

# THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION Chapter 17 Its Meaning-Concluded

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## Transcript

### THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

#### Chapter 17

#### Its Meaning-Concluded

A beautiful type of what we have contended for in these articles is found in Genesis 8. In the preceding chapter we behold the fearful judgment of God under the antediluvian world because of its wickedness—solemn figure of what our Sinbearer endured for us as He was "made a curse," when He cried "deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterspouts. All Your waves and billows are gone over Me" (Ps. 42:7). After the storm of wrath had done its awful work, Noah (who represented the company of God's elect in the place of safety, exempted from the Divine vengeance) opened the window of the ark and "sent forth a dove." Later, he sent her forth again, and "the dove came unto him in the evening, and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf"—"the emblem of peace" (v. 11). Christ was the Pacifier of God and He is "our Peace" (Eph. 2:14). He is the former, because He is "to make reconciliation for iniquity" (Dan. 9:24). He is the latter, because He has satisfied every claim of God upon us. Therefore He designated "shiloh" (Gen. 49:10)—an appellation which signifies "the Peacemaker"—and "the Prince of peace" (Isa. 9:6). Reconciliation was one of the effects which resulted from the atonement which Christ made unto God, and in our last we pointed out that the simplest and surest way of ascertaining the significance of the antitype is to attend closely to the types. Now the Levitical offerings were not designed to produce any change within the offerer, but were presented for the express purpose of placating and propitiating God Himself. The Israelites did not offer them with the object of turning away their own enmity from Jehovah, but rather to turn away His anger from them, and since the sacrifices which they presented were emblems of the one great Sacrifice of Christ, it necessarily follows that the chief end of His oblation was to divert God's wrath from those on whose behalf it was made. The great fact—the terrible thing—brought out by this doctrine is, that God is the offended Party; while the central fact—the grand thing—proclaimed by it is, that Christ is the all-sufficient Pacifier of God. We are afraid that some of our friends will feel that we have drawn out these articles on the meaning of Reconciliation to a rather wearisome length, and for their sakes we regret that it was necessary for us to do so. But while they may not have been troubled by the errors we have refuted or the objections answered, yet a considerable number of our readers have been much bewildered by them, and therefore as a servant of God it was part of our duty to "prepare a way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of My people" (Isa. 57:14). At the beginning of our first article on this

branch of the subject we stated that we proposed to do much more than barely furnish a definition of the word reconciliation. Having sought to make good that promise, we must now look more closely at the term itself and ponder carefully how it is used in Scripture. Reconciliation presupposes alienation and therefore it results from the removal of hindrance to concord, and is the act of uniting parties which have been at variance. It is the putting an end to strife and changing enemies into friends. Sin has placed God and man apart from one another—all harmony between them being disrupted. Therefore satisfaction must be made for sin before peace can be restored. Consequently, to be "reconciled to God by the death of His Son" is to be restored to His favor. It is the reconciliation of the King to His rebellious subjects, of the Judge to offenders against Himself. To reconcile is to bring to agreement, to unite those who were divided, to restore to unity and amity. Reconciliation is a relation, a mutual one. On God's part it denotes a change from wrath to favor; on ours, from one of contempt and opposition to loyal and loving obedience. It is therefore a change from hostility to tranquility, from strife to fellowship. The "peace" which Christ procured for His people was effected through chastisement. "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). There are three things here. First, the history of Christ's sufferings: set out by wounds, bruises, chastisements and stripes—the expressions being multiplied to impress our hearts more deeply. The cause of those sufferings: our transgressions and iniquities—the difference between sins of commission and omission. The fruits or benefits of them: peace and healing—a summary of the objective and subjective results of them. The punishment due our sins was borne by Christ that we might have "peace with God." "He, by submitting to those chastisements, slew the enmity and settled an amity between God and man; He made peace by the blood of His cross. Whereas by sin we were become odious to God's holiness and obnoxious to His justice, through Christ God is reconciled to us, and not only forgives our sins and saves us from ruin, but takes us into friendship and fellowship with Himself" (Matt. Henry). "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him" is explained by "therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1), where the reference is not to a state of heart, but to a relation with God. "Peace with God" does not have reference to anything that is subjective, but only to what is objective: not to an inward peace of conscience (though that follows if repentance and faith are in exercise), nor to that "peace of God which passes all understanding" which keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7), but to "peace with God"—in other words, to reconciliation. It means we are no longer the objects of His displeasure, and have no more reason to dread the Divine vengeance. It is that blessed relation which results from the expiation of our sins: because Christ endured the penalty of them, we are no longer God's enemies in the objective sense, but the subjects of His favor. Every one that is "justified" does not enjoy peace of conscience (though he should); but every justified person has "peace with God" (whether he knows it or not) for His quarrel against him is ended, Christ having made God (judicially) his Friend. There is an interesting passage in 1 Samuel 29 which makes quite clear the meaning of this controverted word and shows it signifies the very opposite of what the Socinians understand by it. While a fugitive from Saul, David and a company of his devoted followers found refuge in Gath of Philistia, where Achish its "king" ("lord" or "chief") showing kindness to him (1 Sam. 27:2,3). While he was there, the Philistines planned a concerted attack upon Israel, and Achish proposed that David and his men should accompany him (28:1,2), to which he acceded. But when the other lords of the Philistines discovered the presence of David and his men among the forces of Achish they were angry, for they feared he would not be loyal to their cause, saying "Let him not go down to battle with us, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us, for wherewith shall he reconcile himself unto his master? Shall it not be with the heads of these men?" (29:4). "Reconcile" there means not, How shall he remove his own anger against Saul, but Saul's against him. How shall he restore himself

again to his master's favor. The great thing to be clear upon in connection with reconciliation is, that it is objective in its significance and action. In other words, it terminates upon the object and not upon the subject. The offender does not reconcile himself, but the person whom he has wronged, and that, by making suitable amends or reparation. Socinians and Arminians have sought to make capital out of the fact that in the Scriptures it is never said in so many words that "God is reconciled to us," but that they uniformly speak of "our being reconciled to Him." The explanation of that is very simple. God is the Party offended, we the parties offending, and it is always the offending party who is said to be the one reconciled and not the offended. Another clear proof is found in Matthew 5:23 and 24, "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has aught against you, Leave there your gift before the altar and go your way, first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." There we have a brother offended, a grievance against one who has injured him. Aware of that, the duty of the wrong-doer is clear, he must do all in his power to right the wrong, remove the ground of grievance and secure amity between them, for until that is done a holy God will not receive his worship. "Be reconciled to your brother" does not refer to any state of mind or feeling in the emotions of the wrong-doer, but signifies, makes reparation to him, pacify him. The offender is not bidden to lay aside his own enmity, though that is understood, but is to go to the aggrieved one and seek to turn away his wrath from him, by means of an humble and frank confession of his sin, in that way gaining an entrance again into his good-will and favor. Nothing could be plainer. "Be reconciled to your brother" means, put right what is wrong, conciliate him and thus heal the breach between you which is hindering your communion with God. Before going further we want the reader to be thoroughly clear upon what has been said. At first sight "with which he shall reconcile himself unto his master?" (1 Sam. 29:4) seems to mean David's laying aside his own ill-will and healing a breach he had made. Yet the very opposite is its actual sense. It was Saul who hated him! The Philistines feared that David and his men would slay them and take their heads to Saul and thus cause him to look favorably again on David. So too a careless reader of Matthew 5:24 would conclude "be reconciled to your brother" signifies that the one addressed was the offended party, who needed to change his own feelings toward the other. But again, the very opposite is the case. It was the brother who had something against him, because of a wrong he had done him, and thus the one addressed is the offender and so "be reconciled to your brother" means, go and confess your fault and appease him. The sense of the words is the reverse of their sound. Matthew 5:24 contains the initial occurrence of our term, and in accordance with the law of first mention intimates how the word is used throughout the N. T. It definitely establishes the fact that to be reconciled to another connotes the pacifying of the offended party so that a state of concord is the result, and it has precisely the same force Whenever it is used in connection with God. We are reconciled to Him as we are to an injured brother—reparation having been made to Him, we are restored to His favor. This is plain, again, from the next occurrence of the word in Romans 5:10. There the whole context makes it plain that God is the offended one, that the cause of His indignation against us was our sins, that Christ offered a sufficient satisfaction unto Him, thereby removing His wrath and conciliating Him unto us. Christ's sacrifice averted God's displeasure as our Governor and Judge. His relation and judicial attitude toward us was changed by a great historical transaction. "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." Here then is the issue. Do those words "reconciled to God by the death of His Son" signify that Christ pacified God so that He has laid aside His judicial wrath against His people, or, that Christ moves us to lay aside our enmity and hostility against God? We contend that it means the former, that, in the language of Wm. Shedd, "Here the reconciliation is described from the side of the offending party—man is said to be reconciled. Yet this does not mean the subjective reconciliation of the sinner toward God, but the objective reconciliation of God towards the sinner. For the

preceding verse speaks of God as a Being from whose wrath the believer is saved by the death of Christ. This shows that the reconciliation effected by Christ's atoning death is that of the Divine anger against sin." The reconciliation which is here mentioned is prior to conversion and therefore quite distinct from conversion (which is when we lay aside our enmity), for occurred when Christ laid down His life for us and not when the Holy Spirit quickened us. We submit that, from the following considerations, "reconciled to God by the death of His Son" refers to God's reconciliation to His people. First, from the relation which that clause bears to "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (v. 8). The one being parallel with the other. Why did Christ die for sinners? Was it not in order to deliver them from the curse of God and to secure everlasting felicity for them! Second, from the fact that the same expression is described as "being justified by His blood" (v. 9), for in the previous verse the apostle speaks of Christ's dying for sinners or rebels against God. The consequence of His death is that believers are "justified by His blood" and, as every Scripturally-enlightened person knows, to be "justified" is to be received into God's favor (being His acceptance of us, and not ours of Him), which is precisely what "reconciliation" is. Third, from the fact that the "when we were enemies" refers to the relation we stood in to God—the objects of His displeasure. "Sinners . . . justified by His blood" and "enemies . . . reconciled to God by Christ's death" correspond exactly the one to the other. Fourth, from the obvious sense of the verse the apostle is arguing (as his "if" and "much more" shows) from the less to the greater. If when we had no love for God, Christ's sacrifice procured His favor, much more, now that we are converted, will His mediation on high deliver us from our sins as Christians. Fifth, from the reconciliation being ascribed to Christ's death, which was definitely and solely Godward. Had it been the removing of our enmity and turning us to love God, it had been attributed to Christ's Spirit. Sixth, from the obvious meaning of the term: as we have shown from 1 Samuel 29:4 and Matthew 5:23,24, it is the injured party who is the one needing to be reconciled to the offender. Seventh, from the fact that our reconciliation is something which is tendered to us. "we have now received the reconciliation" (v. 11): we received the reconciliation effected by Christ and then presented for our acceptance in the Gospel. It would be the height of absurdity to say that we "received" the laying down of the weapons of our warfare against God. "All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. 5:18,19). That His reconciling of "us" "the world" unto Himself refers to God's placation unto and favor toward us is clear. First, because it was effected by "Jesus Christ" and therefore signifies the removing of God's anger. Second, because had it meant His work of grace within us, subduing our enmity, it had said "God is in Christ" or more precisely "God by His Spirit is reconciling the world unto Himself." Third, because "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" means, God appointed and anointed Christ to procure His reconciliation. He was in Christ as the Surety—God out of Christ is "a consuming fire" to the wicked. Fourth, because the term is here formally defined as "not imputing their trespasses unto them," which is God's act and not the creature's—"not imputing" etc. means, not dealing with us as justice required for our sins, on account of Christ's atonement. Fifth, because the "ministry" and "word of reconciliation" was committed to the apostles—that is, the Atonement was the grand theme of their preaching (1 Cor. 2:2). Sixth, because on that ground sinners are exhorted to be "reconciled to God" (v. 20). Since God has changed His attitude unto you, change yours toward Him. Seventh, because our sins were imputed to Christ, and since He atoned for them His righteousness is imputed to us (v. 21). "And that He (Christ Jesus) might be reconciled both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity by it, and came and preached peace to you" (Eph. 2:16,17). As these verses and their context will come before us again we will confine ourselves now to that which concerns our present purpose. The "both" refers to Jews and Gentiles "in one body" signifies the Saviour's humanity—compare "in the body of His flesh" (Col. 1:22). "By the cross"

speaks of a definite historical action in the past, and not a protracted process throughout the whole Gospel era. "Having slain the enmity by it" signifies not that between Jew and Gentile (which is mentioned in the former verse), but of God's judicial disapprobation against both. This is confirmed in the next verse, where the "preached peace" means preached the peace made with God, as the "access" in v. 18 clearly indicates. Having effected peace, Christ, after His resurrection, ministerially (2 Cor. 5:18-20) announced it. "And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself" (Col. 1:20). This passage we also hope to enter into more fully in a later chapter, suffice it now to point out that: since peace was "made" there must previously have been hostility, and since that peace was made through "the blood of His cross," then the shedding of it was the placating of God, by offering a satisfaction to His violated Law. In Scripture man is never represented as making reconciliation Godward. It is what he experiences or embraces, and not what he makes. It should also be pointed out that never is reconciliation ascribed to the risen Christ, any more than that we are "justified in a risen Christ." It is His blood that justifies (Rom. 5:9), which brings redemption (Eph. 1:7), by which we are brought nigh (Eph. 2:13), which sanctifies (Heb. 13:12), which gives us the right of approach to God (Heb. 10:19). We have been contending for a great truth and not merely for a word or syllable. When Socinians object that Scripture nowhere says in so many words that "God is reconciled to us," they are guilty of mere trifling, for equivalent expressions most certainly do occur. If it be admitted that sin is displeasing to God and that His vengeance is proclaimed against the sinner, it must also be admitted that if God's anger has been turned away from sinners by a propitiatory sacrifice, then He must have been reconciled to them. "He who once threatened to punish another but has since pardoned him and now treats him with kindness, has certainly been reconciled to him" (J. Dick). The emphasis is thrown upon our reconciliation to God because we were first in the breach. We fell out with God, before He fell out with us; and because the averseness is on our side. The Gospel makes known His willingness to receive us (because of Christ's sacrifice) if we are prepared to cease our fighting against Him. If it be asked, Was God reconciled to all the elect and they to Him the moment Christ cried "it is finished," the answer is both yes and no. We must distinguish between (1) reconciliation in the eternal purpose of God (2) as it was effected by Christ (3) as it is offered to us in the Gospel (4) as it actually becomes ours when we believe.

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