HWMR: THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD AND GOD'S DISPENSING FOR GOD'S ECONOMY

The Ministry of Reconciliation

Scripture Reading: *Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:20; 2 Cor. 5:18-20*

Rom. 5:10 For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled,

Col. 1:20 And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross-through Him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens.

2 Cor. 5:18 But all things are out from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

2 Cor. 5:19 Namely, that God in Christ was reconciling the world to Himself, not accounting their offenses to them, and has put in us the word of reconciliation.

2 Cor. 5:20 On behalf of Christ then we are ambassadors, as God entreats you through us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God.

Day 1

2 Cor. 5:18-20 - But all things are out from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; namely, that God in Christ was reconciling the world to Himself…and has put in us the word of reconciliation. On behalf of Christ then we are ambassadors, as God entreats you through us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God.

I. **It is helpful for us to have a basic understanding of reconciliation:**

A. The **need** of reconciliation—enmity, enemies—Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21.
B. The **meaning** of reconciliation—to make peace—v. 20; 2 Cor. 5:18.
C. The **instrument** of reconciliation—Christ—Col. 1:20; 2 Cor. 5:18.
D. The **means** of reconciliation—the cross—Col. 1:20; Eph. 2:16.
E. The **scope** of reconciliation—all things in the heavens and on the earth—Col. 1:20.
F. The **sphere** of reconciliation—in one Body—Eph. 2:16.
G. The **fact** of reconciliation—our position before God based upon judicial redemption and justification by faith—Rom. 5:10.
H. The **experience** of reconciliation—in one Spirit having access unto the Father—Eph. 2:18.

Romans 5:10 says, "*If we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled*." Reconciliation occurs between enemies. According to this verse, God and man were enemies, but man was reconciled to God through the death of His Son. This clearly indicates that the death of Christ, the Son of God, on the cross is a death of reconciliation, a death that brings enemies together, as well as a death of atonement, a death to make them one. First, we have been reconciled to God through the Lord's death. Then, having been reconciled, much more we will be saved in His life.

In this verse we see a two-step process. The **first step** is to be reconciled to God, emphasizing the death of Christ; the **second step** emphasizes the life of Christ, which saves us in His life. Hence, there is an initial reconciliation with God or to God, but there is the need for a "much more" salvation in life that completes and consummates that initial reconciliation. It is for this reason that verse 10 says, "*Much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled*." We all have been reconciled to God, both positionally and in actuality, in fact. However, we also must admit that there is still a "much more" aspect in which we need to be saved. In this sense, we may say that our experience of the process of reconciliation is incomplete. Having been reconciled, we still have to be reconciled further. We have been reconciled, but now we need to be much more reconciled. This much-more reconciliation is actually the full salvation in Christ's life that we experience.

Colossians 1:19-20 says, "*In Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross—through Him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens*." God reconciled all things to Himself through Christ. Man did not initiate any reconciliation; it is God who initiated reconciliation. It was man who rebelled, who sinned under the influence of Satan; Satan is the one who brought the entire universe into a chaotic state due to his own rebellion. Satan's rebellion caused the whole creation, the things on the earth and the things in the heavens, to be out of order, to be an enemy of God. God wants to reconcile not only us but also all things to Himself. (*The Ministry of the Word, vol. 30, No. 5, chapter 2*)

II. As ambassadors of Christ, the new covenant ministers carry out the ministry of reconciliation—2 Cor. 5:18-20; 6:1:

A. An ambassador of Christ is one who represents God, the highest authority in the universe.
B. The apostles were authorized by Christ to represent Him to do the work of reconciliation—5:18, 20.
C. The ministry of reconciliation is not only to bring sinners back to God but also to bring believers absolutely into God and to make them absolutely one with Him.
D. Two steps are required for men to be fully reconciled to God:
   1. The **first step** is to reconcile sinners to God from sin—v. 19:
      a. For this purpose Christ died for our sins that we might be forgiven—1 Cor. 15:3.
      b. Christ bore our sins on the cross that they might be judged by God—1 Pet. 2:24.
   2. The **second step is** to reconcile believers living in the natural life to God from the flesh—2 Cor. 5:20:
      a. For this purpose Christ died for us, the persons, that we might live to Him in the resurrection life—vv. 14-15.
      b. Christ was made sin on our behalf that sin might be judged and done away with—v. 21; Rom. 8:3.

Day 2

Gal. 2:20 - *I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

Gal. 5:24 - *But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts.*

E. If we are to carry out the ministry of reconciliation, we need to be identified with the crucified Christ—2 Cor. 4:10-12; 5:14; Gal. 2:20; 5:24.

F. The Corinthians still lived in the flesh, that is, in the soul, the outer man, the natural being—1 Cor. 3:1; 2:14:

1. The veil of the flesh, the natural man, separated them from God.
2. Paul was working to cut asunder the separating veil of the flesh so that the believers at Corinth could enter into the Holy of Holies—Heb. 10:19-20.

G. Only when we have been fully reconciled to God are we fully saved—2 Cor. 6:1-2; Rom. 5:10; Heb. 7:25.

H. The extent to which we can bring others to God and into God is always measured by where we are with respect to God; the more we are in Him, the more we can reconcile others into Him—2 Cor. 12:12a; 5:20.

We need to realize that the enmity may still exist in us. James 4:4 says, "*Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever determines to be a friend of the world is constituted an enemy of God*." If there is something within us that is for the world and that is one with the world, we are at that moment and in that situation at enmity with God. Romans 8:7 says, "*The mind set on the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be*." Regretfully, we do set our mind on the flesh from time to time. The natural mind, the mind that is set on the flesh, is enmity against God. Because that kind of a natural mind cannot be subject to the law of God, we need to realize how much we need to be reconciled. We need to stay on the cross and be identified with the crucified One.

Our flesh keeps us away from God. The flesh is the hindrance that keeps us separated from the Lord. The flesh is the obstacle to our experiencing God fully in the Holy of Holies. We could be wandering in our soul for many years, like the Israelites, who wandered in the wilderness for forty years. The outer court of the tabernacle corresponds to Egypt, that is, our body, and the Holy Place corresponds to the wilderness, that is, our soul. We may be in the Holy Place, enjoying Christ as the bread of the Presence and the lampstand, but we are not where God wants us all to be, that is, in the Holy of Holies, our spirit. Our entering into the Holy of Holies depends on how much we have been reconciled. (*The Ministry of the Word, vol. 30, No. 5, chapter 2*)

Day 3

2 Cor. 5:21 - *Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Rom. 8:3 - *For that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh.*

Day 4

2 Cor. 5:14 - *For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died.*

2 Cor. 3:8-9 - *How shall the ministry of the Spirit not be more in glory? For if there is glory with the ministry of condemnation, much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.*

III. The ministry of reconciliation brings us back to God to such an extent that we become the righteousness of God in Christ—v. 21:

A. Not only are we justified by God (Gal. 2:16)—we actually become the righteousness of God.

B. When Christ died on the cross as our Substitute, God considered Him not only the sin bearer but sin itself; now in resurrection Christ comes into us as life, and this life lives within us to constitute us into the righteousness of God.

C. In substitution Christ was made sin for us; now in His constitution we become the righteousness of God in Him—2 Cor. 5:21:

1. The phrase *in Him* means in union with Christ, not only positionally but also organically in resurrection.
2. When Christ died on the cross, God condemned Him in the flesh as sin for us (Rom. 8:3; John 3:14) so that we might be one with Him in His resurrection to be God's righteousness; therefore, in the organic union with Christ we are made the righteousness of God.

D. To become the righteousness of God in Christ is a matter of being right with God in our being; this is to have an inner being that is transparent and crystal clear—an inner being in the mind and will of God—2 Cor. 5:21.

E. Second Corinthians reveals the complete reconciliation of the believers to God, and Christ as the means of reconciliation.

In Philippians 3:9-10 Paul desired to "*be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God based on faith, to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death*." To be found in Christ, having the righteousness which is of God based upon faith, is to have God Himself embodied in Christ as righteousness. The Christ we live out in chapter one is our righteousness in chapter three. The righteousness of God based upon faith in chapter three is the Christ we must live and magnify in chapter one. When we live and magnify Christ according to chapter one, people will find us in Christ, not having our own natural goodness or natural virtues, but having Christ as our righteousness.

When we see this vision of the experience of life and look at our present situation, we have to admit that we are far off from this experience. We may study the Bible and pray much, but we are still very much in ourselves and not very much in Christ. We are usually in ourselves, having only our good behavior. One brother's characteristic may be his slowness, while another brother's characteristic may be his quickness. When I contact such brothers, I may find them only partially in Christ and mainly in their peculiar characteristics. But the Apostle Paul's particular characteristic was the righteousness of God, the Christ he lived and magnified. In Philippians 1 Paul expected and earnestly hoped to live and magnify Christ. Then in chapter three he desired to be found in the very Christ he lived and magnified. Being found in Christ, he would have no goodness of himself, but the righteousness of God, who is Christ as the embodiment of God. (*The Experience and Growth in Life, Chapter 13*)

Day 5

Heb. 9:3 - *And after the second veil, a tabernacle, which is called the Holy of Holies.*

Heb. 10:19-20 - *Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies in the blood of Jesus, which entrance He initiated for us as a new and living way through the veil, that is, His flesh.*

IV. The two steps of reconciliation are clearly portrayed by the two veils of the tabernacle—Exo. 26:31-37; Heb. 9:3:

A. Both veils signify the unique Christ—the Christ who died for our sins and also for us.

B. The **first veil** is called "the screen"—Exo. 26:36-37:

1. A sinner who was brought to God through the reconciliation of the propitiating blood entered into the Holy Place by passing through the screen.
2. This typifies the first step of reconciliation.

C. The **second veil** (vv. 31-35; Heb. 9:3) still separated the sinner from God, who was in the Holy of Holies:

1. This veil needed to be rent so that the sinner might be brought to God in the Holy of Holies—Matt. 27:51; Heb. 10:19-20.
2. This typifies the second step of reconciliation.

Day 6

2 Cor. 6:11-13 - *Our mouth is opened to you, Corinthians; our heart is enlarged. You are not constricted in us, but you are constricted in your inward parts. But for a recompense in kind, I speak as to children, you also be enlarged.*

V. To be fully reconciled to God will cause us to be enlarged in our hearts—2 Cor. 5:20; 6:11-13:

A. How large our heart is depends on the degree of our reconciliation to God.

B. Narrowness of heart is a strong indication that we have been reconciled to God only partially and that the percentage of our salvation is quite low—v. 2; Rom. 5:10.

C. If we are able to forgive an offense and then forget it, that is a sign that we have become an enlarged person, a person with a large heart—Matt. 18:21-35; Eph. 5:21; Col. 3:13.

D. We need to be impressed with the contrast between narrowness of heart and largeness of heart.

VI. These are the results of reconciliation:

A. Having **peace toward God**:

1. The first result of our reconciliation to God is that we may have peace toward God—Rom. 5:1.
2. Since we have been reconciled to God and have peace toward God, we are walking on the way of peace; this is an issue of our reconciliation to God.

B. **Boasting in God**:

1. As a result of our reconciliation to God, we can boast in God—v. 11.

2. Since we have been reconciled to God through the Lord Jesus Christ, we boast, exult, and glory in God.
3. We also boast in the hope of the glory of God—v. 2.
4. This also is an issue of our reconciliation to God.

C. Being **saved in His life**:

1. As a result of our reconciliation to God, we are being saved in His life—v. 10.
2. This salvation in life also is an issue of our reconciliation to God.

VII. Through the ministry of reconciliation, we are incorporated into the processed and consummated Triune God to become, in Christ, an enlarged, universal, divine-human incorporation; as a result, we become God's sanctuary, His dwelling place, His Holy of Holies—the New Jerusalem— John 14:20, 23; Rev. 21:2, 10, 16.