

Lesson 28 - RECONCILED TO GOD BY CHRIST *Romans 5:10-11*

(5:10) - *“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”* - Those whom God loves and for whom Christ died still fell by Adam into sin and death and were born spiritually dead in trespasses and sin. By nature we are all *“enemies”* of God (*Rom. 8:6-8; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-3*). We need to understand that, according to God’s Word, all unbelievers, no matter what their personality or demeanor, are enemies of God (*Matt. 6:24*). An enemy of God is anyone who is not *“reconciled to God by the death of His Son,”* the Lord Jesus Christ. Reconciliation between God and sinners is a matter of God’s love, mercy, and grace, but it also must be established and attained based on a just and proper ground which honors God. This is why reconciliation (as well as all of salvation) can never be conditioned on sinners. This is why it was (and is) all conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ and established and attained upon the ground of His obedience unto death as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s chosen people. Only Christ could (and did) satisfy the justice of God against the sins of all His people imputed to Him. Only His righteousness imputed to them could establish and attain their reconciliation with God. Only in and by Christ as the Savior of God’s people can we see the true accomplishment of what the psalmist prophesied -

Psalm 85 - (9) Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him; that glory may dwell in our land. (10) Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. (11) Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

This is what the Gospel of Christ is described as the *“Gospel of peace”* (*Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15*), the ministry and word of *“reconciliation”* (*2 Cor. 5:18,19*), and the ministry of *“righteousness”* (*2 Cor. 3:9*). Christ Himself is the everlasting mercy-seat upon which God will meet with sinners on the basis of Christ’s blood. Paul emphasizes this truth in the following - But even *“when we were enemies,”* on His part, God was reconciled to (at peace with) His people *“by the death of His Son”* (*2 Cor. 5:19*). This has always been the case for all *“the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory”* (*Rom. 9:23*). Before the foundation of the world, God’s choice of His people and determination to save them was always grounded upon the satisfaction of His justice by the death of His Son. This is how God justly withheld His wrath from His elect in the Old Testament before Christ came in time to redeem them by His death. This is how God declared *“His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God”* (*Rom. 3:25*).

Because Christ was (and is) the Surety of His people, God justified the Old Testament saints (imputed righteousness to them) and gave them spiritual life (the fruit of Christ’s righteousness) even before He established in time. God justly did this by promise as it was always sure and certain that Christ would come and accomplish their (and our) redemption (*2 Cor. 1:20*). God’s wrath is totally removed from His chosen people because His wrath fell upon Christ based on their sins imputed to Him. When He died for them, He fully satisfied the justice of God for them, and this was confirmed publicly by *“His life,”* which refers to His resurrection from the dead. The fact that Christ died and arose from the dead guarantees the complete salvation of all His people. *“We shall be saved by His life”* - If Christ died and arose for us, we cannot perish. We will be given spiritual life and live eternally in glory with Him. Because Christ arose from the dead and now lives, all for whom He died and arose again shall live forever and ever with Him.

(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” - To “**joy in God**” is to “glory” (boast) in God’s grace being assured of having been reconciled to God “**through our Lord Jesus Christ,**” i.e. based on His blood and righteousness alone (**1 Cor. 1:29-31; Gal. 6:14; Php. 3:3**). The word “**atonement**” would be better translated “**reconciliation**” as in **2 Corinthians 5:18-19**. “**Atonement**” is generally an Old Testament word describing a “covering” for sin typified with the sacrifice of animals. “**Atonment**” by the blood of animal sacrifices always pointed forward to the actual time of redemption by the blood of Jesus Christ Who accomplished redemption for God’s elect and successfully and completely finished the ground of reconciliation between God and His people. The same Hebrew word for “**atonement**” in the Old Testament is also translated “**reconciliation**” five times (**Lev. 8:15; 2 Chron. 29:24; Ezek. 45:15,17; Dan. 9:24**). The sins of God’s elect, including those in the Old Testament, were not put away until Christ came in time and died on the cross as their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. Redemption was not actually accomplished for God’s elect until Christ died on the cross. Righteousness was not actually established until Christ came in time and accomplished satisfaction to God’s justice (“**propitiation**”) (**Rom. 3:24-25**) which the blood of bulls and goats could never accomplish (**Heb. 10:4**). But it was so sure and certain that Christ would come and accomplish this great work for His people that God withheld His just punishment of the sins of the Old Testament saints and justified by them by promise based on what Christ would come in time and accomplish for them. This was the forbearance of God which, even then, was based on the just ground of Christ’s righteousness imputed to His people. This is the ground of salvation and justification of God’s elect in both the Old and the New Testaments. As a justified sinner, Abraham gloried in God through Jesus Christ his Lord. As justified sinners, we all glory in God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ’s accomplishment of our redemption in time has always been and will always be the only ground upon which God is reconciled to sinners and sinners are reconciled to God.

Our regeneration and conversion, our personally being reconciled to God, is also attributed to Christ’s accomplished work on the cross. We see that all of the work of the Holy Spirit IN us is a direct and inseparable effect of Christ’s work FOR us. We have now received Christ’s righteousness which brings us to reconciled to God (**2 Cor. 5:20-21**). All of the blessings of grace through Christ are sincerely promised by God to any sinner who comes to Him for salvation pleading the merits of the shed blood and imputed righteousness of Christ. Why would anyone expect salvation and eternal blessedness based on their own righteousness (which is filthy rags when aimed at the ground of salvation) when they can expect and receive this salvation and eternal blessedness based on the very best of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is how God the Holy Spirit spreads the love of God abroad within our hearts. This instills the only right and godly motivation for obedience to God and for avoiding sin. Our obedience to God’s law is well-pleasing unto God, but it does not alter, or even influence, or even contribute to our unchangeable state of salvation. Our obedience does not gain or maintain our standing before God, and our sins cannot lose or diminish that standing. God loved us when we lived in sin. God loved us while we were servants of sin. God loved us while we were altogether ungodly. And His love provided the ground of our salvation. We are to avoid sin and be ashamed of sin, but we are never, not even for a moment, to entertain the thought that our sins could bring us back under God’s wrath or diminish the certainty of our salvation. Christ satisfied God’s justice for our sins, and we are not to dishonor God or deny His precious blood by unbelief. We are dead to sin and alive unto God. We are to expect God to save us and keep us based on the blood of Christ according to His promise.