

Bible Basics Conference 2010: Results of Christ's Death

Part 7

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[00:00:00] The purpose of this session is to look at the topic of reconciliation and we'll do so by reference to the headings that are up here on the slide, considering firstly the need for reconciliation, then the means by which reconciliation is achieved, the present result of reconciliation and also its future results, and then the present effects of reconciliation in us, and at time permitting we might look at one or two other verses.

In contrast to some of the words or some of the concepts that we've been considering already this afternoon, such as atonement and propitiation, reconciliation is a word that's in common usage in everyday language today, perhaps not in common usage but it's [00:01:07] certainly a word that most of us would be familiar with.

The slide sets out some dictionary definitions of reconcile, they're from ordinary English dictionaries not Bible dictionaries, but really the concept of reconciliation has two elements to it.

Firstly the existence of a difference or a dispute between two people or two groups of people and then that difference or dispute being resolved and a state of harmony being established in its place.

That's reconciliation in a nutshell, but in the Bible reconciliation means much more than the word does when we use it in ordinary language and it really means much more than is set [00:02:04] out on the slide and hopefully we'll see that by the end of this session.

It means so much more than the ordinary meaning of the word because of the two elements of reconciliation that I mentioned before. It means so much more because of the starting point, because of the magnitude of the difference that there was between the reconciled and the reconciler and secondly it means so much more because of the second element, the result, the completeness of the change that is brought about by God's reconciliation.

In this session we'll consider the verses that are set out there on the slide and there's a few notes about translations and Simon has already alluded to these two particular [00:03:05] verses that are noted there, Romans 5.11 and Hebrews 2.17, the first verse being one where the word reconciliation

should appear and the second being one where it should not. Simon's already gone through this so I don't need to go through it again but it's perhaps just worth making at this point that in saying that reconciliation should be in Romans 5.11 and should not be in Hebrews 2.17, it's not just a matter of comparing the JND translation of the Bible and the authorised version and where there's a difference preferring Mr Darby's version and it's also not the other extreme of any of us having to be Greek scholars to be able to work these things out for ourselves. [00:04:01] The true meaning of God's word is available to us in the English language and in both instances if you look at the context of the passage you can see the right word that should be used in each instance.

Romans 5 verse 10 is talking about reconciliation, verse 11 flows on from verse 10 so hence it is talking about reconciliation as well. Hebrews 2.17 in the authorised version the phrase appears, a reconciliation for sins and just as a matter of ordinary language that doesn't make any sense. Reconciliation isn't a word that can be applied to sins. So there are just a few comments on our various verses. One other thing that it's worth noting about reconciliation and again this differs from some of the other things we've already looked at and that is that reconciliation is not [00:05:04] presented in the Old Testament even in type, even in any of the sacrifices.

Apparently some words have been cut off from this slide in the conversion process. The slide did go on to set out the reasons why reconciliation is not presented in the Old Testament but perhaps that first point that has survived on the slide is enough because in the previous dispensation there was a covenant between God and Israel and that was an everlasting covenant and that's clear from Genesis chapter 17 and God's promises to Abram there. So there was a relationship between God and Israel and that relationship existed even when Israel sinned and so there was just no need for the concept of reconciliation.

[00:06:02] Moving now to the topic of reconciliation in a bit more detail. There are many verses in the Bible that describe our condition by nature and some of them are set out on the slide there and we could add many more to them.

In Romans chapter 1 verse 28 it says that man by nature did not like to know God and in chapter 3 verse 11 it says that man by nature did not seek God and those verses apply to us as well.

But I think perhaps the most dreadful description of man's natural state, of our natural state is what we have in one of our verses, Colossians 1 verse 21.

I'll just read out the verse in full. It says and you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works yet now hath he reconciled.

[00:07:02] The key words there for present purposes being you that were sometime alienated and enemies.

I don't think there's a more dreadful description of our natural state than that we were enemies of God.

We can sort of think of things in a spectrum. We have God and some of the other descriptions taking the middle one that's on the slide that we were dead in sins.

While not wanting to play that down in any respect, we can consider that as being that there was

nothing within us that would respond to God but when we consider that we were enemies that's even further down the spectrum and is really at the other extreme because it means that we were not merely not responding to God but we were pointing away from him. We were desiring to get away from him. We were at enmity with God.

[00:08:04] Our enmity was seen in our actions, our thoughts, our desires and again many more verses from the Bible could be quoted there but really enmity was what described our whole being.

We were at enmity with God and perhaps it's good to have an appreciation of the thought of this, to follow Simon's example again and put our own names in there or apply these verses to ourselves.

I was at enmity with God.

You were at enmity with God and it's perhaps also worth at this point pausing to say that if there is any person here who does not believe in the Lord Jesus, to be blunt about it, you are at enmity with God.

[00:09:02] We can contrast though our position with God's position.

From a human perspective us being at enmity with God we might think that reconciliation was impossible.

In this world reconciliation doesn't happen if one party is still at enmity with the other. It needs a change of heart on both parties for there to be reconciliation. But again reconciliation in the Bible is much more wonderful than what we have in this world in human relations because God was never our enemy and we'll read another one of our verses now, 2 Corinthians 5 verse 19, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself not imputing their trespasses unto them and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation [00:10:04] and it goes on.

So there are three key elements to that verse as summarised on the slide. God was in Christ.

God did not distance himself from man because man was at enmity with him.

God did not cut off man because man was at enmity with him but rather God presented himself and more than that he presented himself to the world and he presented his character of wanting to reconcile men unto himself.

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself and we'll come back to consider the third element of this verse a little bit later but for present purposes it's sufficient to say that in presenting himself to the world God did not and does not presently judge the [00:11:05] world as it deserves because of its state of enmity.

God does not impute man's trespasses unto man.

We can take another verse in Romans which summarises this very well and that is that God demonstrates his love to us.

These verses perhaps have their immediate application to the Lord's presence here on earth but the

principles that are behind them I think have an ongoing and a present application.

So we can now consider the means of reconciliation and as we saw in the first presentation I think it was God's love in and of itself and great though it was it wasn't capable on its own of achieving the things that we've been speaking about, wasn't capable of atonement [00:12:06] being made or if there being a propitiation and similarly God's love alone was not enough to effect reconciliation.

Man's enmity with God was the result of sin and sin must be judged and even that state of enmity towards God must be dealt with in a righteous way.

But again there is a way that God's love and God's righteousness can be effected together and that is through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And our verses make it clear that reconciliation comes about by the death of the Lord Jesus.

And we'll read the second of the verses that are quoted there in full reading from Mr Darby's [00:13:01] translation because I think it just reads a bit better this time Colossians 1 21 and 22 and you who were once alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works yet now has it, that is the fullness of God, yet now has it reconciled in the body of his flesh, the Lord's flesh through death to present you holy and unblameable and irreproachable before it. The Lord's death was the means by which reconciliation was achieved.

Now it's worth noting that all of this happened at a time at which we had no desire for it and in fact the world as a whole had no desire for it.

The reconciliation was effected when we were enemies, while we were still enemies God's love brought about the reconciliation.

[00:14:04] We also had no power to bring about the reconciliation ourselves, there was no way that we could make amends to God for our state of enmity towards him because of God's righteousness and for that to be resolved it required something far greater than we could provide. And so it was God and God alone who reconciled us and again that is something that comes out clearly from our different verses that God is the one who has reconciled us to himself. And we might read another one of our verses, 2 Corinthians 5 verse 20, it says there now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in [00:15:01] Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God.

And that is the gospel message which we preach and it's the gospel message which goes out to the world and it's a message which goes out to anyone here who may still not believe on the Lord Jesus.

And the message is very simple, it's set out in those four words in the Bible which are reproduced there on the slide, be reconciled to God.

It's not a message that you need to do anything in order to be reconciled to God. It's not even a message that you need to plead for God's mercy, rather God has already done everything that is necessary for reconciliation to take place. The reconciliation is still presently available, all that is necessary is to take hold of what is offered and to be reconciled to God.

[00:16:08] Now there might be a question as to what is the relevance, if any, of the Lord's life to reconciliation because one of the verses that we have, 2 Corinthians 5 verse 19, refers to the Lord's

life. It says there that God was in Christ reconciling the world.

If we look at the context of the verses and read the verses together, we see that that statement that God was in Christ is actually referring to God's ministry of reconciliation. That phrase, ministry of reconciliation, is used in the previous verse.

And a ministry of something is not the thing itself but rather a presentation of it. We might have a meeting for the ministry of the Word and while the Word of God is the [00:17:01] focus of that meeting and the foundation of it, the meeting is actually a meeting for the presentation of God's Word.

And so God's ministry of reconciliation through the Lord Jesus was a presentation of God's reconciliation to the world.

And when we consider Christ's life, hopefully it's easy to see that it was a ministry or a presentation of reconciliation.

And I've given some examples there on the slide proving that Christ was presenting God's reconciliation.

He did not come, sorry, he came to seek and save that which was lost. We also read that grace and truth came by him. And finally, the Lord's own words, I came not to judge the world but to save the world. In Matthew chapter 9, there's a record of an incident where the Lord was sharing a meal [00:18:08] with sinners.

And the Pharisees see that and they rebuke the Lord's disciples and ask why this man is receiving sinners.

And the Lord answers them by saying that he came not to save the righteous but the sick who needed salvation.

That's obviously a bit of a paraphrase of the Lord's words there. But the point I want to draw out from that is that the Pharisees had in some sense rightly identified that there was some anomaly between someone who was calling himself the son of God receiving sinners.

I say they were right because they were, in a sense, because they were also grossly incorrect because they were focusing only on the side of God that involves righteousness and judgment [00:19:08] but they hadn't perceived the side of the Lord, the side of God, rather, that wanted to reconcile the world.

And it was for that reason that the Lord, in that instance, was seeking sinners to spend time with him at that meal.

Everything about Christ's life was a presentation of reconciliation but it was still his death that was necessary to make reconciliation possible.

Turning to the present result of reconciliation, I mentioned before that there are two elements to the concept of reconciliation.

That difference being done away and something new being established in its place. [00:20:05] The removal of the difference between us and God is referred to in Ephesians 2 verse 16. It's not mentioned on the slide but I'll just read that verse again from Mr. Darby's translation because I think it puts things very powerfully.

It starts off, and might reconcile both in one body to God by the cross, having by it slain the enmity.

So the death of the Lord Jesus destroyed completely and absolutely the enmity that there was between us and God.

So the enmity is done away with.

But reconciliation is not the mere removal of enmity but it's also establishing something new and that something new is a complete change in us. [00:21:03] The Moorish Bible dictionary gives the definition of the Greek word that's used for reconciliation in the New Testament as being a complete change and our verses again bring that before us. Second Corinthians 5, 17, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Behold things are passed away, behold all things become new.

And Colossians 1 verse 22, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight.

So as ever, what God does in bringing about reconciliation is to establish something much better.

In place of old things and in place of our enmity towards God, there is this new life [00:22:03] and this new creation that comes from God that has no flaw.

It says there that we are unreprouvable in his sight. So there is nothing in us that God can charge us with.

We are without reproach in his sight.

We no longer have any enmity with God and in fact we have a desire for fellowship with God and for knowledge of things concerning God and that comes out from John chapter 17 verse 3 where the Lord is talking about new life.

The reconciliation that God affects and the new things that he establishes in us also make us suitable for his presence and the reconciliation that God affects is complete [00:23:02] and it's permanent and that is evident from the verses that we have.

God has reconciled us, we have been reconciled and all things are become new. Just by the by, these verses present absolute truth about what God has done in us. There is also a practical side as to whether we make these things good in our lives now but that's not the focus really of what we're considering this afternoon. There's also a future side to reconciliation and that's mentioned in Colossians chapter 1 verse 20.

It refers there to Christ having made peace through the blood of his cross by him to reconcile all things unto himself. By him I say whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.

[00:24:07] Now wherever sin has existed there needs to be judgment of what sin has brought about or there needs to be reconciliation.

We've dealt with our reconciliation that we receive if we and when we believe on the Lord Jesus but Colossians 1 verse 20 promises a reconciliation of things in earth and things in heaven.

Colossians 1 verse 20 doesn't actually expressly state when this takes place and there's no other verse in the Bible that expressly in so many words states when this reconciliation of these things will take place. It ought to be evident to us that it hasn't yet happened. There is still sin and the effects of sin in this earth and even in the heavens. We read in Ephesians chapter 6 that Satan has access to heaven.

[00:25:07] So this reconciliation of all things has not yet taken place and it is for a future day and again when it is not really the subject of this afternoon's presentation. So it may be something for further study to consider when precisely the reconciliation of things in heaven and things on earth will take place. But it is worth noting that the Bible doesn't promise reconciliation to the third category of things.

Philippians 2 verse 10 refers to three categories of things, the things on earth, the things in heaven and the things under the earth. There is never reconciliation promised to that third category, only judgment. But to put things another way, the Bible never promises reconciliation for all men. [00:26:02] We move now to reconciliation's present effects in our lives and from our verses we learn two things that reconciliation does now.

Firstly, it states that we boast in God as a result of it. To read Romans 5.11, not only so but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have now received the atonement.

Worship should be the natural effect of reconciliation and it's something that all Christians should do. It says there, we joy in God.

There's really no excuse for any of us who have enjoyed God's reconciliation not following that up with worship to God.

Just briefly, if we compare this with the Darby translation of the same verse, we see [00:27:01] that Mr. Darby uses the expression, we boast in God.

And I like that because I think the word boast emphasizes that we should have real confidence in God and what he has done when we worship him.

It shouldn't be that we're approaching God in a state of timidity or anything like that but we should have confidence in our new state when we come before God to worship him. The other effect is mentioned there on the slide, spreading the gospel and we've already read these verses from 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

We see though that the gospel is something which God has committed to our trust. His ministry of reconciliation was something which the Lord Jesus originally affected or first affected but now it's something that God has committed our trust. [00:28:04] In fact, we have the privilege of doing it as Christ's ambassadors and it's really quite a wonderful privilege when we stop to think exactly what

that means. But again, it's something that is the responsibility of all believers. It wasn't just the responsibility of Paul and the other apostles when he was writing these words and spreading the gospel is not just the responsibility of an evangelist. What's being spoken of really in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 is not formal evangelistic work which might be the domain of an evangelist, someone with a gift for that, but it's simply passing on what we have received. We have received the reconciliation and we present it to the world. That's something that we all should be capable of doing. The last slide I'll have to leave for your own perusal at a later date. [00:29:04] It just deals with a couple of questions that may arise from some other verses dealing with reconciliation.

But just to return to where we started and to summarize what we have seen in these last few minutes, there was a need for reconciliation. We were enemies of God in that dreadful state.

Reconciliation was brought about by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's death was necessary to slay our enmity with God. The result presently is that that enmity has been removed and something new, a new creation of God has been put in its place for those who believe in the Lord Jesus. There's also going to be a future result of reconciliation of all things on this earth and all things in heaven. [00:30:01] But reconciliation also has its present effects, firstly in spreading the gospel, but secondly and in furtherance of what I think was some of the exercise behind this weekend, reconciliation should be one of the many things which leads us to worship God.