

## 10-27-24 Confronting Conflict

### Week 3

**Text: 2 Corinthians 5:16–21**

**Topic(s):** Reconciliation, New Creation

**Big Idea of the Message:** As glimpses of the new creation, we have the ability and mission to seek reconciliation in all areas of our life.

**Application Point:** Build bridges even when you want to build walls.

Reconciliation means many things, but today we're looking at this definition: "to fix broken relationships."

In our text this morning, God tells us that that was what he did for us. Our relationship with God was broken... so God fixed it – He reconciled us to himself. What I find interesting about this passage is that God says: NOW that He's reconciled US to HIM... He wants **US** to be a **RECONCILER** with others.

How are you doing at being a reconciler? Leading others to Christ. What about when there is a falling out between fellow believers?

Are you a bridge builder or a wall builder?

**1. The death and resurrection of Christ changes how we (should) see ALL people.**

- **Read verse 16.**
- When Paul says, "**Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh**" (v. **16**), this means Christians have a new, unique perspective on all people. "**So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view...**" NLT
- Understanding our sinfulness and brokenness, and that our new position in Christ is a gift we could not deserve, should change the way we see all other people.
- We should avoid the perspective that has too often characterized Christians in relationships with nonbelievers: self-righteous snobbery.
- We should have the humility and graciousness that characterizes people who have been redeemed by grace.
- Because of what has been done for us, salvation from and by Jesus. It should change the way we view others and how we treat them. **Read 2 Corinthians 5:9-11.**

**Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too. (2 Cor. 5:11 NLT)**

- Remember where you were, who you were before Christ saved your life. Our goal/aim should be to be unoffendable. An unrepentant, unbelievable creature does what an unbelieving, unrepentant creature does. They don't know any better; and without Jesus, either would you.

- But a born-again follower of Jesus does know better and has been set free from the bondage of sin. We cannot hide behind the excuse, this is just how I am. **Nope, that is who you have chosen to be in spite of what Jesus did to set you free. You are choosing to sin!**

*“When we see that we are all sinners’ dead in our sins and needing reconciliation from God, and when we accept Christ’s shameful death on the cross as our death, then all previous canons we used to appraise others must be scrapped” -David E. Garland*

- Are you a bridge builder or a wall builder?

Not only does Christ change how we see people...

2. **The death and resurrection of Christ doesn’t only change an individual’s residency, it changes how they (should) respond. (Changes how we respond)**
  - **Read verse 17.**

**“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! NLT**

- The **“old things have passed away,”** means the old life has “perished.” The use of **“behold”** is designed to call attention to this fact, “Look! Don’t miss this! Open your eyes!”
- If you are saved, you have been created anew and the old stuff is abolished. Jesus said it like this in **John 3:3: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”** The miracle of reconciliation comes from being reborn.
- Just like with our families, conflict in the workplace, and in Walmart will be much easier to address when we come to it rooted in our new identity in Christ.
- **2 Corinthians 5** shows that our salvation exists for more than our own inner peace or to “get to heaven”, it should be a gift for our larger communities. It is not just that we are internally a **“new creation”** but that our redeemed lives are glimpses of that new creation; the new creation has arrived in us. (Jesus characteristics should be seen in your life)
- The world is struggling from an identity crises, and it will continue until Christ’s transformation comes into everyone’s life.
- Gender, ethnicity, sexual, and social identities will continue to decay until a new identity in Jesus Christ is recognized and believed in.
- If you are reconciled with God through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, your identity is found in Jesus. The old life (person) is gone (dead) a new life has begun!
- Not only has Christ’s death and resurrection given me eternal life in heaven, but it has equipped me with the ability to respond to outside circumstances differently than my previous default settings. (The new life has given me the ability to respond God’s way)
- Are you a bridge builder or a wall builder?

Not only does Christ change how we see people...

Not only does Christ change how I respond...

3. **The death and resurrection of Christ has allowed for an exchange from hostility to peace.**
  - **Read verses 18-20.**

- The phrase **“all things are of God”** places the emphasis on God. God did it all for us. Our enmity against God has been eliminated by God Himself!
- I think of Jonathan Edwards’ famous quote: “You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary.” I provide my sin, and He takes care of everything else.
- Notice how Christ **“reconciled us to Himself.”** We can’t make ourselves right with God because our relationship with Him has been ruptured, and God’s wrath is rightfully directed against us. If there’s going to be peace, Jesus is the only one who can make it happen.
- This is true in the context of the reconciliation between God and humanity, but it is also true in human relationships. We must trust in Jesus’ way and be intentional in it.
- This is not just amongst believers, but being **“ambassadors for Christ”** includes seeking reconciliation in all areas of our lives.

*“The ministry of reconciliation therefore involves more than simply explaining to others what God has done in Christ. It requires that one becomes an active reconciler oneself. Like Christ, a minister of reconciliation plunges into the midst of human tumult to bring harmony out of chaos, reconciliation out of estrangement, and love in the place of hate” (Garland, 2 Corinthians, 138, 291–92).*

- Our reconciliation to God and amongst the people of God has been secured by the death and resurrection of Christ, but how can we illustrate that truth in seeking reconciliation with others?
- Something important about conflict: we may have to make the first move and build a bridge where someone else has already built a barrier.
- God has always been the initiator and so we must follow His example.

**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16**

**But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. 9 And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God’s condemnation. 10 For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. Romans 5:8-10. NLT**

**We love Him because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19.**

- Sometimes, as Christians in our workplaces, homes and in our communities, we may even need to be the one to build a bridge between others when they only want to construct barriers.
- As products of the new creation, we can enter our communities with an identity rooted in Christ, a job to do as an ambassador for him in our interactions (even with difficult people), and a mission to build bridges where others build walls.
- There is no divide, then, between evangelism, faithful work, and relationship building. It might feel like a heavy burden on us to seek reconciliation, resolve conflicts, and witness to Christ, but really, it’s all part of our one identity and mission to live in the new creation.

**And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. 19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. 2 Cor. 5:18-19 NLT**

- How can we introduce or help people to be reconciled to God if we aren't willing to be reconciled to people?
- **“no longer counting people's sins against them.”** Many of us struggle to forgive fellow believers and lie to ourselves thinking we are right with God. “Well, I feel fine, I don't notice God correcting me, so all must be good...”
- Let me just put this out there. If you hold a grudge, if you are easily angered, harboring bitterness, unforgiveness and you are a believer, you are not right with God. You can try and act like everything is fine, but you are only lying to yourself. And you will NOT have God's peace.
- What did Jesus instruct in **Matthew 5:23-24?** (GO) Don't even bother offering your gift to God. God doesn't want it until you've first made things right with the person you've offended.
- In **Matthew 18:15?** (GO) **“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ESV**
- So... if you've sinned against someone, what are you supposed to do? (GO)
- AND... if you're brother sins against you, what are you supposed to do? (GO)
- Notice the objective in both cases: reconciliation/ gaining your brother. That doesn't mean you're going to get it done... it just means you're supposed to TRY.
- You must come to a place and let it go.

**And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. Luke 6:31ESV**

- We do what we do because God first DID IT for us!!! (**2 Cor. 5:18**)
- God did not wait for us to come to Him. God stepped down out of heaven. He came to us to offer to fix what was broken. He died on the cross in our place.
- Now unlike us... Jesus didn't have a log in His eye. He was without sin... but we aren't. But He did UNTO US as we would want God to do UNTO US - He forgave our sins... and told us He loved us. God thru Christ reconciled us to Himself.
- Are you a bridge builder or wall builder?

Not only does Christ change how we see people...

Not only does Christ change how I respond...

Not only does Christ change how I treat others...

#### **4. The death and resurrection of Christ changes who I speak for.**

- **Read verses 20-21.**
- Ambassador: a person who acts as a representative or promoter of a specified activity:

- Before believing in and trusting Jesus' death and resurrection I represented myself, my sinful, hell bound self. But now, I have been bought and paid for, I am redeemed by the blood of Jesus, I am not longer owner of myself. I have been redeemed!!!
- **Verses 20-21** must become my message.

**So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" 21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. NLT**

- This is what God desires of His children, to bring Him honor and glory through obedience and sharing His message, "Come back to God!" "God put our punishment on the shoulders of Jesus, so that we could be restore/rescued."
- What message are you known for sharing? How would those who know you answer?
- Are you an ambassador for a sports team? Hobbie? Family? Job? Political agenda? Conspiracy theory?
- Are you a bridge builder or wall builder?

### **Conclusion**

1. Christ changes how we see people.
2. Christ changes how I respond.
3. Christ changes how I treat others.
4. Christ changes who I represent.

Make sure you've been reconciled with God.

- If you have not yet put your faith in Christ, the Bible says you are an enemy and at war with God (**Ephesians 2:3**). It's time to have a peace conference with the Prince of Peace. There is no way to have the peace of God until you know the God of peace.

Be reconciled with those around you.

- Do you need to make things right with someone you're in a fight with? Is there anyone you need to forgive? Do you need to ask for forgiveness?

Help others who are in conflict.

- How can God use you to build bridges between people who are in conflict?

Urge others to be reconciled with God.

- **Ephesians 6:15** refers to believers having their feet fitted with **"the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."** **Proverbs 11:30: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise."**