

Text: 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 **Title:** Reconciled!

Truth: God reconciles the Christian to Himself through Jesus and tells us to share the word of reconciliation with others.

Date/Location: Sunday 6/7/2026 at Tobermore Baptist Church, N. Ireland

Introduction

Greetings in the name of Christ from FBCAA. Thanksgiving.

The subject matter in verses 18-19 is *reconciliation with God*.

Plan: I will share an illustration now, and tie it in at the end. It is about a situation where reconciliation did not happen. This will help us talk about interpersonal reconciliation, which then will help us understand how we can be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's most famous poem was entitled, "How Do I Love Thee?" She wrote it during her courtship with her future husband, Robert Browning. It starts out this way:

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.

A childhood accident caused poet Elizabeth Barrett to lead a life of semi-invalidism before she married Robert Browning in 1846...In her youth, Elizabeth had been watched over by her tyrannical father. When she and Robert [Browning] were married, their wedding was held in secret because of her father's disapproval. After the wedding the Brownings sailed for Italy, where they lived for the rest of their lives. But even though her parents had disowned her, Elizabeth never gave up on the relationship. Almost weekly she wrote them letters. Not once did they reply. After 10 years, she received a large box in the mail. Inside, Elizabeth found all of her letters; not one had been opened! ...Had her parents only read a few of them, their relationship with Elizabeth might have been restored.¹

¹ "Bible" in *6,000 Plus Illustrations for Communicating Biblical Truths* (Christianity Today, 2000).

I. Background: What is Christian Reconciliation?

A. **What:** Reconciliation is word that has to do with personal relationships. It has been a concept as long as sin has been in the world. When Adam and Eve sinned, they needed their relationship with God to be mended. They needed their relationship with one another to be mended on a frequent basis. This “mending” is the heart of the idea of reconciliation, in which a broken relationship is fixed so that people who were enemies become allies. People who were hostile to one another become friendly. Coldness becomes warmth, and indifference becomes interest. Reconciliation means to exchange friendship for enmity, love for anger, peace for war.²

We can illustrate it from Scripture in **Matthew 5:24** about a worshipper who needs to be reconciled to his brother before he continues to worship. Another illustration is in **1 Cor. 7:11** where a wife who has divorced her husband can reconcile with him.

Is there any person—maybe even a fellow church member—with whom you need to be reconciled right now?

Even more importantly, do you need to be reconciled with God?

B. **Why** is reconciliation with God needed?

1. The word of God declares that before we come to the Son of God in faith, we are in **enemy status** with Him:

Col 1:21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works...

2. The **displeasure and wrath of God** rests upon those who rebel against Him (Psalm 5:5, John 3:36). Enmity affects both sides in a way—both can feel the broken relationship if they are paying attention. But God has done nothing wrong nor changed in some way that is unfavorable and calls into question His

² Murray Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC, p. 436. He writes that reconciliation “denotes a transformation of relations, not in the sense that original friendly relations are restored (humans are by nature at enmity with God...) but in the sense that friendly relations now replace former hostility.”

immutability. *People* have done wrong in violating God's law, so the enmity is our fault.

3. **God's holiness** does not allow Him to overlook our sin. He cannot simply *pretend* to be reconciled because that is not the same thing as *actual* reconciliation. We made war and rebelled against Him. God is like a good judge who has to sentence a murderer to prison, or a like good parent who must discipline her children.

II. Exposition of 2 Corinthians 5:18-19: Who and How

- A. **All things are of God.** Whatever Paul had talked about before about the death of Christ, being in Christ, being a new creation, old things passing away—God does all those things. Salvation is *entirely* from the Lord. God planned it, Christ died for it, the Spirit convicts us about it.

Despite how far humanity fell from God's good graces, God is very kind to us. He gives sunshine, rain, food, pleasant seasons, love and children, and blessings. He shows even deeper love in the cross (John 3:16, Rom. 5:8).

- B. **Who has reconciled us to Himself.** God initiated the reconciliation. But He was the *wronged* party! Normally, reconciliation would require the offender to fix the problem. We *should* have started the process, but by nature of the offense and its consequence, we were unable to do that. So, God initiated to solve the relational problem on His own.

Us... Christians are the focal point of the change. God did not change, but God changed circumstances and ourselves so our standing with Him could be right, and we receive that.

The world... Verse 19 further explains verse 18. It expands the applicability of what Paul is saying about reconciliation to a world-wide audience.

This does not refer to universal salvation because it is obvious that not all want to be or will be reconciled to God. But the work God has done through Christ is universally applicable and has world-

wide implications. The world has been blessed by an objective and real reconciliation.

Nothing remains to be done from God's side. He stands ready with open arms for you to come. Salvation is accomplished and readily available, but its benefits have to be accepted, received, embraced, believed. You cannot reconcile yourself to God, but you need to be reconciled, and can be reconciled.

C. **How? Through Jesus Christ.** Interestingly, instead of just two parties being involved—God and you—there are three: God, you, and Jesus. He is the intermediary agent to bring two together. He is a perfect “man in the middle” to bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18).

2 Cor. 5:20-21 explains how reconciliation works. Colossians adds:

Col 1:21-22 ...yet now He has reconciled ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.

Not imputing their trespasses to them. This is another new piece of information in verse 19. This is, in part, **forgiveness**. It means God does not count your sin against you. It is not that He forgets, as if His omniscience falters. It means He will **not hold sin against you** anymore. He wipes it off your record so that you can join King David in saying:

Psalm 32:1-2a Blessed *is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* ² Blessed *is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity...*

Reconciliation comes about because God imputes our sin to Jesus. Then He fixes the broken relationship by drawing you to Himself.

D. We participate in two ways. First, we receive grace by casting aside our sin and placing our unreserved trust into Jesus. We believe with our minds, we assent with our hearts, and we choose with our wills to follow Jesus. He then graciously takes away our sin!

E. Second, we participate by pleading with others to be reconciled to God. He **has given us the ministry of reconciliation** and **committed to us the word of reconciliation**. It is our privilege and

responsibility to proclaim reconciliation with God and to urge people to receive it.

All Christians must be involved in proclaiming and urging people to be saved. I am not saying we all become vocational ministers, but we all can participate in supporting the work of the church, getting behind pastors and missionaries, and keeping the church's focus on the Great Commission instead of ancillary things. Like a professional sports team, this church is a team. Some are fly-halves and coaches and front office and back office and public relations and advertising and maintenance and finances. But all participate in the team effort, with the goal of bringing the message of reconciliation to the world. I hope that our words encourage you to be reconciled to God, and to energetically help GMSA and other sound missionary works to advance.

Conclusion

Think back to Elizabeth Browning. Tragic! Her case reminds us that we need to soften our hearts toward those that we have differences with and get on the same page with them. Otherwise, we are not being Christ-like in our behavior.

The illustration also helps us understand how to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. God has done a tremendous thing in sending Jesus to be the reconciling mediator between us. He asks us to abandon our selfish sin and turn to Him in faith. The only hindrance now is on our side. He stands ready to be reconciled, like Elizabeth was ready to reconcile with her parents. But they were hardened against her.

Bridging the gap between Paul's day and our own is not difficult. Paul's two truths are directly connected to us. God has provided reconciliation for us through forgiveness of sin, and gives us the responsibility and privilege to minister that same message to others.

God wrote a whole bunch of letters to you about being reconciled. Are you storing those letters in a box, unopened, ready to send back to Him someday? Or are you reading those letters and heeding His call to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ? MAP