

Friday, February 16, 2024—Southern California Regional Grace Bible Conference

- Title: The Ministry of Reconciliation, What Is It And Why Is It So Unique? (2 Cor. 5:18-21)
- Assignment: This message will focus on the unique way that God is dealing with humanity in this dispensation of His grace as compared to how He was dealing with humanity in “time past.”

II Corinthians 5:18

- **And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;**
- **And all things *are* of God**—is a reference to the preceding context. Note the occurrences of “all” in this context:
 - Verse 14—Christ died for “all” because “all” were dead.
 - Verse 15—Christ died for “all”
 - Verse 17—for those who are “in Christ” “all things are become new.”
 - Verse 18—God is both the responsible party and causal agent for all these things in the context.
- **who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ**—God was able to act on our behalf “by Jesus Christ.”
 - **Reconciled**—is defined as follows by Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* (ADEL): “brought into friendship from a state of disagreement or enmity; made consistent; adjusted.” This word is past tense and speaks of those who have already been brought into friendship from a previous state of enmity.
 - Romans 5:8-10
 - **Us**—is a first-person plural pronoun. In this context, who is the “us” that have been reconciled to God? Paul and the believers in Corinth i.e., those who are “in Christ” in verse 17.
 - **By Jesus Christ**—God the Father was able to reconcile us by the word of his Son, Jesus Christ on our behalf.
- **and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation**—all those who have been “reconciled” have been given the “ministry of reconciliation.”
 - **Hath given**—is past tense. Thereby indicating that the action signified by the verb has already occurred.

- **Us**—once again is first-person plural pronoun and includes all the same people as the first occurrence i.e., Paul along with all those who are “in Christ.”
- **Reconciliation**—“1) the act of reconciling parties at variance; renewal of friendship after disagreement or enmity. 2) In Scripture, the means by which sinners are reconciled and brought into a state of favor with God, after natural estrangement or enmity; the atonement; expiation.” (ADEL) This word speaks of the act, or the process, of taking two parties that are presently at variance and settling the enmity between them.
- Because Paul and the Corinthians have already been “reconciled” to God they had been “given” the ministry of reconciliation.

II Corinthians 5:19

- **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.**
- **To wit, that God was in Christ**—“wit” is a verb that means “namely” or “that is to say” (ADEL). It signifies an explanation or elaboration of what was just said i.e., the “ministry of reconciliation” from verse 18. What is the ministry of reconciliation? Verse 19
 - Note the tension between “was” and “reconciling.”
 - Was = at the cross—2,000 years. The world has already been reconciled to God.
 - **Was in Christ**—is a verb in the imperfect tense. The imperfect tense denotes a past action which is incomplete. This tense indicates an action that has gone on over a period of time or has happened frequently. It is translated into English using a combination of “was” + “ing.”
 - “In grammar, the imperfect tense denotes an action in time past, then present, but not finished.” (ADEL)
 - “Of a tense: expressing in progress but not completed at the time referred to. . .” (Oxford English Dictionary)
 - John 1:1, 2—the occurrence of “was” in verses 1&2 are also verbs in the imperfect tense. Is Jesus still God or was he only God at a singular point of time in the past? Jesus Christ remains God in the present. If one reads the “was” here in John 1 the way some folks want to read the “was” in I Corinthians 5:19 they would of necessity weaken their Christology or doctrine of Christ.
- **reconciling the world unto himself**—note the present tense on the word “reconciling” this goes with our understanding of the imperfect tense on the word “was” in the previous clause.
 - **Reconciling**—is a present active verb, thus the “ing” instead of “ed.” The “ing” only makes sense when “was” is understood to be in the imperfect tense.

- Noah Webster defines the word as: “bringing into favor and friendship after variance; bringing to content or satisfaction; showing to be consistent; adjusting; making to agree.” (ADEL)
- Once again, this word speaks about the active process of settling the differences between two parties. 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.
- **not imputing their trespasses unto them**—the word “imputing” also ends with an “ing.” Why? Because it’s a present tense verb. To impute means to count or reckon.
 - **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. It doesn’t mean that God has automatically forgiven the lost it just means that God is not counting the sins of the against them now.
 - Leviticus 7:18—under the Law imputation was immediate.
 - II Corinthians 6:1-2
 - Romans 2:1-6—the lost today are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.
 - 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. When Israel was rendered in unbelief (in Acts 7) and fell from their favored “Time Past” standing, there was no longer any difference between Israel and the Gentiles. This allowed for God to reconcile the world unto himself without distinction through the fall of Israel.
 - The mechanics by which the body of Christ could be formed were brought about by Christ’s work upon the cross.
 - Ephesians 2:13-18—the provision that accomplished the reconciling of Jew and Gentile and the formation of the one new man took place 2,000 years ago upon the cross. Please note the fundamental components of our definition of reconciliation in these verses:
 - Verse 13—the Gentiles who were far off in “time past” are brought nigh by the blood of Christ.

- Verse 14—Christ’s work upon the cross made peace between these two parties (Jew and Gentile) that used to be far apart from one another. Christ broke down the “middle wall of partition” between Jew and Gentile and made them both one, thereby doing away with the basis for their former enmity.
- Verse 15—the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross abolished the former enmity and took the law of commandments out of the way (Col. 2:14). The purpose of this was to form the “one new man” (body of Christ) and bring peace (reconcile) between those who used to be at enmity with each other.
- Verse 16—it is here that the reconciliation spoken about in II Cor. 5:19 was accomplished. The world was reconciled to God through the fall of Israel (Rom. 11:15). Without the cross work of Christ, God could not form the one body of this dispensation. The enmity was slain through this work of Christ.
- II Corinthians 5:19-20—it is in the dispensational sense that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Rather than imputing sin and pouring out his wrath upon “humanity” his wrath was poured out on Christ upon the cross, thereby providing the basis upon which the church of this dispensation could be formed. In other words, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself in the sense that God moved on our behalf through the work of Christ to make our reconciliation unto him possible.
- **and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation**—notice how this verse ends where verse 18 left off. Note the parallel structure.
 - The “ministry of reconciliation” in verse 18 is the “word of reconciliation” in verse 19.