

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, *diallassomai*, 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 serving 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