



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

“The Finished Work of Christ, part III - Reconciliation”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Let's begin with a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank thee again that we are able to gather in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and study Thy word. We thank Thee for these wonderful doctrines of redemption and propitiation and reconciliation. And we thank Thee for the way in which they light up the things that Jesus Christ did when he died for us upon the cross. And so we pray tonight as we consider the third of these great doctrines that we may be subject to the Spirit's teaching. May, Lord, he lead us into the things that concern our Lord Jesus Christ and our salvation through him. So we commit our time of study to Thee. In his name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] Tonight we are to study reconciliation, which is the third of our three great doctrines, which summarize or epitomize "The Finished Work of Christ." You notice again, on the diagram on the side of the wall here: "It is Finished." And from that finished work, propitiation: the God-ward doctrine, redemption: the man-ward and sin-ward doctrine, and reconciliation: the man-ward only doctrine. The finished work of Christ. I've also put these on the board in the diagram, and you can see that the idea of

this is for the three, redemption, reconciliation and propitiation, to summarize the finished work of Christ.

Now this is the final one of the great works accomplished by our Lord in his death. Propitiation is toward God. It is that work of God whereby Jesus Christ satisfies God's righteous claims against us by the death that he died on the cross for us. In other words, by dying for our sins, God's holy claims against man are met so that his love, he has always loved us as we shall see, but his love which could not effectively bring us to himself until his holiness had been satisfied, when propitiation took place, when the blood was shed, his love was free to extend salvation to all who would believe on the Lord Jesus.

Redemption was that doctrine whereby Jesus Christ through the payment of the sacrifice of the cross bought us from the slave market of sin, bought us thereby delivering us from the bondage to sin in which we were before we received Christ. Now redemption is man-ward and sin-ward in its application. Propitiation, God-ward.

Tonight in reconciliation we have that doctrine which is directed toward man. Now this has not often been recognized. And if you have been paying attention at all as you have sung hymns in the Christian church, you may recognize some familiar hymns, and you may remember that some of them have this word reconcile in them.

For example, there is a very good hymn written by one of the Wesleys called "Arise My Soul, Arise," which we often sing because it is a good hymn. But hymn writers were often not theologians and occasionally there intrudes into our hymnology some false theology, unwittingly, unknowingly, and surely in many cases, unintentionally. And in this particular hymn, there is a stanza which goes like this: "My God is reconciled, his pardoning voice I hear."

Now that is good sentiment, it just so happens that the first part of it is not biblical. No where in the New Testament is it stated that God is reconciled. Reconciliation is an important doctrine, but always reconciliation is directed toward men. Now we're going to

see that in just a moment. I'm just mentioning this to show you that it has not often been understood correctly.

In the thirty-nine articles of the Anglican church, and these articles are an excellent summary of Christian theology. If all Anglicans believed the thirty-nine articles, all would be excellent Christians. Because they are good doctrines. But nevertheless, within them there is this statement that Jesus Christ died to reconcile "his Father to us." And that of course is not the biblical doctrine as we shall see.

Now I think that this doctrine of reconciliation is very vital for doctrinal clarity and also for vitality in the preaching of the gospel. And I do not mean just for someone who stands behind a pulpit desk as I do frequently, but for you as you attempt to lead someone to Jesus Christ, for every Christian ought to have a burden upon his heart for those who do not know the Lord Jesus.

And if you are to be an effective witness for him, then you must understand these doctrines of the Christian faith and have them clearly in your mind, because they will come up in any discussion of the Christian faith. And it is important that we understand this doctrine of reconciliation. I do not think that we can really witness with authority and with fruitfulness if we do not understand it.

We often sing "Sing it over and over again, Christ receiveth sinful men, Make the message clear and plain, Christ receiveth sinful men." Now this doctrine of reconciliation, I think, will stress that, that is, that Jesus Christ stands ready to receive all who will come to him.

Paul speaks of his preaching as the ministry of reconciliation. So if he would describe his whole preaching ministry, his whole Christian ministry, not just his pulpit ministry or his ministry when the whole church is gathered together, but his ministry as he talked with Jews and Gentiles on the street corners of the cities of Asia Minor and Greece and Asia. If he would describe that as the ministry of reconciliation, I think that you can see that this doctrine must be an extremely important one.

Now, like the doctrines of propitiation and redemption, we find this doctrine especially taught in one passage, that is, it is the normative passage to which we are going to refer. The normative passage in connection with propitiation was Romans 3:21-26, that is, it is the one passage in which we find more about the doctrine than any other. The normative passage concerning redemption is probably 1 Peter chapter 1, the passage that we looked at last time.

Now the normative passage on reconciliation is in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, so take your New Testaments now and let's turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 11 through 21. 2 Corinthians 5, verses 11 through 21.

Now Paul in the midst of this second letter to the Corinthians, which he wrote probably from Macedonia, is defending his ministry to them, for they had been somewhat critical of him due to some changes in plans that he had made. And so in the course of expressing his delight over the way they had been responding to the faith and explaining his actions to them, he defends himself and naturally discusses the ministry of reconciliation. So 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 11, page twelve-hundred and thirty-three.

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart."

Now he's talking about some false teachers who had come in among the Corinthians who gloried in appearance and who set themselves up as being apostles from the church in Jerusalem and therefore as having more authority than Paul. He later on sarcastically or ironically refers to them as the super-apostles, these men who have come there. You see, Paul was not a man who went around, just a little goody-goody kind of apostle, who said, Yes, yes, yes to everything that people said. He was a man just as

other men. And when something was wrong, he didn't hesitate to say something about it too. And I'm quite sure if you had gone up to Paul and said, 'Now Paul, you're judging,' he would have given you a good Bible lesson on the difference between judging and pointing out that which is evil in the assembly. Well at any rate, he's talking about them.

And so in verse 13 he goes on to say, "Whether we be beside ourselves." Now that means to be mad, crazy, going around the bend, you see. Whether we have gone around the bend, it is to God; you see that would be a popular translation. It is to God, in other words, if we are crazy, it is because we are dedicated holy to God, that we are crazy. "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God." By the way, Paul was in good tradition because they accused the Lord Jesus of being crazy too, and they used the same greek word, you know. He's beside himself, that is he's crazy, he ought to be in the laughing academy.

"Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. (No man was a better illustration of this text than Paul himself) If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 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. 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. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Now this is the great passage on reconciliation. Redemption sees man as a slave in bondage to sin. Justification or propitiation sees man as a sinner condemned to die. But man's basic difficulty is not that he is a slave to sin or that he is condemned to die. His basic difficulty is his attitude toward God. And reconciliation sees man as an enemy of God and therefore it is the most fundamental and most basic of these doctrines.

Here we have man as a condemned sinner before the great throne of God's judgment. Here we have man as a slave to sin, but you see all of man's actions come out of his attitude toward God. Here we see man as an enemy of God, and so this is the doctrine that touches man at his deepest.

Well, we're going to look at it now as we did redemption and so I'm going to start out with something that is just a little difficult and you'll have to, well you'll have to just go along with me for about five minutes now while I talk about these Greek words. But after all the Greek words are the bases of the use of the term reconcile and so we must lay the proper foundation.

There are several words for reconcile in the New Testament. I want to talk now for a few minutes about the terms for reconciliation. The common terms which Paul uses are *katallass* , K A T A L L A S S O, and *apokatallass* , which are related words. If you wanted to write them down, why spell them *katallass* , and then the other would apo A P O before it. And then the third will be *dialass* .

Now these words are related as you can see, they all have allass at the end. And the word *allass* in Greek means to change. If I were to say, 'Now I'm going to change you into a butterfly,' why then I would use the word *allass* , you see. *Allass* means to change. *Katallass* is Paul's favorite word with *apokatallass* .

Now the important thing for you to notice about these first two words is that these words mean to change from enmity to friendship, from enmity to friendship. They do not refer to a mutual reconciliation, but they are always used when there is only one person to be reconciled, to change one person from enmity to friendship. This word *diallass* which occurs in the New Testament, but never in the doctrinal passages, means to change to people, from enmity toward one another to friendship toward one another. But this word which means a mutual reconciliation is never used of the doctrine of reconciliation in the New Testament. Always when the Bible speaks of reconciliation as God's work, it is a one-way reconciliation directed toward man.

Now that is important because that shows us right from the beginning that God does not need to be reconciled to man. Man needs to be reconciled to God. God is not an enemy of men, men are enemies of God. Now I dare say that every single one of you in the room here before you believed in the Lord Jesus as your savior, you thought that God was angry at you. You thought that God was angry at you because you had sinned and displeased him and you had of course.

But you see God is not an angry God who needs to be propitiated. He is a loving God but he is also a holy God, and his holiness means that he must be just in forgiveness. And so it is necessary for him to give his son the Lord Jesus Christ; that is the evidence that he does not hate us. He loves us. He initiated action toward us by giving his son so that his son's death may satisfy his holiness and thereby free his love to bring men into relationship to him. Now that is taught in these words because Paul always uses the word that refers to one-way reconciliation.

You know customs are quite a bit different now from the ancient days when I was a youngster. When I was going through high school and college, when you took a girl to a dance, well sometimes you were expected to send her a corsage. Now if I failed to send my date a corsage, then of course I needed to be reconciled to her. Now that was one-way reconciliation, because well I was not angry at her but she was angry at me if I

forgot that corsage. So that was one-way reconciliation. I was not angry at her, she was angry at me. She needed to be reconciled to me.

Today customs are different and I don't know that they are better. I understand now that it is customary for the man to give the young lady a corsage and it is also customary I understand (I'm not engaged in this kind of activity now) but nevertheless I understand that it is customary now for the young lady to send him a boutonniere.

Now I don't like that custom because I don't think the ladies ought to do anything for the men. I think the men ought to send the girl a corsage and let it go at that. But nevertheless now if a corsage is forgotten and if the boutonniere is forgotten too then there must be a double reconciliation, that is, he must be reconciled to her and she must be reconciled to him.

Now in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 24, we have a double reconciliation referred to, but it is not in the doctrinal section of the New Testament. Matthew chapter 5 and verse 24 reads like this. Remember this is in the Sermon on the Mount. And in verse 24 the Lord is speaking and he says, "Leave there Thy." Oh, let's read verse 23, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

Now apparently this was a double reconciliation because he says remember that the brother has something against you, then go be reconciled to him. And he uses the word *diállass*, because apparently here there is this double reconciliation.

But now in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, coming back to that chapter, Paul uses the term *katállass* which means to change from enmity to friendship but it is one-way. Now notice for example, here in verse 18, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself." Not himself to us, but he has reconciled us to himself. Verse 19, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Not himself unto the world, but the world unto himself. And then finally too, in verse, well this is enough. We could

look at some other passages such as Colossians, but there is no need to do this. You can see that in Paul's thinking it is the world, it is we who are to be reconciled to God.

Now on the basis of the terms, let me define reconciliation. Reconciliation is the finished work of God whereby man is brought from enmity to friendship with God by the removal of the enmity through the cross of Jesus Christ. Reconciliation is God's work whereby he brings us from enmity to friendship through the removal of that enmity by Jesus Christ's work on the cross.

Well now that is the term; these are the terms and that is the definition. Let's look now at one other passage which presents the need of reconciliation. You might be saying as I'm speaking here, 'But why does this affect me? Do I need to be reconciled to God?' Well let's read Romans chapter 5, verses 6 through 10. And I think you can see that man does need reconciliation when we read these verses. In fact, in these verses we have four definitions of the man outside of Christ. Verse 6 now, page eleven-ninety-seven. Do we all have it? I want you to read it yourself.

Romans 5 verse 6 now. Paul is talking about what we were and he says,

"For when we were yet without strength, (that is weak, we could not do the will of God.) in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (Not only were we weak and unable to do God's will, but we were also ungodly, that means irreligious. We cared nothing about him.)

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, (now this is the word that refers to us as constantly missing the mark) Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, (enemies) we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

Now have you noticed the four definitions of the man who does not know Christ? He is without strength, 6th verse. He is ungodly, the 6th verse. He is a sinner, the 8th verse. And the 10th verse and this is the deepest word of all, he is an enemy of God.

Now I want to tell you just a little bit of personal history. Because I don't know any better illustration of this outside of the Bible than my own experience. As you know, those of you who've been listening to me, you know that I grew up in a professing Christian home. I grew up in a home in which, well, in our background we had had a long relationship to the Presbyterian church. I've had preachers in my family for some generations. My father is an elder today in the First Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina.

So we grew up in a professing Christian home, but I was not a Christian, though I joined the church. And I had been sprinkled too. So I had done all of the things; that outwardly one does in order to become "Christian". And through my earlier years, if you had said to me, 'Are you a Christian?' And if you had been a Jew, why I would have said, 'Why of course I'm a Christian.' But I wasn't really a Christian, I had never really personally believed in the Lord Jesus as my savior. And the evidence of it was that when I grew large enough to say I don't want to go to Sunday school, I didn't go. And so Sunday morning through high school and college, you could find me out on the golf course practising my golf swing in order to play in the golf tournaments, which I played in all the south and east.

So I was interested in being as far away from anything biblical as I possibly could. In fact, the last place you would ever have found me would be in a Bible study class such as this after I was married. For you see the man outside of Christ does not like the things of God. The minute the word Bible was mentioned, I was ready to leave. If anyone started to talk about Christian things, that's where I did not want to be.

I remember right now there was a man in my Greek class, the Lord was working, I didn't understand why I was taking Greek in those days, I just somehow seemed to like it.

But a man in my Greek class, he's now the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Charleston, a very fine Christian man, he was in my Greek class and another young man was in the class too who is a pastor of a very fine independent church in Montgomery Alabama. Well, they both were Christians and they didn't mind talking about their Christianity. And I never liked to study with them because it was liable to get on this religious thing, you know. And so I was an enemy of God. I did not want anything to do with spiritual things. And when I was married, I was in the church one time in order to be married, you see. And well, I may have attended the Sunday before to get acquainted with the minister who was to marry me. But the last thing I wanted to do was to be with him.

Now I say this because this I believe is the feeling of a lot of people. Now some do of course get so used to being in the church that they are in the church hoping to gain some merit with God. But I had not reached that stage. I just wanted to be as far away as possible. Now I had a very biblical attitude because it's illustrated right in the Bible in the opening chapters. (That's all right that's not my message) [Laughter]

This is illustrated in the opening chapters in the Book of Genesis because you remember when Adam sinned in the garden of Eden and Eve sinned and then the text says in the 3rd chapter and verse 8, "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife" went out to greet the Lord because they loved to be in his presence and they wanted to confess the fact that they had sinned. Is that what it says? No, you see, right in the beginning of the Bible you have all of these doctrines implicitly taught. For it says that "Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden." And God had to go out after Adam saying, "Adam, where art thou?"

And then of course, Adam when he was brought out into the presence of the Lord, what did he do but blame Eve? And Eve blamed the serpent. You can see right here in the beginning of the garden, this feeling of being afraid to come into the presence

of God. And this is something that men have naturally. This why it is so difficult to get men out to hear a Bible class like this. This is why if you speak to your best friend and you're getting a blessing from hearing the word of God and you say, Come on out and study the Bible, it's just wonderful to see the things the Lord has for us. Bible? Bible class? Well, I've got something to do that night. Well, what about the next night? Well, I, I may have something to do that night too. Well, what about the next Tuesday night or Monday night after that? Well, I'll give you a call about it.

And don't expect that telephone to ring because it won't ring most of the time because you see men do not like the word of God. They do not want to hear the word of God, because we are enemies of God naturally. So that is illustrated right here in the opening chapters of the Bible. So men need reconciliation because they are enemies.

Now fourthly. Let's go back to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and I want to say just a little bit more about the objects of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians chapter 5 again.

Now I've already stressed this and so I won't stress it too much again except perhaps to illustrate it a little more. But again I want you to notice that the objects of reconciliation are men and not God. It is God who takes the divine initiative.

Notice verse 14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." We did not bring him down to die for us, God sent him down to die for us. And you have seen here how in the 18th verse and in the 19th verse, it is God who is the initiator of the plan of redemption. It is God who sends the son.

And just as in the garden of Eden, God went down and sought out Adam and said, "Adam where art thou?" That's the story of the Bible. God has been seeking men ever since Adam sinned in the garden of Eden. This is why the Lord Jesus said when he came, "The son of man comes in order to seek and to save that which is lost." He did not come in order to condemn us, John says, he came in order that the world through him might be saved. He came to show men that God is not an angry God waiting to

judge us but a loving God who has made it possible for men to come to him by the suffering which he himself has offered and has carried out through Jesus Christ.

So that if you get one thing from the doctrine of reconciliation, be sure and get this: that God love us and has made it possible for us in our sin to come back to him freely and receive the wonderful gift of everlasting life.

The Lord Jesus expressed this when he was just about to die when he came to Jerusalem. Do you remember what he said when he reached Jerusalem preparatory to his death? He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thee unto me, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!"

"How often would I" and "ye would not." In other words, God, the doors to heaven have been opened down through the centuries, but God has had difficulty finding men to bring them to the salvation that he has offered for them through Jesus Christ. This is why we speak of the gospel as good news, because it is good news. It's good news that Christ has died for our sins. We don't have to die. And so we go out and shout it to all, if we can find them. But they're fleeing and running from God because they're enemies of God.

One of the great English preachers was a man by the name of Henry Moorehouse. He had a very interesting history. But when Mr. Moody was carrying on his campaigns in Britain he met Mr. Moorehouse who was just a young man at the time. And Mr. Moorehouse and he were engaged in conversation, and Mr. Moorehouse said to him, Well, Mr. Moody I'd like to come to the United States someday and preach. And Moody was the pastor of the large church in Chicago at that time and so he said Moorehouse if you come, come to Chicago and I'll let you preach for me, thinking of course he would never show up.

And so one day he was quite shocked as he was just getting to go out of town for meetings to get a telephone call from New York and on the other end of the line he

heard this man say, Mr. Moody this is Moorehouse. Remember me? I'm in New York. I'll be in Chicago on Sunday. And Mr. Moody didn't know what to do and so he turned to his wife after he had hung up and he said, Now tell my committee to put him on for one time. And if they like him let him preach another time on Sunday. And with that he left town for his meetings.

He came back on Friday night. He said, By the way, how did that fellow Moorehouse do? She said, Why, he's been doing fine. He's a better preacher than you are. And he said, What do you mean a better preacher than I am? Why, his wife said, Why, he's telling sinners that God loves them. And he said, Why God doesn't love sinners. He's not right in saying that. She said, Alright, well come down and hear him for yourself. He said, You mean he's still preaching? Yes, he's been preaching every day. They liked him so much, we've been having meeting through this week and furthermore Mr. Moody he's preached on John 3:16 every night.

Well that night Mr. Moody went to the final meeting in the series. And Moorehouse stood up and he said, You know, I've been asking the Lord for the text that I ought to preach on tonight and it just seems as if I ought to talk again on John 3:16. And so he turned to John 3:15 again, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

And he preached a wonderful message on the love of God and Mr. Moody said afterwards that it was that night that his understanding of the gospel was clarified after he had been preaching for many years. And a large part of the success of the ministry of Moody in after years he traced back to the fact that he learned that night that God does love sinners.

Now he does not love their sin, but you see he has made it possible for that sin to be cared for in the death of Christ. And he loves the individual and he seeks them. And that I think is the whole point of the object of reconciliation. "Sinners, Jesus will receive

sound this word of grace to all, who the heavenly pathway leave, all who linger all who fall."

If you never get anything in the Bible, get this: that God is responsible for the whole plan of salvation. He initiated it all. "God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets hath spoken unto us in his son." He has initiated this conversation with men through Jesus Christ.

Well what is the means of reconciliation? How is it that he moves on our hearts to bring us to friendship? Well, let's take a look at verse 14. "For the love of Christ constraineth us." For the love of Christ constraineth us. Well, we know it is the love of Christ that causes us to return to God.

What about verse 21? "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." When did that take place? When did Jesus Christ become sin for us? When he was born in the manger in Bethlehem? Why, of course not. Not when he was born in the manger in Bethlehem, that's why we never read in the Bible that we are saved by the manger. We never read that we have peace through the babe in the manger. We read that we have peace through the cross, by means of the cross.

Colossians states it very definitely, so keep your finger in 2 Corinthians 5 and turn over for a moment to Colossians chapter 1 so you can see it with your own eyes. Colossians chapter 1, page twelve-hundred and sixty-three. Now Paul writes, Colossians chapter 1. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, if you find one of those books you're near. You're warm. And if you've got Philippians or 1 Thessalonians you're hot.

Verse 19, chapter 1. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself." It is by the cross. We are reconciled by the cross. We are not reconciled by confession. We're not reconciled by anything that we do. We are reconciled to God by the death of the cross.

"God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And then Paul goes on to say, "for if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the" what? "the death of his son." Romans 5:10.

So what is it that God uses to cause us to turn from enmity to friendship? It is his love as expressed in the cross of Christ. When he finally corners us so that we have to listen to the word of God, he then tells us what he has done for us in giving Jesus Christ to die for us. And we see that God is not against us but really for us and that he loves us and he wants us to be in the family of God.

And the evidence of it is that he has borne within the godhead the suffering of and the agony of the cross of Jesus Christ. And mind you, don't you have any little shallow attitude toward the death of Christ as if it meant nothing more than some Roman soldiers crammed a crown down upon his head and he was pierced in the side with the Roman soldier's spear. That was not all that went on at Calvary. That was just the outward.

The thing that makes Calvary what it is was is the fact that he within his inner man was made sin for us. The holy Son of God became sin. That was a suffering that cannot be compared with the physical agony of the cross. It was by this spiritual agony which is so great that you and I could never even understand it. It is by that that we are redeemed. That is that which expresses the love of God for us. So it is by the cross then that we are reconciled.

Well now in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, we have one more interesting thing. It is the question of the extent of the reconciliation. Does this reconciliation pertain to all men or does it pertain to a limited group of men? Well now you will notice in verse 19 that it says, "To wit, God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."

Now if we had only this text, we might say all men are reconciled. If that were true then we would be teaching Universalism, that everybody will get to heaven someday. Now we know that's not true because the Bible very plainly states in many places that not

all are going to be in heaven someday. So we must interpret this in the light of the context.

Now will you look at verse 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." So obviously not everybody has been reconciled . So apparently in the first statement Paul means everyone, the world, has been potentially reconciled. The death of Jesus Christ is sufficient for the whole world reconciliation.

But it only becomes actual when I am reconciled to the Son. It is when I accept this reconciliation that it becomes mine. It's like this. Jesus Christ died for all, but not all are saved. Those who respond to the work that he did are saved. Though no one can say a sufficient work was not done for me. For he died for all, for every man. So that it is potentially for all, it is actually for those who respond.

One final thing. How do we get it? How do we get this reconciliation? Well now I want you to turn back to Romans 5. This is the other great passage. Well there are four great passages on reconciliation but this is one of the really great ones, perhaps the second most important. And here we have a very interesting statement in verse 10 and 11. Let's read them. Romans 5:10-11, page eleven-ninety-seven. Do you have it?

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received."

And at this point I want to pull out my six-gun and shoot some translators of the King's James Version, because they rendered this "by whom we have now received the atonement." Now if you have another version, you notice immediately that the word atonement is not there. I have forgotten how the Revised Standard Version renders it, but I do have one with me and so I just know it did not render it atonement because that word cannot possibly mean that. It should render it reconciliation. Well, let's see. Yes, it does here too.

"Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." That's what it should be because it is the word *katallag* . That is the word that Paul has been talking about here. He's been using the term *katallass* , reconcile. So here he says through whom we have now received the reconciliation. In other words, Paul says, How do we get it? We get it by receiving it, receiving it.

How do you get a Christmas gift? Do you pay for it? No, you don't pay for it because if you pay for it it's not a Christmas gift, is it? Chip, suppose next Christmas, when you ask for your Christmas present and you come down and Santa Claus has brought your present and you find a little note attached to it saying, "This is your present, Chip, providing you pay Santa Claus twenty-five dollars." It wouldn't be much of a Christmas gift would it? Because it would cost you something.

You see, you receive Santa Claus' Christmas gifts. You receive reconciliation. It is a gift of God's wonderful grace. That's how we get it. We receive it. Paul says, "through whom we have now received the reconciliation."

Well now we have about ten minutes. You know in the Bible we always will find an illustration which will illustrate these difficult to comprehend doctrines. It sometimes helps to clarify them. Now I turned you to Genesis chapter 3, because there we have an illustration of how when a man has offended God he thinks God is angry at him.

Now I want to turn you to another story in the New Testament told by the Lord Jesus, which I believe is the best illustration of the doctrine of reconciliation that you can find. And it is the parable of the forgiving father.

Now you know it as the parable of the prodigal son. But that parable should never have been called that. It is the parable of the forgiving father. For the important person in that parable is not the son. The important person is the father as we shall see.

So let's turn to it. It's Luke chapter 15. Very familiar story. Luke chapter 15, that's the New Testament you know. Mathew, Mark, Luke chapter 15.

Now I'm not going to say anything about this parable in its context. If I were teaching the Gospel of Luke I would have to because it is set in the context and these two, the elder son and the younger son, are designed to represent Israel and the Gentiles. The elder son representing Israel, disobedient, unthankful, ungrateful for the blessings of the promises of God. The prodigal, an illustration of a Gentile who never had anything, well who had something but who lost everything and is no longer in the father's house but who returns. And the two are designed to illustrate Israel and the Gentiles. But we are going to stop, let that alone, because this parable is designed to represent something a little more significant for us. How a man comes back to God. How he is reconciled to his father.

Now [indistinct] has painted the prodigal son and he has given this prodigal the important place in his picture. But I say that he is wrong. This should never have been called the parable of the prodigal son and if I were an artist and I were painting it, I would never paint the son in the prominent place. I would paint the father in the prominent place. In fact, Felix I think, if I were painting it, I would like to paint, in some way catch the picture of the father's face when the son returns. But at any rate, let's read it. Verse 11.

"And he said, "A certain man had two sons." Do you see that? You could tell right from that statement that the man is the important one and not the two sons. "A certain man had two sons." Now remember the reason the Lord gave this parable is because he had been eating with publicans and sinners and the Pharisees and scribes didn't like that. And so in the 2nd verse we had read, "And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

And so he told them these little stories, the parable of the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin, and this parable of the lost son or the forgiving father. By the way, there was a little girl who went to Sunday school who had a sister named Edith. When she came home her mother said, What did the teacher talk about? Why, the teacher talked

about Edith. Edith? What text did the teacher use? Why the teacher said, This man receiveth sinners and Edith with them. [Laughter]

Well let's look at the parable now. "And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living." Now he was the younger son so he should have had one-third of the inheritance. You see the older son had two-thirds because he was the firstborn son and he got a double portion. Now I'm going to tell my father about this, but I don't think it's going to have any effect. I happen to be the firstborn son in my family. But we don't go by these rules now and I'll be fortunate to get a fourth.

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him."

Here is a man who has moved from plenty to poverty, from freedom to servitude, from honor to dishonor. He is a picture of a man who has abandoned the blessings of his father, a man who is outside of Christ and outside of God. He is called lost in this parable. He is spoken of as being one who has perished. He is a son by right of ownership not by right of relationship.

His sin is that he has done what? He has acted independently of his father. That's the basis of sin, you know. He left his father. What did he do? He distrusted his father. He did not believe that the father's home was the place for him. He doubted that the father would be as good to him as he could be to himself. And so he took his goods,

went into the foreign country, and came to the end of himself. So finally he came to the place where he had to come to himself. And we read in verse 17, "And when he came to himself."

You know I think it's very interesting that the Bible speaks like this, "when he came to himself," because do you know that sin is a form of insanity? Do you know, (now Dr. I hesitate to talk to you because you know a lot more about this than I do, so I'm going to get way out on a limb and he can chop it off, but I'm talking tonight at least until 9:00 and he can't reply at this moment.)

But insanity really means unhealthiness. That's what it means. And you know when a man is in sin he is insane. And some of the same characteristics that pertain to the insane man pertain to the sinner. He loses memory. He cannot make certain identifications and certain distinctions. But at any rate the Bible I think is very, very accurate when it says "when he came to himself," because no man can really be sane in the fullest sense who is not identified with God through Jesus Christ.

Now I believe that with all my heart. In fact, I think that one reason so many people have to go to get outside help is because they have not used the help that is available for them in the word of God. True sanity is to be rightly adjusted to God through Jesus Christ and as a Christian to the Holy Spirit.

Well, at any rate that's not the point I want to make here. He came to himself and so what did he say? He thought about the father's goodness. He realized that perhaps it was better after all to be at home. "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise."

Now here he's made his decision "I will arise and go to my father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." So you see he made up a little speech in which he had three points, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of the servants."

And so he started back. "And he arose, and he came to his father." You see the next step after coming to ourselves is to come to our father, and so he does. "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion."

Now I want you to notice. This is one-way reconciliation. You see the father had not been angry with the son. The son had been displeased with the father. The son had gone off because he distrusted the father's goodness. The father was waiting at home for the son to come. "And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him."

Now you know, if I had been writing this, not knowing biblical doctrine, what do you think I would have written? Well, I would have written something like this, The son said, I'm going to make this confession. The father said, I will sit here like a stone until he confesses his sin, but then when he confesses his sin, then I will respond and restore him to his place in the family.

But you don't find anything like that in the Bible. For you see, God does not lay down conditions so that we must do something in order to gain his love and favor. When his father saw him when he was yet a great way off his father "had compassion, and ran."

Now have you ever seen an old man run? Do you know that in the east it is a very undignified thing for an old man to run? And you can understand why because men dressed in long flowing garments. And for an old man who must run a little awkwardly to gather up his garments and to run, it was a well-known undignified thing.

I was reading a few months back in [name indistinct], one of the great New Testament German scholars, in one of his books on the parables. And he pointed out this, that this according to oriental custom was a very undignified thing. So when I look at this, I'm inclined to think of the indignity of the father who "had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

But do you know, I don't think this was absence of dignity. I don't think this was absence of dignity at all. In fact, to tell you the truth, I think this is one of the most

dignified things that I have ever seen in the Bible, because you see, in the dignity of a great love, the father ran after that son.

And when he met that son, he didn't say, Alright son, make your confession. Alright son, tell me what you've done. But he fell on his neck and kissed him and the Greek term is a word that means he either kissed him repeatedly or kissed him fervently. It's a word that is intensive in significance. And kissed him.

And so what did the son do? Why well, the son says, " Father" Now here notice his three points, except he doesn't have three. " Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and I'm no more worthy to be called thy son." But then he never got out that that other statement, "make me as one of the hired servants." Why? Because the father smothered him with kisses.

And you see in our Lord's story when a son comes to the father, he's not made a servant in the family. He's made a son in the family. And so it's as if he just shut him up with his kisses and said, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."

And someone has said, whoever heard that they stopped. [Laughter]

Now before I stop tonight, I want you to remember what Jesus Christ is doing here. Why is he telling this little story? He is telling this little story to show us what God is like. They said when he sat with those sinners and ate with them, God is not like that. This is Jesus Christ's picture of God: the man who has compassion, who runs, who fall on the son's neck, who kisses him, doesn't even allow him to make this confession. But since he's come to him that's all as far as the father's concerned. This is Jesus Christ's picture of God.

Now isn't that wonderful? That means wherever we are, wherever we've been, however far we've gone from God, when we come to ourselves and come to him, we can

be sure that he responds. It's no wonder that Nehemiah spoke about a God who was ready to pardon. You see, that's the kind of God we have. The one who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ. Time is up, let's close in prayer.

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we're so grateful to Thee for the wonderful God that we have who is always ready to receive us through Jesus Christ. Lord may we be grateful for that which Thou hast done for us through Christ. For we ask it in his name. Amen.