

Reconciliation

Helen Harray

Sunday 30 November 2014

Romans 5: 6-11

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

2 COR 5: 16-21

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

A couple of weeks ago we thought about the critical importance of a lifestyle of forgiveness...and I compared it to being like the oil in the engine of a car. Without oil the engine will seize and shutdown and you will need a new engine. Similarly, unforgiveness in a life will eventually cause a seizure of relationship with God. A hardness and a shutdown. A question was left hanging about whether God's unconditional love was enough to cover the practice of not forgiving others. This question has been addressed by some of our members in an email.

This morning I just want to consider very briefly the other part of our lifestyle of forgiveness which is the call to the ministry of reconciliation.

God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. 2 Cor 5

1. RIFT Reconciliation implies that there's a rift between me and God. Peace with God and Harmony is destroyed by the act of rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden. That's called sin. Being the master of my own destiny. It also destroyed order in creation, and subjected it to frustration and decay. It also put frustration and enmity between people, making relationships the subject of disharmony.

2. INITIATIVE I love it when my husband takes the initiative to plan something for me or the family I haven't thought about. Don't you agree?...when you can sit back and let someone else plan or lead it's a treat.

I am so grateful that God took the initiative to remove the rift or barrier between me and Him. He did this. It had nothing to do with me, because I was completely in the dark about my need for help.

COL 1: 21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.

2 Cor 5:¹⁹ In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's sins against them.

3. So what does RECONCILIATION mean?

The Bible is clear about two principles: 1. We always need to forgive, but 2. We don't always achieve reconciliation.

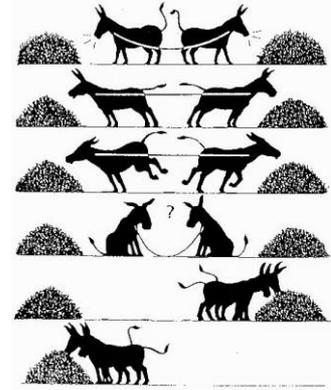
Reconciliation means to put an end to hostility...to justify. It means to **come together**.

But it takes two to tango so to speak. Forgiveness is singular, but reconciliation requires the two parties to come together and talk and go forward together. With God, with myself and with others.

God has done his part:

Romans 5: 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

¹⁰ For if, **while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son**, how much more, **having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!**



We are justified and reconciled by his blood and death on the cross and saved to life. Christ restores the principle of harmony in the universe, though not yet fully realised and makes possible the peace between us and God and the reconciliation of those who oppose each other.

COL 1:19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Christ, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself **all things**, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

4. But have we received that reconciliation?

While all are forgiven not all of the world is reconciled to God. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. But we are still required to receive and embrace that and given the ministry of reconciliation we are required to help others find that peace.

Imagine for a moment that you were not reconciled to God.

- You had not experienced God's absolute forgiveness and affirmation.
- That you had not predominantly lived a lifetime in a culture based on Christian principles, even if today they are shaky and undermined.
- That you had not followed a Christian lifestyle of forgiveness and Christlikeness.

What would your life be like in the absence of the experience of God's reconciliation and presence?

When I thought about this:

- I felt sick in the pit of my stomach.
- I felt ...empty, panicky, shutdown, hopeless, suicidal, depressed and unhappy.
- I felt forced into a life of mere existence, a struggle for survival.

I remembered that I couldn't reconcile myself to myself. I lived in cognitive dissonance. I felt pulled apart by my internal disagreement about whether I was worth anything or not.

GOD gave me the version of myself I couldn't perceive.

Without knowing Christ I would be an empty shell of a human being.

Here's a few verses that describe the end result of not knowing reconciliation with God

Psalm 73:21-22

²¹ When my heart was grieved
and my spirit embittered,

²² I was senseless and ignorant;
I was a brute beast before you.

2 Tim 3:3 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good,

⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power.

Romans 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

God allows sin to run its course.

This is also the meaning of Matt 6:15. If we will not forgive, God cannot forgive us because we have become impervious to it. Life without God's reconciliation is full of very scary possibilities and realities.

It seems to me that its pretty important to nail this because if we are not that convinced we will won't be that fussed about being ministers of reconciliation to others. Our sense of who Jesus is and how the good news has transformed us is critical to our confidence in helping others find peace and reconciliation.

What we have in our hands is such a gift and we must stir up how we will be bearers of it.

What is the fullness of reconciliation like in Christ?

- absolute affirmation and acceptance...relaxation not on guard...like being at home
- complete justification by grace
- LIFE in all its fullness, not the pathway of death and decay
- Peace with myself and others not anxiety, or frustration or hostility

How could you stir up a sense of intentional appreciation and gratitude for what is the presence and power of God in your life?

How will this motivate you to be the bearer of reconciliation- God's ambassador?

What a gift we hold in our hands.

RESPONSE:

The white ribbon is a symbol of peace, of reconciliation.

Story:

THE WAITING FATHER

They say that the first time Sawat went to the top floor of the hotel, he was shocked. He had never dreamed it would be like this. Every room had a window facing into the hallway and in every room sat a girl. Some looked older and they were smiling and laughing, but many of them were just twelve or thirteen years old - some even younger. They looked nervous, even frightened.

It was Sawat's first venture into Bangkok's world of prostitution. It all began innocently enough, but soon he was caught up in it like a small piece of wood in a raging river. It was too powerful for him, too swift, and the current too strong. Soon he was selling opium to customers and propositioning tourists in the hotels. He even went so low as to actually help buy and sell young girls, some of them only nine and ten years old. It was a nasty business, and he was one of the most important of the young 'businessmen'.

Sawat became a central figure in one of the world's largest and most loathsome trades: Thailand's sex industry. It is estimated that over 10% of all girls in Thailand end up in prostitution. The top floors of most hotels are used by them, as are the back rooms of many bars. Though the practice is discouraged by the Royal Family, many poorer rural families sell their young daughters to pay off family debts. Who knows what happens to many of these frightened ten-year-olds when they have outlived their usefulness?

Sawat disgraced his family and dishonoured his father's name. He had come to Bangkok to escape the dullness of village life. He found excitement, and while he prospered in this sordid life, he was popular. But then the bottom dropped out of his world. He hit a string of bad luck: he was robbed and while

trying to climb back to the top, he was arrested. Everything went wrong. The word spread in the underworld that he was a police spy. He finally ended up living in a shanty by the city rubbish dump.

Sitting in his little shack, he thought about his family, especially his father. He remembered the parting words of his father, a simple Christian man from a small village in the south, near the Malaysian border: 'I am waiting for you.' Would his father still be waiting for him after all he had done to dishonour the family name? Would he receive him home after disregarding all he had been taught about God's love? Word had long ago filtered back to his village about his life of crime and sin.

Finally, he devised a plan. 'Dear Father,' he wrote, 'I want to come home, but I don't know if you will receive me after all that I have done. I have sinned greatly, Father. Please forgive me. On Saturday night I will be on the train which goes through our village. If you are still waiting for me will you tie a piece of cloth on the po tree in front of our house?'

During the train ride he thought over his life of evil. He knew his father had every right to refuse to see him. As the train finally neared the village he was filled with anxiety. What would he do if there was no white piece of cloth in the po tree?

Sitting opposite Sawat was a kind stranger who noticed how nervous his fellow-passenger had become. Finally, Sawat could stand the pressure no longer. The story burst out in a torrent of words. He told the man everything. As they entered the village, Sawat said, 'Oh sir, I cannot bear to look. Can you watch for me? What if my father will not receive me back home?'

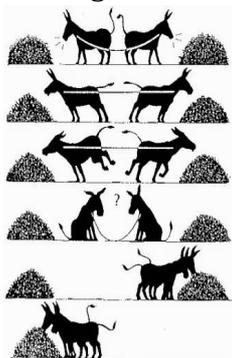
Sawat buried his face between his knees. 'Do you see it sir? It's the only house with a po tree.'

'Young man, your father did not hang one piece of cloth...look! He has covered the whole tree with pieces of white cloth!' He could hardly believe his eyes. There was the tree, covered, and in the front yard his old father was dancing up and down, joyously waving a piece of white cloth! His father ran beside the train, and when it stopped at the little station he threw his arms around his son, embracing him with tears of joy.

'I've been waiting for you,' he exclaimed!

McLung, Floyd. The Father Heart of God Ch 3.

God gives us all this white ribbon for ourselves and for others



Reconciliation of self to self...internal parts of me have to agree and not be in conflict.

Of self to God

Of self to others

As you hold it consider...What does it mean to you today?

- A symbol of my life with God -gratitude.
- A call to work on a part of my life that needs peace
- A call to the ministry of reconciliation

