

“Reconciliation”
Ephesians 2:17-18
(Preached at Trinity, May 25, 2014)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I’ve stated before, one of the themes of the Book of Ephesians is the union of Jews and Gentiles into one body.
Ephesians 2:14 NAU - "For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall"
 - A. Paul stresses the desperate condition of the Gentiles. Not only were they dead in sin. They were outside of God’s covenant promises which were given exclusively to Israel.
Ephesians 2:12 NAU - "*remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."
 - B. In Christ both Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled into one body.
Ephesians 2:13 NAU - "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."
Ephesians 2:15-16 NAU - "that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity."
2. The division between Jews and Gentiles merely reflects the enmity between all men. The sin of Adam caused terrible hostility. After Adam sinned he immediately turned against his wife.
Genesis 3:12 NAU - "The man said, "The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."
3. Cain turned against Abel and on and on. We live in a world of hatred and strife. Christ brings peace.
Ephesians 2:16 NAS - "and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity."
4. As Paul paints the vivid picture of the great wall of division between Jews and Gentiles that has been removed through Christ there is a much greater wall of division which Paul does not want us to overlook.
 - A. In **Verse 17** Paul speaks of peace being preached to both groups – Peace to those who were far away as well as peace to those who were near. Paul speaks of Christ doing the preaching – not Christ personally preaching but Christ preaching through the Apostles and then through the pastoral ministry.
 - B. Paul is speaking of a much greater wall of division that could only be removed through Christ.

5. Sin has brought a terrible alienation between God and man – an infinite chasm exists and there is no way to bridge the expanse. Paul is telling us that through Christ sinners are reconciled to the Father.

Ephesians 2:18 NAU - "through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father."

The Trinity is clearly revealed here. We are reconciled through Christ, by the Spirit, to the Father.

6. This morning I want us to consider this ultimate dimension of our salvation – we have been reconciled with God.

I. First, We have to remember the nature of man at creation

A. Human beings were created in the image of God with communion with God. We were at peace with God.

1. As Creator God remained infinitely above man, yet God condescended in coming down to man.
2. The Bible tells us that we were created to reflect God in righteousness and holiness

Ephesians 4:24 NAU - "and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."

Ephesians 4:24 ESV - "and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

- a. Adam was created to reflect God's purity and moral perfection.
- b. Prior to the fall Adam continually obeyed God
He loved that which was right and did that which was right.
3. We were also created with wisdom and rational knowledge
 - a. Calvin – "Adam was endued with a right judgment, had affections in harmony with reason, had all his senses sound and well regulated, and truly excelled in everything good."
 - b. We were created with the ability to think in the abstract – especially moral concepts like justice, truth, goodness.
 - c. We were created with a hunger to seek and explore the infinite excellencies of God.

B. Human beings were created in harmony and fellowship with God

1. Adam had a true and proper reverence for God – a godly fear
Godly fear is to have the highest reverence for God. It is to stand in awe of His majesty
2. Adam worshipped God in love and obedience.
He knew God intimately and enjoyed pleasing Him.
3. Adam had the confidence that God was working for his good – that he was in a true and proper communion with God
God was the source of all his comfort and confidence
4. Adam had the ability to know God and understand God rightly.
There was peace and harmony between God and man.

II. With sin came a terrible alienation from God

Isaiah 59:2 NAS - "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden *His* face from you, so that He does not hear."

A. It is a two-fold alienation. God has turned away from us and we have turned away from God.

1. God has turned away from the sinner. God has given him over to a depraved mind.
2. Fellowship with God is impossible. The lost man is under the wrath of God. This means that God's fiery judgment is already kindled. Hells gates have already opened wide to receive sinners.
3. Paul said that sinners are storing up wrath to be fully released at the Day of Judgment

Romans 2:5 NAU - "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,"

B. But fallen man has also turned away from God. We can see it in the life of Adam after he sinned

1. Adam immediately fled from God
 - a. Instead of his conscience leading him to God, it terrified him and led him to flee from God.
 - b. Adam feared God, mistrusted God, he no longer understood God
2. Adam and Eve lost the knowledge of God. Paul describes their darkened mind
3. God gave man over to a depraved mind. In our lost condition we naturally resist God; we naturally flee from God.

This describes the condition of every man since Adam.

4. There is a great chasm between God and man
Man is separated from the knowledge of God

- a. He is unable to think right thoughts of God
- b. He does not seek after God in because he is unable

Romans 3:11 NAS - "There is none who understands,
There is none who seeks for God"

- c. He wants God far away pretending He does not exist

C. The result of this is devastating

1. Everything around us is plagued with hostility – it mirrors our alienation from God.
 - a. There are wars between nations – in my lifetime I have never seen a time when there has not been conflict somewhere in this world.
 - b. There are conflicts in families – the divorce rate is still terribly high. Many just simply refuse to get married
 - c. There are conflicts between employees and employers
Neighbors squabble with one another
 - d. We look at the two main political parties in our nation and see they are most characterized by strife, partisanship and political wrangling. Even people within the same party fight.

- e. People cry out for peace but peace cannot be found
The chief problem they are at war with God
- 2. The lost man has no sense of purpose in his life because he is running from his Creator
 - a. The lost man drifts through life with no sense of direction
 - b. Nothing brings lasting joy or lasting satisfaction
 - c. Without a sense of purpose we feel no sense of calling in our life
Our jobs are just a means of earning an income or a means of personal advancement but no sense of a higher calling
- 3. The lost man is separated from the love of God
 - a. He daily benefits from God's common love that He pours out upon all men but he knows nothing of God's particular Fatherly love.
 - b. He knows nothing of God's Divine favor that directs all of His goodness upon His beloved people.
- 4. The lost man is separated from the fellowship of God
 - a. He only knows God as his enemy. He is not allowed into the presence of God. He is not allowed communion with God.
 - b. He knows that he is separated from God but knows no way of resolving the problem
 - c. His life is spent running from God fearing death when he will stand before God's holy judgment.
- 5. The lost man has no confidence that God is working in his favor
 - a. He vainly pretends that God is on his side. He vainly hopes he will go to heaven when he dies, but he has nothing to base this confidence on.
 - b. Everyone vainly pretends we are all at peace with God. Everyone announces, "God loves you." We all pretend God is well-pleased with us
 - c. The truth is the lost man has a nagging knowledge that he is outside the favor of God – the wrath of God is revealed to his conscience.

III. What can be done to restore fellowship with God – where can we find reconciliation?

- A. Since no man rightly seeks God our only hope is that God seeks us – God must do the seeking.
 - 1. If God had not come to Adam his condition would have been that of the fallen angels – forever condemned.
 - 2. It was God who sought Abraham while he was an idolater
It was God who sought Moses when he was a fugitive in Midian
It was Jesus who sought the disciples while they were fishing
John 15:16 NAU - "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit,"
 - 3. It was God who sought you
John 6:44 – "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."
1 John 4:19 – "We love him, because he first loved us."
Luke 19:10 NAU - "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

- B. This in no way diminishes our responsibility to seek Him
1. Over and over we are commanded to seek hard after God
Psalm 105:4 NAU - "Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face continually."
Isaiah 55:6 NAU - "Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near."
 2. And we are told that God can be found of them that seek Him
Hebrews 11:6 NAU - "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."
Jeremiah 29:13 NAU - "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart."
Matthew 7:7-8 NAU - "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."
 3. We must seek God through Christ.
 - a. Jesus Christ is our Mediator, our High Priest
 - b. We only have access to the Father through Him
John 14:6 NAU - "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

Conclusion:

1. Reconciliation is made possible through Christ.
Romans 5:8-11 NAU - "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."
2. Paul always marveled at this aspect of His apostolic ministry and it is the pastoral ministry as well. We are calling lost sinners to reconciliation.
2 Corinthians 5:17-20 NAU - "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. ¹⁸ Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."
 This is the preaching of **Verse 17**
3. Those who have been reconciled should live their lives for His glory. It is the height of ingratitude to live carelessly and sinfully in spite of the greatness of God's mercy towards us. God watched His beloved Son suffer and then turned away from Him as He bore our sin so that we might be reconciled to Him.
 He is worthy of our love and our praise and worship. He is worthy of our lives lived to His glory.