



Romans 5:10-11
Reconciliation & Salvation
May 19, 2019
Courage Church, Detroit, MI

Let's pray and ask God to change us through the reading of His Word.

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We are only going to get through two verses in Romans today, and the reason for that is that I want to lay a really strong foundation for what we are going to get to next

week when we get into the concept of Jesus as the new Adam, and talk a bit about summer.

Chris did a great job on our last Roman's message teaching on 5:6-11 and in that message he touched on these last two verses but because it was Cinco De Mayo we limited his time so much that we had him focus more so on the first half of that section, and I am going to only focus on verses 10 and 11.

In framing this, we need to note what Paul is leading us into. Though today we will not read about Adam specifically, Paul is ramping up to explain the big idea of the mess that humanity is in from the time of Adam, when he exchanged the glory of God for the knowledge of good and evil... which we will cover more thoroughly in a couple of weeks...

But the pattern you see in that story and throughout history to follow, is that man sins against God... thinks he can do it better than God... tries to live is life as his own God...

God still loves him. God still protects him... God still doesn't rule Him out... and God ultimately promises to redeem... to put him back.

Let's get right into it.

Romans 5:10-11

“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

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The word that God gave us from the moment that we moved to Detroit that we felt like we just needed to own is the word “Reconciliation”

you know that. You know that word. We use the word in just about everything we do. I have it printed on my shirt... we are building a table that can seat something like 100 people and naming it that. (more on that a little later)

We have told stories about reconciliation for years. I believe that *because* our focus has been reconciliation more than it has been anything else, that God has placed us in strategic places in which the outcome tends to be some form of reconciliation.

But even though every single person who has sat under any amount of teaching in this place knows that word... a lot of people who I have talked to still don't quite know what it means. Even I at times have had a bit of a difficult time articulating it properly.

So I want to take a couple minutes to flesh that out this morning.

The word Reconciliation is the Greek word “*katallagē*”(kata-la-gay) - and there is nothing particularly amazing that I know of about it's literal Greek definition, it simply means “to put back, or to exchange” it was a term used to describe the restoration of the favor of God TO SINNERS. People who are far from God being drawn back into a relationship with God because of how much God loves them. In Greek, its meaning is not particularly loaded...

but its usage is absolutely fascinating.

Jesus never says the word, at least the Bible doesn't record Him saying it. But yet, His entire life embodied it, as he modeled the concept of

“reaching people right where they are at” time and time again as the Pharisees and religious leaders watched in horror... I think of the moments he had with Zacchaeus, and when he called Matthew... when he met the Samaritan woman at the well... the woman caught in the act of adultery...

case after case in which a person was outcast by the religious, and by the religious standard were considered to be far from God... when Jesus just stepped right into the center of their brokenness and met them right where they are. He is the picture of reconciliation...

But Paul is the ONLY writer who uses the word in the New Testament (The theological dictionary of the new testament) BUT he takes it very very seriously and in fact tells us we have been given the MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION. It is the only “ministry” that he or any other New Testament writer gives us by name... and where the point certainly does have to do with us reconciling with others, ULTIMATELY the point is that God reconciles to us.

So to say “we have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation” - it means that we live our lives in such a way that demonstrates TO THEM the love of God who did everything necessary to reconcile with us. That is the message here in Romans... Jesus did it. The price was high but he paid it so that reconciliation can now be a reality for literally ANYONE.

The Theological dictionary of the New Testament says this of reconciliation:

“it always denotes a disposition or economy of God... It brings before men the action by which God takes them up again into fellowship with Himself. It is an action of God on the world which **does not belong only** to the past but still continues”

The ministry of Reconciliation means showing people how much God loves them... How much He has ALWAYS LOVED THEM and how wide His arms of grace truly are, that HE WILL NEVER STOP LOVING THEM!

When a person comes to Jesus... that is reconciliation. They are being reconciled back into the place that God had always intended for them to be.

When a child leaves home and betrays his parents and yet they love him through the entire thing and accept him back the moment he is ready... that is reconciliation... and it is a model that points to what Jesus did for us.

When we love someone who thinks that God has given up on them, and they have an encounter in which they realize that Jesus actually meant it when HE DIED FOR THEM... - that is reconciliation.

Our goto passage is of course 2 Corinthians 5... when Paul says “you have been given the ministry of reconciliation - reconciling people back to God by NOT COUNTING THEIR TRESPASSES AGAINST THEM.” We use that, because it gives clear instruction for how the church is supposed to react to sinful people... it is supposed to meet them right where they are... reconcile them back to God right where they are... show them a love that surpasses anything they have ever understood in their lives.

Most people are far from God because they have been sold the lie that they need to be. They have been convinced that “if there really is a God, then I am way out of His reach!”

And what has happens is this: if you are raised to believe that Jesus won't save you until you change... then even if you do change, you will never know how to love other people. Because you will always see in others the reasons why “that person” is far from God... what it does, almost subconsciously, is it creates this chasm in our minds where we view people who sin different differently than we do, in a different category than us entirely.

It is a very “us and them” mindset...

where we say “you better do this... join our side... and then God will forgive you.” It is opposite of what Jesus ever modeled.

The message of Jesus is always based on hope and never on fear.

Even with the woman at the well who had gone through many husbands and now was living with a man not her husband... when she went away she DID say to the people of her town: “come, see a man who told me all that I have ever done!” but not a single time did Jesus condemn her for it,

instead He offered her living water... a hope that life doesn't have to GO ON this way... it can change. The Spirit of the living God can take hold of your life and who you are right now doesn't have to be the person you are tomorrow!

But most of us would have handled that evangelism opportunity much differently... had we had that window into her life we would have spun it like "look at all you have done wrong... IF YOU DON'T DO THIS THING OR SAY THIS PRAYER... then you are going to be in even bigger trouble!"

When you get a window into someone else's life like Jesus had in that moment at the well... it is going to bring out just how much the Gospel has taken shape in your own life, and whether or not you have grasped it.

Its an enormous amount of power to hear someone else's story... it is power *to know* someone else's story... and I guarantee you that *if* you use that power against them, they will open up less and less of their lives to you.

THE MINISTRY we have been given is that we bring people back to God BY NOT COUNTING THEIR TRESPASSES...

their past...

the things they have done wrong, against them... we don't tell people that those are good things... but we also don't define people by the things that they have done.

But we need to catch what Romans is saying if we are ever going to be able to embody what 2 Corinthians 5 is saying. Because we will never be able to be a part of reconciling the world back to Jesus if we haven't let it take shape in our own lives.

It says:

While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God BY THE DEATH OF JESUS... so even when we found ourselves totally against God, exchanging glory for things that are fading... spitting in His face saying I WILL DO IT MY OWN WAY GOD!!!

the cross of Jesus reconciled us.

But Paul is saying... if we have been reconciled through his death... HOW MUCH MORE WILL WE BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE!

That big concept we have been talking about this entire series... Justification - God's declaration that you are righteous... what that is, like we have said, is a status. It is the declaration of your place in the family of God.

But a process begins in you when that happens, called Sanctification. Paul gets into it a bit more moving forward... where now you actually start living like you are a part of the family of God... and its a process... you don't learn it all overnight... most people don't change all of their bad habits overnight...

But if you want to understand how to begin that process... how to learn how to live a life today that is moving more and more toward wholeness... the example is Jesus Christ.

Christians are followers of Jesus, not just of the man... but of the Way.

The way He modeled for us. And His life teaches us WHAT our lives should look like on the other side of being reconciled... His death reconciled us... He paid the price... but Salvation is about a lot more than just getting into Heaven one day. It is deliverance today from the person that we once were, so that we can BECOME the type of person in this world who actually makes the lives of others better... who actually has wholeness in our own lives... who actually has PURPOSE in our own lives.

we are reconciled by His death because Jesus dealt with our sins on the cross...

but we are saved by His life.

Honestly... it is shocking what this letter tells us.

The charge in this verse is not to change everything... life change begins to become automatic when you begin to fully grasp what's been done.

The charge in this verse is to REJOICE IN GOD through JESUS CHRIST... because through Him have we now received reconciliation.

Rejoice... take joy in it... delight in it. Let your life be guided by the Good News...

But get this - the word "rejoice" here is the SAME GREEK WORD that Paul uses in chapter 3 and chapter 4 when he talks about BOASTING... he says that Abraham had to be saved by faith alone, otherwise he would have something to BOAST ABOUT...

The Bible goes out of it's way to intentionally strip us of the things that we may boast in... and puff ourselves up believing that we have achieved some sort of status all on our own.

well here he finally gets to this moment when He says THIS.... this is where you boast... This is it.

Don't boast when you get it right... because there will come a time when you won't... Don't boast when you find the strength to carry the burden that is placed on you... because a day will come when it will get too heavy... and you will need to lean on someone else... you will need God to be your strength. But BOAST... REJOICE... in the incredible fact that God, through Jesus Christ has prepared a way for you to be reconciled.

Making us agents of reconciliation.

These couple of verses in Romans tell an incredible story. They tell the story of a people who are NOT just far from God... but a people who are enemies of God.

You have heard me for years talk about King David and his prayer in Psalm 23 when he thanks God saying "you prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies" - I can't do that whole teaching for you today but it was hugely instrumental in the concept of the Reconciliation Table... because where the Greek word for reconciliation is not bad... but it also is pretty self explanatory... the Hebrew concept of Reconciliation is one of the most powerful things that I have ever heard in my life....

Psalm 23 is a what is considered to be a Psalm of thanksgiving... and most people find this line to be out of place with the other parts... such as “the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want... though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for you are with me and comfort me...”

Then he says “you prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies... and my cup overflows.” - in other words... you prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies... AND THATS AWESOME. I AM SUPER STOKED ON THAT. I am REJOICING IN THE FACT... I AM BOASTING IN THE FACT that a table has been prepared for me in the presence of my enemies.

and the reason is INCREDIBLE.

The Hebrew word that David uses there for table is the word “*shulchan*” - it is used to describe A KING’S TABLE... something grand... something important...

and from that word we get a word that is still to this day used and sometimes even practiced in Arabic culture, and that word is “*sulha*” which means: “A MEAL BETWEEN ENEMIES WITH THE PURPOSE OF RECONCILIATION.”

it was a last-ditch-effort before a feud between two parties got so out of hand that it is likely they would never go back.

and what would happen was, they would set the table for their enemy, and they would share a meal together... and both parties would enter this meal with the understanding that WE WILL NOT LEAVE THIS TABLE UNTIL WE HAVE COME TO WHATEVER TERMS NEED TO BE COME TO FOR THERE TO BE RECONCILIATION.

Google the word, and you will find several modern day examples of them that are fascinating and extremely moving...

There are several instances of this in the Bible... from the meal between Jacob and Laban, all the way to the parable Jesus tells about a Prodigal Son, who, when his father saw him coming... ran out to meet him, and immediately commanded that a banquet be thrown. The fact that Jesus

added the meal to this story only solidified the fact that He believes reconciliation is possible even when you are betrayed and let down in the worst kind of ways.

When David praises God saying “God, you prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies and my cup overflows...” he is NOT saying that God has done this to humiliate his enemies... he is not saying that God has brought down his enemies... he is not saying God has prepared a table for him WITH THE HEAD OF HIS ENEMIES...

he is not saying that God prepares a place in which David can DEFEAT HIS ENEMIES...

He is saying: God... THANK YOU! That in spite of everything that I have done to cause so much hurt to so many people... YOU HAVE PREPARED A PLACE FOR ME TO RECONCILE WITH MY ENEMIES.

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About two and a half years ago, God gave us a very simple vision for a specific project, you all know about it, it is called “The Reconciliation Table” - an outdoor table that will sit on the corner lot that we own next to the Courage House on Rademacher and Army. It is going to be a table that there is a seat for everyone at... and it is one of the many efforts that our church is making to reconcile the people of our community back to not only the church, but ultimately to Jesus Christ.

We want to prepare a table... and have the worlds largest sulha. We want to prepare banquets, and throw parties like Jesus says to do in Luke 14, when instead of inviting the people who can pay us back... we go out into the highways and the byways and we invite the people who can never pay us back and give them the greatest experience they ever had in their life.

Its a big vision... and we have talked about it for a long time... we have given MUCH MORE DETAILED SERMONS on the concept... but we are done talking about it.

We are doing it. Now. And later this summer, we are all going to share a meal there together. There are several churches that we have cast the

vision to about it and a handful of them have committed to coming along side of us and helping us meet our goals... including Mount Hope Church, Brightmoor Church, Kalamazoo First Church, the Rock Church, Grace Assembly in Fruitport...

you will hear more about it in the coming weeks... it won't only be a table... it is going to be a work in progress but it ultimately it will also be a full community garden, and much more.

it is going to be a table that will be filled with stories.

Stories of hope. Stories of loss and sadness. Broken hearts and hearts that are full... people will come to Jesus through experiences with people who are living, as best as we can, as much like Jesus as possible...

it's a place that continuously will be asking the question:

“what if we actually take Jesus seriously about the radical things that he seemed to say all the time.”

We need your help. We are raising as much support for it as we can... pray about what you can give... we are selling new t-shirts, and all of the money goes toward working on the project and to continuing the project after it is built... we will roll out more designs all with the same purpose of helping keep it going. A second non-profit is being setup to help make it so this becomes something we can reproduce in other neighborhoods and in different forms which you will hear about down the road.

Come serve... plant a garden bed... help us move dirt... whatever you can do.

I don't know what all will come from it... I don't fully know what it will be like in the end... but I know that the entire purpose of it is reconciliation because I know that our churches entire purpose here is reconciliation.

I want to share this one last thing with you, and then we will close with a story...

I know for some of you, you have heard us talking about this table and its been over two years now of us saying “this is what we see - its not there...

but we see it” - but if you drive by the side lot of the courage house... it doesn't look any different, and its been over two years. I assure you that nobody is harder on themselves about that than I am...

but for us... as a church, doing what we do... being about what we are about in the community...

even an outdoor side lot project is bigger than ourselves...

THE ONLY CURRENCY WE HAVE IS OUR LOVE FOR OUR COMMUNITY.
That's it.

If you give... we can do more... if others come along... we can give more...

If God wants it done, then He has to bring us the people who can do it... he needs to bring the craftsmen... the laborers... the finances... The people who will say THIS MATTERS... this needs to get done.

We told God... **WE WILL DO WHAT YOU SAY... WE WILL LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS...** we will dream for the future of our community... but everything else is in your hands.

Reaching people... loving a community... living the love of Jesus out to the people who perhaps are far from Him... it is a long play... change doesn't happen overnight. Yesterday we had an amazing outreach with amazing partners... even with a rough start to the day because of the cold weather we still saw over 400 people register and come through. But building even to that, it's taken us years to get that type of a response from our community.

And some of the people we will meet... it is going to be years before we see fruit in their lives... others it will happen over night.

That is why we hold so tightly to Galatians 6:9 - let us not grow weary of doing good... for in due season we will reap if we do not give up.

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Dawn and I teach a class every Thursday at life challenge. Life Challenge is a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program, it is Detroit's Teen Challenge - and every Thursday we spend two hours teaching the book of Romans, the same book we are studying here, to students. We get each student for 3 months, so we get around 24 classroom hours with each one of them.

And there is one guy in particular... on the VERY FIRST DAY of our VERY FIRST CLASS ever teaching there, right before our break, he raised his hand and said "so we have to listen to you guys for the next three months?" - he went out of his way to make sure we know that he didn't want to be there, and he didn't care to listen to us.

The first month with him, I was super frustrated with him because it was just more of that... he didn't want to be there... he didn't want me to be there...

into the second month he was really frustrating me... he wasn't responding when we would ask questions... he wasn't reading when directly called upon to read... all of the stuff to just try and prove that we are not in charge of him. Dawn told me... "let him be... don't make him read..." she just helped me to show as much grace as possible to this person who was living in a place where he was completely boxed in by rules, and tried his best to push whatever ones he felt like he had a chance of getting away with pushing.

I almost for a moment began to view him as being against me in there...

but with Dawn's help I just tried to be as nice as I could to him.

Eventually, in one of those moments when we were asking the students to share their stories... which we did several times and got nothing out of him... eventually, this one time he opened up a tiny bit, and we got a little bit out of him. And I am not going to share his story today, I thought about telling it without using names or anything like that but I woke up this morning and just felt like I needed to not.

But he shared a little... and Dawn and I, we cared. We asked questions...

and slowly but surely, the more he shared... something just started to break... and **the resistance turned into openness...**

on the very last week of our classes, he was about to be done with those three months of having to listen to us, and I got to class really early, and he came in, also, very early.

And I asked him how he was doing, and how his kids were doing because he told us he has kids, I asked how he was holding up in the program...

and in that moment, on the LAST DAY that I would have class with him, before class even started, he told me his whole story. Not a one liner... not a short heartless response. - and it was one of the hardest stories that I ever had the privilege of hearing someone tell. I hated hearing it, because it broke my heart, but it put everything into perspective about him for me.

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you never know what is going on underneath the tough guy layers... you never know what is going on underneath the parts that you see...

This is a guy who... ultimately the only reconciliation he is concerned with is with his family... and if he is going to find it in any other area he is going to need to know that the God we are sharing with Him actually cares about the safety and the reconciliation of his family.

and the only reason that he opened up to Dawn and I is because we talked to him about the things that MATTERED TO HIM...

Most of us DON'T know the entangled mess that some people's lives really are...

But the point is that the Gospel doesn't just untangle your soul so you can go to Heaven... if it takes hold of your life, it will begin to untangle your LIFE so you can begin to rebuild some of the bridges that you have burned... you can begin to set the table for the people who you have hurt... you can begin to find health in the areas of your life that have for so long felt so hopeless.

And the churches job is not only to experience that ourselves, but also to be the facilitators of that for others... and its not always easy... because most people live their lives behind several layers that you never see... but

love is the universal language... it can speak English and Spanish and German and French... it can cut through the walls that people build up... and that is why what Jesus did is so powerful... its speaks the same truth on a universal level... and if we can learn to live even a fraction of that type of love to others... we will start seeing a lot of peoples lives changed.

I can tell you this... our friend in life challenge finished our class... he passed... and has two more months in there, and then he will get out and go get his kids... and I am there every week... and every single week now, during break between classes, he stops in our classroom and says hi, and talks until the second hour starts.

Because what happened was, that little bit of **openness turned into friendship.**

Last week we couldn't find a baby sitter which is obviously required for us to co-teach a class... we have tried to take the baby to class but it didn't go quite as we wanted it too, so Dawn just read and worked on her homework for school in the car in the parking lot, while I attempted to teach by myself... and he came in during the break... and asked about her... and I told him where she was, and he went outside and visited her after talking with me until the break was over.

I am realizing more and more that most people aren't interested in the God OF A person who isn't even interested in them. If you want to be an agent of reconciliation, you need to care about other peoples stories... we need to care if someone had a rough day... or a rough week or year.

I have found that people tend to talk when someone cares enough to listen.

and as I reflected on that story this week... and the stories that were written yesterday... I had this hopeful thought of... what if that could be all the stories? What if we kept loving the people who were resistant to the love... what if we set the same table every single day for them hoping that one day they will come home...

what if the people who turn the other direction when they see us coming now, are popping their heads in to visit us this time next year.

to just say hi... and just say thank you.

I have a lot of hope for our community.

and I hope you do too.