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ so that they too can be **reconciled to God**.

- Dr. Rick Batt