

Saturday, February 17, 2024—Southern California Regional Grace Bible Conference

- Title: A Message Direct From God To You...”Be Ye Reconciled To God” (2 Cor. 5:20)
- Assignment: This study will explain what the phrase “Be Ye Reconciled to God” means, how a person is reconciled, and will show some of the many spiritual blessings that result; such as justification, complete forgiveness, imputed righteousness, peace with God to name few.

Review

- Last night in my first message we considered the following points:
- Three forms of the word reconcile: “brought into friendship from a state of disagreement or enmity.” (Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language*)
 - **Reconciled**—this word is past tense and speaks of those who have already been brought into friendship from a previous state of enmity.
 - **Reconciliation**—this word speaks of the act, or the process, of taking two parties that are presently at variance and settling the enmity between them.
 - **Reconciling**—is a present active verb, thus the “ing” instead of “ed.”
 - Those that are working on settling their differences are said to be in the process of “reconciling.” “Reconciliation” cannot occur until both parties have settled their differences and put away their former enmity. At which point one can say they have “reconciled.”
 - Only believers have been “reconciled.”
 - Meanwhile, God is still “reconciling” the lost.
- **Was in Christ**—is a verb in the imperfect tense.
 - “Of a tense: expressing in progress but not completed at the time referred to. . .” (Oxford English Dictionary)
- **Not imputing**—is a negative statement. It is a statement of what God is not doing. This does not mean that the reverse positive is automatically true.
- Romans 11:11-15—is the primary cross reference for II Cor. 5:19. It was through the fall of Israel that Christ brought about the reconciling of the world unto himself.
- The “ministry of reconciliation” in verse 18 is the “word of reconciliation” in verse 19.

II Corinthians 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.**
- **Now then we are ambassadors for Christ**—"we" is a first-person plural pronoun. "Are ambassadors" is a present active verb. In other words, it is denoting those who are already functioning as ambassadors while Paul is writing the epistle.
 - II Corinthians 1:1—the epistle is addressed to the Corinthians by both Paul and Timothy.
 - II Corinthians 1:19—who first preached the Gospel to the Corinthians? Paul, Silvanus, & Timothy.
 - II Corinthians 5:12-13
- **as though God did beseech you by us**—God beseeched the Corinthians ("you") through the ministry Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy ("us").
- **we pray you in Christ's stead**—Paul, Silvanus, & Timothy pray/beseech in Christ's stead i.e., on behalf of Christ.
- **be ye reconciled to God**—if every person has already been reconciled to God 2,000 years ago when Christ died upon the cross, then why bother beseeching people in "Christ's stead" to be "reconciled to God?" It is senseless to beg people to be reconciled to Him if in fact they already are in a right relationship. If the reconciliation spoken of in II Cor. 5:19 was individual and not dispensational, and each person's individual sins were already forgiven, why bother committing to the church "the word of reconciliation?"

Irreconcilable

- Another word we need to define in this context is irreconcilable. According to Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language*, the English word irreconcilable carries the following meanings:
 - "1) Not to be recalled to amity, or a state of friendship and kindness; retaining enmity that cannot be appeased or subdued; as an irreconcilable enemy or faction. 2) That cannot be appeased or subdued, as irreconcilable enmity or hatred. 3) That cannot be made to agree or be consistent; incongruous; incompatible; as irreconcilable absurdities. It is followed by with or to. A man's conduct may be irreconcilable to or with his avowed principles."
- In human terms, people get divorced every day in this country citing "irreconcilable differences" as the reason for their separation. In other words, the forces that separate the two parties cannot be overcome thereby restoring the relationship to its former standing. Whenever there is infidelity in a marriage the question is often asked, "can two parties reconcile their differences?" If one party desired to be reconciled, they may even take steps toward that outcome such as ending the adulterous relationship, seeking marriage counseling, rehab, or the like. However, just because

they desire to be reconciled back to their spouse and may take steps towards those ends, does not automatically bring about the desired reconciliation. The other party must be willing to end the enmity and reconcile.

- What Christ accomplished upon the cross, as revealed through the pen of the Apostle Paul, is take care of God's irreconcilable differences with humanity. Christ paid the price for our reconciliation, but each human being needs to be willing to end their enmity with God and accept the provision that God has provided through Jesus Christ.
- Therefore, reconciliation should be regarded as a process according to God's purpose that involves two parties, not an accomplished fact for the whole world. It is God's desire to save all, but all will not be saved. The sense in which the whole world is reconciled to God is potential, not actual. That is, Christ's death for all human beings made them reconcilable to God; otherwise, Paul would not be calling on them to be reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:20). What the first Adam did by bringing legal condemnation to all humanity is reversed by what Christ, the "last Adam," accomplished--the save-ability (or potential justification) of everyone. Actual Salvation, reconciliation, and forgiveness of sins does not come automatically but by an act of faith in the finished work of Christ.

Rob Bell & The New Reconciliationists: An II Corinthians 5:19 Thought Experiment

By

By Jeffery Newnum & Bryan Ross

The New Reconciliationists (NR) teach that all of humanity had their sins *forgiven* 2,000 years ago when Christ died upon the cross based upon II Cor. 5:19. According to this position, people die and go to hell with their sins *forgiven*. In short, the NR position maintains belief in the *forgiven lost*.

Those who take the position that the primary meaning of II Cor. 5:19 is dispensational and not individual (as we do) are accused of not following Pauline Truth and teaching another gospel. Supporters of the NR position view themselves as standing for Pauline Truth against those who believe that Christ *paid for* all sins upon the cross but that *forgiveness* is not granted until the individual sinner receives the free gift of salvation by trusting in the shed blood of Jesus Christ as the only total complete payment for sin (Acts 13:38-39; 26:18; Rom. 3:22, 24-25; 5:1).

It might be instructive to see exactly where the logic of the NR position leads.

In 2005 Zondervan published Rob Bell's first book [*Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith*](#). On page 146 Bell states the following:

- "So this reality, this forgiveness, this reconciliation, is true for everyone. Paul insisted that when Jesus died on the cross, he was reconciling "all things, in heaven and on earth, to God". All things, everywhere. This reality then isn't something we make true about ourselves by doing something. It is already true. Our choice is to live in this new reality or cling to a reality of our

own making... and this reality extends beyond this life. Heaven is full of forgiven people. Hell is full of forgiven people. Heaven is full of people God loves, whom Jesus died for. Hell is full of people God loves, whom Jesus died for..."

While we agree with Mr. Bell that Hell is full of people that God *loved* and for whom Christ died, we must disagree with both Bell and the NRists that "Hell is full of *forgiven* people."

In 2011, Rob Bell created a stir within Christendom when he came out in favor of full blown Universalism with the publication of [*Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*](#). It appears that Bell's 2005 views on *reconciliation* were a stepping stone towards the complete denial of Hell or any form of Eternal Punishment in 2011. What Bell did in *Love Wins* is follow his views from *Velvet Elvis* through to their logical conclusion. If Hell is full of *forgiven* people what is the purpose of Hell? Why would God send anyone to hell with their sins *forgiven*? Put another way, what is the purpose of Hell if everyone is already FORGIVEN? Logically, according to his paradigm, Bell concluded that there is no purpose for Hell because the entire world is already *forgiven* and *reconciled* to God.

While we do not agree with either of Bell's expositions (2005 or 2011) at least we can respect him for having the courage of his convictions to carry them through to their logical conclusion; which is more than we can say about the current NR doctrine circulating in the Grace Movement. NRism seeks to retain two opposing viewpoints within a singular belief system. This why NRist often don't make sense when seeking to enunciate their position, they know that belief in Hell and Eternal Punishment is part of orthodox Christianity so they cannot or are unwilling to deny its reality. Meanwhile, they have God sending *forgiven* people to eternal damnation and separation from Him for unbelief.

At this point a few questions are in order. Should one consider Rob Bell to be "Pauline" because of his 2005 stance on reconciliation? What about his 2011 position? Rob Bell is the furthest thing from a mid-Acts Pauline dispensationalist who rightly divides the word of truth. Yet, NR supporters find themselves in agreement with his 2005 position (at a minimum) even holding it forth as "Pauline Truth" and accusing anyone who disagrees of teaching "another gospel." To teach what Bell did in 2005 is *defacto* Universalism and Bell knew it, which is why he amended his position in 2011 and removed Hell and eternal punishment from his belief system altogether.

When one logically, and scripturally, examines the arguments being offered by NR supporters they lead to Bell's 2011 conclusion whether they want to admit it or not. NR doctrine i.e., Universal Reconciliation is a stepping stone to Universalism Salvation because it confuses the issue of God's *not imputing* sin to world (a dispensational thing) with God automatically forgiving every one of their sins at the cross 2,000 years ago (an individual thing).

This is what justification is about, God imputing his righteousness to the account of the sinner by faith. Man is born in Adam dead in sin, and his sin separates him from God. What a lost man needs is God's righteousness and he does not possess it when he is born (Eph. 2:1-3) and neither does he possess automatic forgiveness and reconciliation. An individual does not possess the righteousness of God until

they by faith trust the shed blood of Jesus Christ as the only total and complete payment for their sin. Then, and only then is God's righteousness imputed and the individual is forgiven and reconciled to God.

Once again II Cor. 5:19 is dispensational. If God would have imputed the world's sins unto them he would have been forced to deal with the world in his wrath, according to the prophetic program. God did not, instead He placed them on Christ upon the cross so that he could form the church the body of Christ and reconcile Jew and Gentile in one body by the cross (Eph. 2:13-18).

While NR advocates assert that all sin was *forgiven* 2,000 ago they maintain a difference between *forgiveness* and *justification*. Those articulating this position assert that *all* sin was *forgiven* at the cross, but one must trust Paul's gospel in order to be *justified*. This a misuse of the word *justification*.

Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines the word *justification* as follows:

- "4. In theology, *remission of sin* and absolution from *guilt* and punishment; or an act of free grace by which God pardons the sinner and accepts him as righteous, on account of the atonement of Christ."¹

The very same dictionary defines the English word *remission* as follows:

- "5. *forgiveness*; pardon; that is, the giving up of the punishment due to a crime; as the remission of sins."²

It is therefore a contradiction to assert that one is *forgiven* but not *justified*. According to the meaning of English words, one cannot be forgiven without being *justified* because to be *justified* means to be *forgiven*. This of course means that for the sake of consistency if one is going to assert that all are *forgiven* they must also assert that all are *justified*. If all are automatically *justified* that is *universal justification* and hence *universal salvation*. The razor's edge is a dangerous place to be.

Even the *Middle English Dictionary* acknowledges that the word *justificacioun* means:

- "God's act of imparting forgiveness and grace to man and absolving him of his sins"³

All sin has been *paid for* but one must trust Paul's gospel in order to receive *justification* i.e., the *forgiveness* of sins as a *free gift*.

To believe that people are born into a state of *forgiveness*, which is synonymous with *justification*, then NRists, potentially without realizing it, are Universalists (Universal Salvation). Universal forgiveness is universal salvation; which is completely contrary to Scripture rightly divided. NRism, therefore, is the

¹ <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/justification>

² <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/remission>

³ <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id...>

conclusion which stems from wrongly dividing the word of truth and misapplying a dispensational principle. II Cor. 5: 21 clearly demonstrates the potential that mankind has to be made the righteousness of God in Christ; i.e. “might be made”. It is not automatic, and the prerequisite is personal faith in the cross work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the many problems with NRism, is that it is not stand-alone. In other words, to teach or preach NRism, is to skew and malign many other verses and doctrines which throw into question such teachings as the state of the lost, what sends a person to hell, what separates man from God, what God through Christ actually did accomplish on the cross, and man’s obligation to what Christ accomplished. While not an exhaustive list, NRism teaches these doctrines contrary to Scripture not only the detriment of the one teaching it, but to those who hear it as well.

In response to the Scriptural view of reconciliation, NRism asks this very poignant question; “If Christ died for all sins 2000 years ago, but if everyone is not automatically forgiven, then where did those sins go that Christ died and paid for? Which sins did He leave me to pay for?” The question itself is intrinsically deceptive, and purposefully so. The intent is to get a person to make the assertion, that since Christ did die for all sins 2000 years ago, and his payment was satisfactory to the Father, then consequently there are no sins for which He can apply to me, because they were all applied to Him. The deception lies in the fact that although Christ paid the price for all sins, the payment must be applied by faith. The necessity of faith in the salvation/forgiveness (justification)/reconciliation/ process cannot be overstated; it is fundamental. NRism takes away the fundamental need for faith to be justified (forgiven), which leads to universalism (universal salvation). Dutiful soldiers on watch raise an alarm when they see or hear things that are not right. We are no different. Let this serve as the alarm.

II Corinthians 5:21

- **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.**
- I am going to leave the first half of this verse for Richard to address tonight in his message, “When Christ Was Made Sin For Us: Seeing The Travail Of His Soul.”
- **that we might be made the righteousness of God in him**—the verb translated “might be made” in II Cor. 5:21 is in the subjective mood, which is the mood of possibility and potentiality i.e., not yet actual fact. The action described (someone being made the righteousness of God in him) may or may not occur, depending upon circumstances (whether or not I chose to believe the gospel of the grace of God). Christ provided the means from me to *potentially* be made the righteous of God in him. However, I am not actually made the righteousness of God in him until I trust the cross work of Christ on my behalf. No one is made the righteousness of God unless they are in Christ, according to II Cor. 5:17 & 21.