

# GOSPEL WORKERS MINISTRY

SERMON OF THE MONTH

## A MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

*June 2022*

*Pastor Jack Jones*

This morning we're going to talk about a big word. Do you know what reconciliation means? What is reconciliation? Let me read to you three definitions I found in the dictionary. "A renewal of friendship after disagreement or enmity." "To restore to friendship or favor after estrangement." Or "to call back into union."

Have any of you ever had an enemy? Maybe you have an enemy today, I don't know. I've had enemies in the past. But you know there are times also when those enemies became my friend. That's what reconciliation is. Somebody that was once your enemy, but now they are your friend.

**2 Corinthians 5:17:** "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Would you say that this is the most wonderful experience that anyone could have in this life; to become a new creature? I believe it's the most wonderful experience that I've ever had. And the second most wonderful experience is to help somebody else to become a new creature through your witness. That's another wonderful experience.

**Verse 18:** "And all things [all things that are become new] are of



[www.gospel-workers.com](http://www.gospel-workers.com)

God [**God is the only one who can make new things, isn't He? We can't do it ourselves and nobody can do it for us. Only God.**], And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; [**God's assignment to us is for us to learn how to make friends out of enemies. He has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.**] to wit [in the same way], that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."

God always initiates reconciliation. Always. And doesn't it make sense for His children always to be the ones who initiate reconciliation when there is estrangement between you and another person, or between two other people? God's people are to be the ones who initiate the process. We're to be humble enough to come and say we're sorry, if we have to. Confess our sins to one another and make that reconciliation.

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;"

Do you know what the word imputing means here? It means to take an inventory, or to think upon. When we become new creatures in Christ Jesus, God does not take an inventory of our past sins. He doesn't think upon our past sins because all "things are passed away." [**They are thrown into the depth of the sea. And then it says**] and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

And so, if God does not impute our sins unto us, or call them to mind, do we have any business to recount the sins of others? Absolutely not!

**Verse 20:** "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

I hope that in some little way today that I can explain it more fully as we go along. If God has given us the ministry of reconciliation as we just read in these verses, then we should all be reconcilers. We should be a people who bring parties at variance into renewed friendship.

And so, a person who is a reconciler is a person who helps others have an attitude adjustment. Is that a good way to put it? And of all people, parents are real good at that one, real experienced in helping your children to have an attitude adjustment. And have you ever noticed how quickly children make up to one another? They can be fighting like cats and dogs one minute and the next minute they're just good old pals. I think we can take a lesson from that, don't you? Jesus said unless we become as little children we shall not enter into the kingdom of God.

And so, reconcilers are people that help others forgive and forget. And so, this morning we're going to have a crash course on how to put yesterday to bed. And I think all of us need to learn how to do that. The opposite of reconciliation: alienation, separation, estrangement, divorce, disunion. If reconciliation is to make friends out of enemies, then alienation is to make enemies out of friends. That's the devil's work, not to be our work.

Here are a couple definitions of the word alienation. "A withdrawing of the affections from one another." "A separation of two individuals, or two groups, who have once experienced togetherness."

You know, there's an old saying that goes, "As the world goes, so goes the church." That's not the way God would have it, but too many times that's the reality.

“At the time when the danger and depression of the church are greatest, the little company who are standing in the light will be sighing and crying for all the abominations that are done in the land. **[Do you like to listen to the news? I can't say that I like it, but I like to be informed. Are you crying and sighing for all the abominations that are done in the land? Oh, it's horrible.]** But more especially where their prayers arise in behalf of the church because its members are doing after the manner of the world.” **5T 209, 210**

Friends, as church members, we become alienated from God when we start doing after the manner of the world. Causing alienation is doing after the manner of the world. That's not the work that God has given us to do. I would say that our society today has a PhD in alienation. Over half of the Americans who are alive this morning will experience one or more step situations in their families before they die. Each day 1300 new stepfamilies are formed in this country. And of these families, two out of three will end in divorce. And they will probably marry and marry and marry again and perpetuate alienation. Not a very promising statistic, is it?

Did you know that a woman dies as a result of spousal abuse every six hours in this country of ours? As you can see, alienation is a big problem in this country, and it is a problem that the little company who is standing in the light should not add to. Wouldn't you agree that the purpose of the church is to counteract alienation? I would. That being true, then the synagogue of Satan's purpose is to counteract reconciliation.

Open your Bible with me to **Ephesians 2** beginning with **verse 11**. “Wherefore remember **[you Ephesians]**, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh **[or unbelievers who are living after the sinful nature]**, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: **[Now that pretty well describes every one of us at least at one time in the past. Without hope and without God in the world.]** But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. **[Brought back into union—reconciled.]** For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; **[between Jews and Gentiles, between the circumcision and the uncircumcision.]** Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances **[what would that refer to? Doesn't that have something to do with the ceremonial law, and the sacrificial system, and the feast days, and all those kinds of things?]**; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners **[aliens]**, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” Praise the Lord!

Go with me to **Colossians 1:20, 21** “And, 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. And you, that were sometime alienated **[all of us were at some time alienated, let's face it]** and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.”

And so you see, God is not interested only in outward behaviour. He wants our mind to be reconciled to His mind. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” **Phil. 2:5**. That's what reconciliation is all about. Then wicked works will cease.

**Verse 22** tells us how reconciliation comes, and what the result will be. It comes in the body of Christ. “In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight.” And so, that is always the effect of true reconciliation—presenting us blameless. Why? How can we be presented blameless? Only as we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. He does not see our past mistakes. He sees His Son Jesus, His perfect life, rather than our sinful past.

Now here’s the catch in **verse 23**, “If [**very important two-letter word that implies a condition to this beautiful promise**] If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard.” Then you’ll remain God’s friend and not His enemy.

**Romans 5**, begin with **verse 6** “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. [**Another way of saying He died for His enemies**] For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Do you know what it says in **John 15:13**? “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” That’s a pretty good feat in itself, but Jesus lay down His life while we were not His friends, His enemies.

**Verse 9**: “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

If the death of Christ has such reconciling power, how much more will His risen life have power to keep us from becoming His enemies once again. From becoming His enemy once we have become His friend.

**Hebrews 2** beginning with **verse 14**: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”

Now, did you get what that was saying? The only way that Jesus could reconcile us to God is to succeed in the same nature that we failed in—fallen human flesh. He had to have victory over sin in the same nature that we are defeated in. That’s the only way that reconciliation could take place between God and the sinner. **1 John 4:1-3** where it talks about those who do not believe that Jesus is come in the flesh are antichrist. That word flesh is fallen flesh. Anybody who teaches that Jesus came into this world in unfallen flesh is anti-Christ. Do you understand why? Because the only way Jesus could reconcile us to God is to have the same nature that we have. Otherwise, it doesn’t make sense. And it’s really not only anti-Christ, but it’s anti-Gospel, and it’s anti-reconciliation.

There are a few other words that are synonymous with reconciliation. We’ve already read a couple of them in the verses we read and one of those words is peace. Peace. Does peace have anything to do with reconciliation? Absolutely. You can’t have peace with someone and be alienated from them.

Go to **Matthew 5:9**, Jesus is speaking here in the Sermon on the Mount. He says, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” I want you to notice that it doesn’t say

blessed are the peace breakers. Those who are called the children of God have a ministry of reconciliation, thus making peace.

Let's look at a few other texts that speak of peace. **Luke 24:36**. The disciples are in the upper room, and **verse 36** says, "And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." Or peace to you, or peace be with you. The reconciling power of Christ is transferred from Him to us. Have you ever thought about it that way?

If you go to **John 14:27**, it really clears this up, this transfer that takes place. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." So, in the same way that Jesus has a ministry of reconciliation and peace, we are to have the same because He has given us His peace. It's been transferred to us when we accepted Him as our Saviour.

Now go to **John 20:19-22**. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." [**And so, Jesus said, in effect, My Father has sent Me into this world to be a reconciling force to bring peace. Now it's your turn. "Even so send I you."**] And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

Was there power in that breath? There was. There was reconciling power. There was power to bring peace among eleven men who were just a short time before jockeying for first place. Who should be the greatest? It took them a little while, but they finally figured out that Jesus is the greatest. Have you figured that out? Jesus is the greatest.

**Colossians 3:15**: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." Can we be of one body and be thankful unless we are reconciled to one another? We can't, can we? The word rule, here, means to be the umpire. The peace that comes from God is what should call the shots around here. The word of God is to be the basis for every decision that we make. Jesus is our umpire. He has the final word. We need to get that in our heads.

**Ephesians 6:15**: This is talking about putting on the whole armor of God, and one of those pieces it speaks of in **verse 15**: "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;" Wouldn't the gospel of peace be the same as having a ministry of reconciliation? It's the same thing. We are to be prepared at all times to be reconcilers, or to be peacemakers.

Another word that is synonymous with reconciliation is "to restore." To restore means "to return to a person the thing he has lost, or that which has been taken from him." By choice, Adam and Eve allowed Satan to take away our eternal life. And Jesus lived and died and lives again to give it back. And through faith it is ours. Are you thankful? Jesus came to restore.

Go to **Psalm 51:12, 13** – that well-known prayer of repentance of King David where he says, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit." And if the joy of salvation is restored to us, what is going to be the result?

**Verse 13**: "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Or

reconciled unto thee.

**Galatians 6:1** “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Sounds to me like we have a duty to perform toward those who have fallen away from the truth. Not to condemn, but to draw them back to Christ. Isn’t that what Jesus came to do? What does it say in **John 3:17**? “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved [**Reconciled! Same difference.**].”

How about **Psalms 23**. You know that one well enough, you don’t have to turn to it. “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: . . . He restoreth my soul.” He brings me back into harmony with His will once I have strayed. He reconciles my soul from death.

Another word we could look at is renew. Renew is “to begin again,” or “to have a fresh start.” Aren’t you thankful for fresh starts? We ought to have a fresh start every morning.

Go back to **Psalms 51:10**. David cries out, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” If we are renewed, we are reconciled.

**2 Corinthians 4:16**: “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed [**how often?**] day by day.” So being reconciled to God is a daily matter. It’s not once reconciled, always reconciled. We must die to self daily.

**Ephesians 4:23**: “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” And so again, it’s not being a good actor that makes us Christians. It’s not just the outward thing, but it needs to be a change in the brain. God wants to change our mind. That’s what true reconciliation is all about and only God can make that change.

**Romans 12:2**: “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” And so being renewed or transformed or reconciled to God has something to do with being able to discern what His will is. So you see how important it is to be reconciled to God.

**Titus 3:5**: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration [**or the spiritual new birth**], and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” And so here we get started in the new birth, and then the renewing of the Holy Ghost is what sustains us day by day. And so we have both justification and sanctification here and it takes both to be reconciled and to remain reconciled to God.

There are lots of other words we could look at this morning, reconciling words such as transformation, mercy, grace, conversion, being born again, being saved, and probably some others that I haven’t thought of. But I would like to look at just one more besides these. It’s a four-letter word and without it, reconciliation, peace, restoration, renewal and all the rest would be absolutely impossible. You know what that one word is? It is what God is. L-O-V-E. Without love reconciliation makes no sense. But with love alienation makes no sense either. If we don’t have the love of God in our hearts, brothers and sisters, we won’t see the necessity for reconciliation. We won’t desire reconciliation. And we won’t experience reconciliation. That’s how important love is in the process.

Without love we will have a ministry of alienation. We may have doctrinal truth all right, but we will have a ministry that errs on the side of severe justice rather than mercy. Harshness rather than compassion. Condemnation rather than forgiveness. And a cold legalism rather than a warm atmosphere where healing can take place.

We're told very plainly in **1 Corinthians 13:8** that love never fails. Do you believe that? Love. Never. Fails. Love will always succeed in bringing about reconciliation if both parties are submissive to Christ. It can't be any other way.

Didn't Jesus say something about love your enemies? The Sermon on the Mount. **Matthew 5:43-48**: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

And so, you see reconciliation also has something to do with character perfection. Very clear here.

**Roman 12:17-21**: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Easy to read, hard to do. Think about Jesus for just a minute. He could not reconcile with the Pharisees. He could not reconcile with Judas. But did He do anything to create alienation? Absolutely not. The atmosphere of reconciliation was there. It is a fact that we as fallen human beings are more bent on seeing justice served than mercy. That's just a fact with the fallen human nature. The fallen flesh seeks revenge. It seeks extreme punishment for wrongdoing. It is unforgiving, it is hateful, and it is devoid of mercy.

But let me ask you a question. Did God pursue such a course toward sinners? No, He did not, but listen to this. He did pursue such a course toward His only-begotten Son. Do you get it? It was upon Jesus that God meted out the punishment justice demanded for sin. God placed our sins upon Him so that we could be forgiven. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." **2 Corinthians 5:21**. And brothers and sisters, herein lies our example for becoming reconciled to one another.

In **John 15:12** Jesus said, "This is my commandment [**He didn't say, This is my suggestion**], This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." Oh, we fail so miserably, don't we?

We fail so miserably. Do we obey this command or are we indulging sharp, unChristlike traits of character? If we have in any way grieved or wounded others, it is our duty, or our moral obligation, to confess our faults and seek for reconciliation. It is a requirement. "This is an essential preparation that we may come before God in faith and ask His blessing." **Christ's Object Lessons, pg. 144**. And so, bottom line, if we have offended even one soul that we know of, if we have grieved or wounded others

and we are unwilling to go to that person and confess our fault, we just as well not ask God's blessing upon our life. He's not going to give it to us.

**Matthew 18:21:** "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? [**Peter thought he was going the second mile. Aren't I good, Lord? Seven times?**] Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

How many times is that? 490. That means that there is no limit to forgiveness when it is asked of us. But too many times pride does not allow us to get past seven

**Verse 23:** "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

"The pardon granted by this king represents a divine forgiveness of all sin. Christ is represented by the king, who, moved with compassion, forgave the debt of his servant. Man was under the condemnation of the broken law. He could not save himself, and for this reason Christ came to this world, clothed His divinity with humanity, and gave His life, the just for the unjust. He gave Himself for our sins, and to every soul He freely offers the blood-bought pardon." **Christ's Object Lessons, pg. 244**

"In the parable, when the debtor pleaded for delay, with the promise, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all,' the sentence was revoked. The whole debt was canceled. And he was soon given an opportunity to follow the example of the master who had forgiven him." **Christ's Object Lessons, pg. 245** Oh, brothers and sisters, let us not be like the unforgiving servant, but let us learn to follow the example of the king in such matters.

"In the new birth the heart is renewed by divine grace and brought into harmony with God as it is brought into subjection to his law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty. The old life of alienation from God has ended; the new life of reconciliation, of faith and love, has begun." **Spirit of Prophecy, Vol. 4, pg. 298**

How is it with you this morning? Are you alienated from God, or are you experiencing right now the new life of reconciliation? It's an eternal question.



Cindy and I, Friday evenings lately, have been reading from the book *Story of Redemption*. I think it's a wonderful little book. Two Fridays ago two chapters titled, "The Trial of Christ" and "The Crucifixion of Christ." And I have to tell you our hearts were absolutely broken once again as we read the closing scene of Christ's earthly life. And the whipping that He endured, the purple robe, the crown of thorns, a reed in His hand, the mocking and the spitting, and the punching. Abuse heaped upon abuse. Then Pilate sends Him to Herod, only to be derided, mocked, and abused all over again. Then Jesus makes His way to Calvary, but He faints under the burden of the cross. And as Simon is forced to take His place, Jesus staggers on while those who, just a few days before sang His praises, continued to say "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

Finally, He reaches the place of execution. And while those two thieves wrestle in the hands of those who stretched them on the cross, Jesus offers no resistance. After Jesus is nailed to the cross powerful men lift that cross and they thrust it with great violence into the place prepared for it. Then as He hangs there He continues to be verbally abused by priests and people alike.

And if all this was not enough, even His Father hides His face from Him. And He cries out, "My God, my God. Why hast thou forsaken me?" "He, **(the Father)** hath made him **(Christ)** to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." **2 Cor. 5:21**

As we continued to read, I got to a certain place where I broke down. And because I broke down, Cindy broke down. And it had to do with the part after His crucifixion as He hangs on the cross dead. And the disciple John is looking and he's wondering "how can I get His body down from that cross. I can't allow these rough soldiers to take Him down. I've got to do something about this." And unbeknownst to John Nicodemus is already making his way to Pilate to beg the body of Jesus. And because of his influence and his position in the Sanhedrin Pilate gives him permission and he comes back. And Joseph of Arimathea is already preparing the aloe and spices. And I believe John was there. Those three men. .

How would you have taken down the body of Jesus? Do you think that was an easy task? Not only emotionally, but physically. To try to get His hands and His feet off those nails or to pry those nails out, you need to support His body so it didn't crumple to the ground. They got Him down and I don't know how they made it from there to Joseph's new sepulcher, but they made it.

And as they laid His body out and straightened out those mangled limbs they began to wash the blood from His lacerated body. He was there because of us. By His sacrifice Jesus was reconciling the world unto Himself and preparing us to have a ministry of reconciliation. Let us not let Him down; what do you say?