

RECONCILED TO GOD

(The Fruits of Faith, Part 2)

Romans 5:6–11

Key Verse: 5:10 “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”

What's a trial you are going through right now? Are you rejoicing in the midst of it? Or have you struggled to see God's goodness, his love? In the previous passage, the apostle Paul says one of the fruits of faith is joy in suffering. Whenever we do not bear the fruit of joy, we may question: am I really justified? Am I really saved? Or is God, the righteous judge, punishing me for my sins and failures?

In today's passage, Paul speaks to those who have been justified by faith but who struggle with the present realities of ongoing sins, failures, and suffering. So Paul reminds us not only that we have been justified, but that we have been reconciled to God. Reconciliation reminds us of what God has already done for us when we were still sinners and enemies. When we know when, why, and how God reconciled us to himself, we can overcome fear and doubt. Our present sins, failures, and suffering do not mean that God has rejected us. Instead, we can confidently go through the process of sanctification.

I. God's gift of reconciliation (6, 8a, 10a)

Before we talk about reconciliation, let's clarify some previous terms. When we accepted Jesus by faith, we were justified. Justified is a legal term. Before God, the perfect and holy Judge of all, all of us were guilty and condemned because of our sins. But when we accepted Christ by faith, Christ took our place, bore our sins, and died in our place. So God the judge can now look at us and say: innocent, guiltless, righteous, perfectly obedient!

Justification changes our standing before God; reconciliation restores our relationship with God. In justification, God declares us righteous. In reconciliation, God brings us near. In sanctification, God makes us holy.

Now, in Romans 5, the English word “reconcile” translated from the Greek means to restore a broken relationship from hostility to peace. Reconciliation is more than simply “forgive and forget.” It is a radical and decisive, objective transformation. God removed the barrier of sin, cancelled the debt, and completely changed our legal and relational status from hostile combatants into at-peace allies.

So what does this look like? Any other judge would say, “You are free to go,” and send us away. However, God the Judge did something radical because he is not just our judge. He is our heavenly Father, and we had broken his heart. We willfully disobeyed him. We rejected him. We became his enemies. But when we were justified, God the Judge came down from his judgment seat, came to us, embraced us, and, taking us by the hand, he took us into his own house to live with us as his dearly loved children in whom he takes great joy. This is the meaning of being “reconciled to God.”

In Romans 5:6-11, the Apostle Paul moves from justification to reconciliation, and he begins by reminding us of our former reality. Look at verses 6, 8, and 10. He describes our former spiritual status with four specific words: still “weak” (6a), the “ungodly” (6b), still “sinners” (8a), and “enemies” (10a).

Why does the Apostle highlight them at this moment? Does he take us on a guilt trip? No! We need to read it in the context of 5:1-5. Paul has just told us that those who have been justified by faith have peace with God, access to his grace, hope of the glory of God, love of God, and joy in the midst of suffering. These are the fruits of faith that God pours into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Now I want you to close your eyes and examine your fruit from last week. Are they peace, grace, hope, love, joy, and character? Or were they fear, doubt, anxiety, sorrow, anger, bitterness, and insecurity? I’m sure your heart produced both the good and the bad.

So how can we have absolute assurance in the midst of our failures and sins? How can we bear those good spiritual fruits of faith in our hearts and lives? Paul reminds us of our former spiritual status when we received justification by faith. While we were his enemies, when we had only hostility and enmity against God, was when Christ died for us. While we were still sinners, when we rebelled against God, was when we were forgiven through the death of Christ. While we were ungodly, when we lived ignoring God and exercising our autonomy as our own gods, was when we were justified by his grace. While we were still weak and powerless was when God initiated the restoration of our broken relationship with him.

Paul reminds us that God did not justify us when we were righteous and good, and we were doing well spiritually. We were justified while we were still sinners and enemies, ungodly and weak.

When we remember our spiritual state when we were justified by God we acknowledge how merciful and gracious our God is. He did it for us! Our reconciliation is God’s gift. It has nothing to do with our righteousness or goodness or good fruit that we bear.

II. God’s motivation and price for reconciliation (7-10)

Some of us may ask why and how God reconciled himself to us while we were still sinners and enemies, ungodly and weak. His motivation is his love and his way is by the death of Jesus.

Look at verses 6b-8. "...at the right time Christ died for us. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Here Paul contrasts human love with God's love. Human love is conditional. We may sacrifice for those we love or for those who love us dearly, but no way would we die for our enemy or for someone who hurt us! In contrast, God's love is not based on our spiritual status, whether we are good or bad, righteous or wicked. God is love by nature. His love is like a deep fountain. It always gushes out! God was purely motivated by his love when he sacrificed His One and Only Son. The death of his One and Only Son was the very price he paid for his reconciliation with sinners like us.

We tend to doubt God's love when things go poorly and our spouse and children are still the same, or we remain unchanged. We are prone to praise God for his love only when things go well. However, what Paul says is God's love never changes. God's greatest love has already been shown and demonstrated in that Christ died while we were still sinners! Chronologically, Christ died before we were born. But according to Paul, God's love through Christ's death was displayed at the right time, and in due time. He died for us according to God's sovereign time schedule.

Some of us may protest against God, saying, "Why won't you love me as I want, according to my time schedule and my way? I don't need Jesus' death right now. I need a better job and marriage. I need good health. I want my children to be successful. I want my ministry to be more fruitful. I want to be happy, Lord!" One person has suffered from terrible physical pain, loss of her beloved, and financial difficulties—which has led her to doubt God's existence, goodness, and love, even her own faith and salvation. Like her, I have had many ups and downs. If you are like her and me, welcome to the club. But God's love through the death of His Son Jesus Christ is the greatest, most undeniable and historical demonstration of his love. If we miss God's greatest love through the death of Jesus, we will doubt God's love in the midst of the trials of life.

Once I despaired greatly because I thought I was a failure as a missionary. I didn't have as many sheep as other full-time staff had. I didn't have a Ph.D., title, or money. I answered the phone in the church basement and cleaned the parking lot of dead leaves and the restrooms. I don't like fall because of dead leaves. Out of depression, I slept often. I protested against God and doubted his love. One day I was praying, of course, sleeping. In my dream, I saw a man bleeding on the cross and looking at me, he said, "This is how much I love you!" His love on the cross moved me to tears. From that time on, I now look at Jesus on the cross and see his love. No matter what happens and doesn't happen, I know God loves me. Out of his love, I know he has reconciled himself to me.

When we think about reconciliation among people, usually the wrongdoer should be the one to apologize and ask for forgiveness. In our broken relationship with God, however, it is different. We were the wrongdoers. We were the ones who rebelled against God. Yet it was not we but God who initiated reconciliation with us. Look at verses 9-10. “Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” What is the price God paid for his reconciliation? Yes, it was the death of his Son.

We, the covenant violators, should have paid the price for our sins. Yet God gave his most precious relationship—His Son—to restore His broken relationship with us. He initiated reconciliation when we were still rebelling against him, and he paid the price himself. Where can we find such love as God showed while we were still sinners?

When we know God’s love as his motive and the death of Jesus as the price of His reconciliation with us, we can overcome fear and doubt, bitterness and resentment toward God due to the small and large things that trouble us. Instead, we can thank and praise God for his initiative, his love, and his sacrifice to reconcile himself to sinners like us.

III. “Much More” of Reconciliation (9–10)

Thus far, we learned about God’s reconciliation as his gift, motivated by his love and paid for by the death of his Son. If God reconciled us when we were his enemies, what does that mean for us now, when we still struggle with sin and suffering? Look at verses 9–10 again. “Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”

Here the Apostle Paul repeats “much more” twice. His logic is simple: If God did the greater thing for us when we were his enemies, how much more can we trust him now that we are reconciled to him?

Think about a parent and a child. If a parent goes to great lengths to rescue his child from a life-threatening situation, would that parent suddenly stop caring for the child once the child is safe? Of course not. The rescue itself gives us confidence that the parent will continue to care for the child.

That is Paul’s “Much-More Logic.” God gave his own Son to reconcile us to himself when we were his enemies. Much more, now that we are reconciled to him, we can trust God to save and sustain us.

Look at verse 9. We have been justified by Jesus' blood. Jesus paid the price of our sins once for all. He was raised from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God. He is living and interceding for us. So if Jesus gave his life for us when we were sinners, much more will the risen Jesus save us now that we are reconciled to God. Our lingering sins and sufferings are not evidence that God has abandoned us. He is our Advocate before God. He saves from the future wrath of God as we will stand before God.

Paul's second "much more" argument comes in verse 10. "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."

Paul uses the word "saved" in both verses 9 and 10, but salvation has a past, present, and future dimension. We have been justified and reconciled through Jesus' death. We are being saved and sustained by the risen Jesus in our present life. And we will be fully saved when Jesus brings us safely into God's kingdom and delivers us from the final judgment. So salvation is not only something that happened in the past, and it is not only something waiting for us in the future. Christ has saved us, Christ is saving us, and Christ will save us. We are united with the resurrected and living Jesus. He is our Savior, Guide, and Friend on our way to the kingdom of God. He saves, guides, and helps us to the end.

Why then are we still fearful and doubtful? Our confidence in reconciliation and salvation doesn't come from our good performance, seemingly successful ministry, or success in this world. It comes from Jesus' death for our sins and his life for us. Therefore, let's not be fearful and doubtful when you do not see the fruits of faith right away. Have faith in Jesus, whose death made this new life of reconciliation and whose life sustains and nurtures it.

IV. The Joy of Reconciliation (10–11)

And what happens when we truly understand this reconciliation? Paul says in verse 11. "More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." Paul reminds us that we have not achieved reconciliation; we have received it. And the result of receiving reconciliation is joy. Our daily life shifts from fear, anxiety, and guilt to rejoicing in God. Since we have been reconciled to God, we can bear the fruits of faith: peace, grace, hope, love, joy even in the midst of suffering.

Since we have received God's gift of reconciliation from God, what shall we do with our broken relationships?

Are you suffering from any broken relationships? Are you trying to reconcile? Or have you left yourself stranded across the divide, feeling stuck, isolated, hurt, and bitter? We are to work on our broken relationships as God has done for us. God didn't wait for us to apologize to him. He first came down to where we were. He sacrificed his valuable relationship with his Son for us. He decisively changed our relationship with him, turning hostility into friendship. We have been reconciled to God. Amen!

Since we are reconciled to God, we are called to reconcile with our significant ones and to carry this message into our broken world—not only with our words, but through our example. In 2 Corinthians 5:18–20, the Apostle Paul says, “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation... Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

If any of us here has not been reconciled to God, hear God’s desire to reconcile himself with you. The bridge has been built, the price has been paid, and the invitation is delivered to you. Stop trying to negotiate your own peace terms with God through legalism, performance, and self-righteousness. Don’t walk out of church today carrying the weight of an enemy. Be reconciled to God. Walk out of this room in freedom and friendship with God through our Lord Jesus’ death and life.

If any of us has renewed God’s grace of reconciliation with us, reconcile yourself to anyone with whom you have broken a relationship. May God bless us to receive God’s reconciliation and live as ambassadors of the ministry of reconciliation.