

GWOTG - RECONCILIATION & PROPITIATION

In the last month or so we have been looking at some of the great words of the Gospel. In the first message, we looked at salvation and we saw that it was based solely on the finished work of Christ on the cross. Because we have accepted Christ as our Lord and Saviour we have our sins forgiven and we are in right relationship with God – both for now and all eternity.

In the second message of the series we looked at Redemption and we saw that is all about a price being paid to purchase us back. Because of the price being paid by Jesus' death on the cross, we are free from being slaves to sin, free from the power of sin and death, and free from the punishment for sin.

This week I want to look at two very closely related words – Reconciliation and Propitiation. These two words finish the triangle of salvation as I call it. But before we talk about that, let us pray.

Bible Reading

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

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.

Message Points

Today I want to share 6 things about reconciliation and propitiation.

1. There is a need for reconciliation

Reconciliation means bringing together of two parties that are estranged or in dispute. In a worldly sense, we understand what reconciliation means. We have all probably experienced a breakdown of a relationship where one party is aggrieved and there is a tension between us when we are together. There is a wall or a barrier between and we are not relating the same as we once were. It is not until someone takes the initiative to sort it out or apologise that things get sorted out and the relationship returns to normal.

The Greek word in the Bible used for reconciliation is *kat-al-lag-ay*. It means exchange or change of status, restoration, or reconciliation. It is about making things right again.

In the Bible Reconciliation involves a change in the relationship between God and man. It assumes there has been a breakdown in the relationship, but now there has been a change from a state of enmity and fragmentation to one of harmony and fellowship.

As we saw several weeks ago in my message in salvation there is a need, a provision and a response required for salvation to take place.

The Bible tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God in Romans 3:23. It also tells us in Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death. 1 John 1:8 says that, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Isaiah 59:2 reminds us that our sin separates us from God.

One of my favourite tracts I give out to people is Billy Graham's "Steps to peace with God". As you can see from the pictures on the screen, he uses very simple illustrations to show the need for reconciliation. He shows people looking towards God off in the distance, they are separated by sin and they try to find ways to God, but nothing works.



As we can see from these simple pictures there is a definite need for reconciliation. This brings us to point number two.

2. God is the Reconciler

In the ancient biblical world where a relationship had broken down the initiative for reconciliation was usually made in one of two ways.

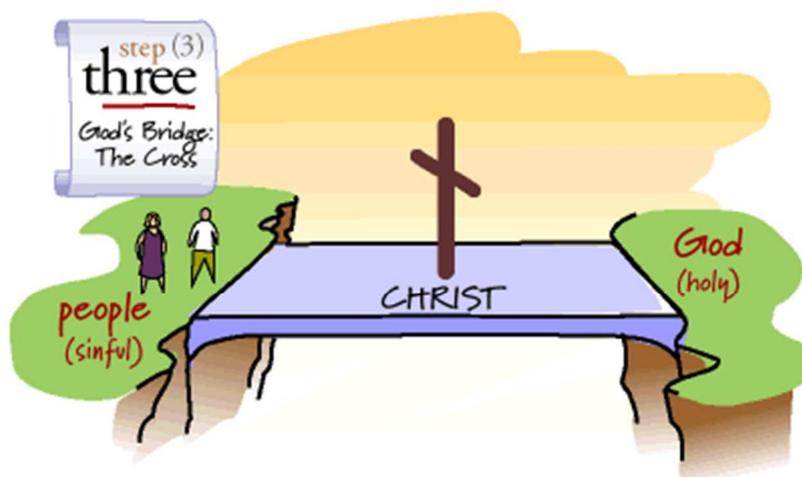
Firstly, the one who caused the offence tried to reach out to the offended party. Secondly, a third party could intervene and try to broker peace and bring the two parties together. It was very rare for the injured party move towards the one who had offended them. It was often seen as a matter of pride and saving face.

However, in the Bible, restoration of relationship between God and humanity, reconciliation occurs with an unexpected twist. God, the injured party, takes the initiative.

This initiating, reconciling action from God is contrary to expectations. The removal of alienation, created by man's sin, is the work of God. He is the one who initiates, He is the one who provides the way and He is the one who accepts us.

John 3:16 is a key reminder of this when it says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life".

Coming back to the Billy Graham tract, God provides the bridge to life and bridge to Himself through the cross of Christ.



3. The death of Jesus Christ accomplishes reconciliation

The death of our wonderful Saviour accomplishes all that was required

Romans 5:10 - 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!

The results of Christ's work of reconciliation has four parts...

a. Removal of the offense of sin – God is no longer offended by our sin because it is gone. As I said several weeks ago, the Father looks at us through the lens of Christ. Like I look through that window and see outside. He looks through Christ and His shed blood as us.

b. Restored favour with God – we are right with God. The enmity between God and mankind is gone. We are adopted into His family and are co-heirs with Christ. We are spiritually seated at the right hand of the Father with Christ.

c. Fellowship is regained – we are in right relationship with God. We are no longer slaves forced to work for someone in a worldly sense, but we are friends with God as Jesus says in John 15:15. He is with us and we are with Him.

d. Justified with God – we are justified before God. We have right standing with Him. We can boldly come into His presence because of the blood of Christ as Hebrews 10:19 tells us.

The work of reconciliation has been completed. Christ did His part on the cross when He died for us. Jesus' last words were "It is finished". Our part in the salvation process is to accept what Christ has done for us.

4. Now we are reconciled to God, we need to help others be reconciled too.

In the last part of our reading today it talks about us being given the task of helping others come to Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 says, "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".

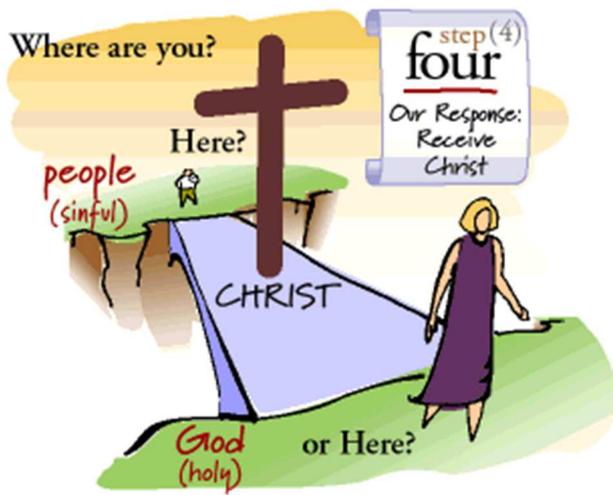
Believers have been commissioned by the resurrected Lord to have a message and ministry of reconciliation. In this sense reconciliation is not only a reality of life for believers, but it is also a purpose of their kingdom ministry. It is one of the main reasons why this church exists.

I remember years ago I got up early on morning in Perth to do my devotions. I went to my study and closed the door and began to pray. Before long God told me to open my Bible to 2 Corinthians 5. As I scan down the page these verses from 18 and 19 almost jumped off the page. It was like size 10 font changed to size 32 font like on the screen. It was like a light shone on the page too. For me this was a key moment in my life and it was a moment where I felt the call of God to bring people back to Himself. He gave me the task of reconciliation.

These verses along with 1 Peter 3:15 and Matthew 28:18-20 remind us that sharing our faith and bring people to Christ is a key part of our life on earth.

1 Peter 3:15 – "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect".

Matthew 28:18-20 - Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."



Our job is to help people get to “here”. As someone who has blessed to bring quite a few people to Christ, it is one of the greatest joys of my life.

5. God is satisfied

Now we come to the other great word of the gospel – Propitiation. Propitiation means the turning away of wrath by an offering. For the Christian, the propitiation was the shed blood of Jesus on the cross. It turned away the wrath of God so that He could pass "over the sins previously committed" (Romans 3:25).

As we know it was the Father who sent the Son to be the propitiation. 1 John 4:10 says, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins", not only our sins, but for the sins of the world. 1 John 2:2 tell us that Jesus died not just for us, but for all mankind.

Propitiation is a legal word that means satisfied. The Heavenly Father is satisfied with Jesus death on the cross. It was Fathers idea and the Son carried it out. God is satisfied. If you have trusted Christ for your salvation, it is done. God's wrath is turned away and we will not face it again.

If we were to summarise propitiation, we would say...

- a. God is the object of propitiation – His justice need to be satisfied before a sinner can be acceptable in His sight.
- b. Christ is the provision for propitiation – His death satisfies the Father's offended holiness.
- c. God is satisfied – From the Father's view point He is justified in forgiving sin and bestowing righteousness on us.

6. The triangle of salvation

If I was to summarise the first four great words of the gospel we have looked at so far – Salvation, Redemption, Reconciliation and Propitiation - I could do it with this diagram which I call the triangle of salvation.



On the left-hand side Jesus died to pay the price for sin and redeem us. As a result, on the right-hand side we are reconciled to God. On the top, God is completely satisfied.

Summary

Today we looked at six things...

1. There is a need for reconciliation because of sin.
2. God is the Reconciler and the one who took the initiative.
3. The death of Jesus accomplishes reconciliation.
4. We are given the task of reconciling others to Christ.
5. God is satisfied with the work of Christ (Propitiation).
6. The triangle of salvation is complete – saved, redeemed, reconciled and propitiated.

Let us pray.