

## Reconciliation And The Day Of Atonement

### Atonement and Reconciliation

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**Acts 3:19-21** Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

It has been God's purpose since the foundation of the world to restore all things and for there to be a time of refreshing—we might say a breath of fresh air, breathing space, respite. The word that is translated as restoration here means "the establishment of something good following something bad," or it could also mean the establishment of what was predicted by the prophets.

Now God knows, and I am sure that you know as well, that we need relief. We need restoration for the conditions that exist here on earth.

I have a couple of articles here that illustrate why we need relief. I am sure that you are going to be able to relate to this very quickly. You will have likely experienced situations that are very similar to what is being described here. Even if you have not gone through something like this personally, you likely know of people who have. You watch the news on television, listen to the radio, and read the newspaper, and you know pretty well what is going on in our world even though it may not have touched you personally (the way it did the person that is being described in this article).

I clipped this from the *Chicago Tribune*, January 27, 1985, because I thought it was appropriate for an Atonement service. It is from Bob Green's column and it is entitled, "The Unnoticed War is Altering America." He is quoting from a man who was at that time 55 years old. The article reads:

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He is 55 years old, a sales representative who lives in affluent suburb Glencoe [an affluent suburb of Chicago]. He is a kind of person who should be savoring the rewards of successful life; instead he worries aloud about what he has seen happen to his country.

I have been traveling on business for a long time. I first went on the road as a sales rep. in 1958. I go to a lot of big cities, Cleveland, St. Louis, Detroit, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, New York, Los Angeles. It used to be sort of fun.

Now to go to the downtown areas of these cities. . . . I was in Detroit, and I went into a drug store to buy a tube of toothpaste. The cashier was behind a plate of bulletproof glass. I had to put the toothpaste on a lazy-Susan contraption so he could ring it up for me. He was in a bunker, in isolation.

This is America? In my travels, I pick up the local newspapers and truthfully, I do not even look at the front page anymore. I go straight to the sports because I do not want to read about what is going on out on the streets.

A little bit later, he says,

I am not sure the politicians understand. . .

That is kind of interesting because one of the complaints against George Bush is that he grew up in wealth and he is out of touch with reality. I mean, he went to school in a limousine. How many of you have done that? He went to private schools as a boy, he went to private military academies, he went to universities where he moved in a circle of people that maybe were not touched by these things. Maybe he is not aware—I do not know, maybe he is. Maybe he is more aware than we know. But the author goes on to say:

. . . when I walk down the street, I am not like them. I do not have bodyguards. If I get mugged, it is not reported in the papers. When I travel to New York, they tell me at the hotel, "do not even walk a few blocks at night. Take a cab." I have been going to Cleveland

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my whole adult life. I used to park my car and walk to the theatrical bar. Now—NEVER! I do not dare walk the four blocks at night. In Detroit, I will be downtown at five o'clock, and I will get an uneasy feeling. I will know it is time to go back to my motel in the suburbs.

I grew up in New Jersey where I was not bothered to go any place. I could go to New York City. I could go to the Polo Grounds alone. My parents never worried about it. They said to be careful with strangers, but they had no real sense of fear.

Now when you are bringing up a child, you almost get paranoid. I have a nine-year-old son, and if he goes one block to the park, I have trepidation even if he is only there for an hour. We want to know every minute where that kid is. That is the kind of fear that parents live with today.

Right toward the conclusion of the article, he said,

Things were very bad during the Depression, but at least the fear of other people was not there. As bad as things were, you did not have people attacking and shooting people in the streets. The politicians say that there is a new optimistic spirit in America. I do not know where they are looking, but it is not out on the streets of our cities.

I have a second article that is also from the *Chicago Tribune*. It is a little bit broader in its scope because it is world-wide in its scope. We begin to see very clearly that what is happening on the streets of America, is happening everywhere. Not only that, it is in much greater and more intense because what is happening between people here in the United States is also happening between nations as well.

Now this article was clipped out right around the Day of Atonement, October 10, 1985 (same year as the other article). It comes from the Sunday supplement of the *Chicago Tribune* and the title of it is, "A World in Conflict." I think the picture on the front of the supplement is especially appropriate. There is a picture of a guerilla on its cover—not the kind that lives in jungles, you see, but a guerilla who goes to war. He definitely has the look as if he came out of Central America.

At any rate, the guerilla represents all of mankind. He is holding a rifle above his head while he is sinking into quicksand. The quicksand is already up to his upper lip. Now I think the picture is quite appropriate because what it is showing is a world (represented by this man) going down with guns blazing. The last thing in the world he wants to go into the quicksand, is his gun—his rifle.

Quoting from the article:

'War is hell', said General George Patton, who fought his way through the biggest of them all and he echoed this sentiment of the Roman philosopher Seneca whose summation of the folly of war was equally pithy: "Men practice war, beasts do not."

There is almost universal agreement about the iniquity of war, but it remains mankind's worst habit, one seemingly impossible to shake off. In this respect, new generations do not learn from the mistakes of the past. As civilization progresses in a technical sense, the resort to war becomes ever more frequent.

Are we getting smarter? That is what the evolutionist say—that as mankind grows older, we are improving. . . . No! As technology increases so does war increase. In the early part of this century, there was a "war to end all wars"—the "Great War," as some called it. WWI ended 67 years ago this Monday, but it did not end war. Instead it set the stage for the most monumental conflict of all times—WWII. WWII in turn failed to exhaust man's appetite for slaughter on a mass scale.

There have been 150 to 300 wars fought around the globe since WWII, depending on how one defines war. Each month [Hold on to your hats!] 41,000 people around the world die in armed conflict. That has been the average toll since WWII ended 40 years ago. It adds up to almost 20 million lives—3 out of 5 of them hapless civilians, according to the United Nations.

Now here we are celebrating the Day of At-one-ment. These two illustrations came out of one newspaper in 1985 and I am sure that we have not improved based upon what we read in the newspapers today in 1992. We are not improving. We are degenerating in every direction and mankind is being driven apart. We are hardly at one, even within families. It is very difficult to keep things on track and everybody going together.

So they illustrate how separated mankind is from one another and the important thing from you and me is, if mankind is separated from one another, then they are also separated from God.

**I John 4:20-21** If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

What we are going to cover in the sermon is the only way that atonement will ever be achieved. We will have atonement with God and man, when men love one another. I am using men in its generic sense including women as well. Love, we understand, is the keeping of the commandments, and love is an outgoing concern. That love is an action. It is not a feeling, or affection; it is an action. It may be accompanied by a feeling, but in a biblical sense, it does not have to be accompanied by a feeling.

Jesus Christ said we have to love our enemies. Our feeling toward our enemies might not be good at all, and yet we are required to love him. Since love is an action, then we can do that even though our feeling may not be all that agreeable toward that person.

I want you to notice all of the 'that's that appear in Acts 3:19-20. Actually there are 3 of them:

**Acts 3:19-20** Repent therefore and be converted **that** your sins maybe blotted out, so **that** times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and **that** he may send Jesus Christ who was preached to you before.

Peter is stating that the respite and the restoration are the result or the consequence of something. The 'thats' are used in the sense of saying that one thing results in another. There is a direct connection between what precedes the 'that' and what follows the 'that.' The 'that' at the beginning is the action; the words that follow the 'that' are the consequence.

Now, if people repent—if they allow their minds to change and be converted—their repentance will play a part in the great events that are talked about in these two verses. He is saying, in effect, that repentance is the cause of respite, of restoration, and of the coming of Jesus Christ.

We understand that other things are involved, and repentance does not stand alone. I am putting this in, though, because it plays a direct part in it. Let us go back to John 17 and we will see here in Jesus' prayer that it was His prayer for you and me that we be one with God.

**John 17:11** Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, ['These' are the disciples] and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, [here comes the word "that"—here is the consequence:] that they may be one as We are.

Now let us go a little bit further to verse 20.

**John 17:20-22** I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; [Here it is talking about you and me; He is praying about you and me.] that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one

in Us, that the world may believe **that** You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, **that** they may be one just as We are one.

Now it is very clear that God wants us to be at one with Him, and if we are at one with Him, then we can be at one with man.

The restoration of God's government is obviously not all that God had in mind, because God is above all—Supreme Creator—and He has a plan of reproducing Himself through the creation of divine character in beings created in His image.

As we have been seeing in the last number of sermons, this plan involved angels also, but those angels rebelled. When man was created, they led and continue to lead mankind into rebellion against God's government.

God is all-powerful. God defeated Satan and the angels when they attacked Him. He could have just forced His government on the creation. He could have condemned the rebels, whether angels or men, with no hope at all. But God is also infinitely wise and also merciful as well. He just continued His plan that He was working out, and He included the rebelling angels in it, as unwilling dupes in helping Him to carry out His purpose—that of building character within mankind.

Now from the articles, as well as things that you know yourself very well, it is obvious that the rebellion against God is not only continuing, but is intensifying and we are moving toward a very sobering climax.

So the question for us this day is, how will mankind ever be reconciled to God? How will we ever be able to produce peace with one another? Well, the answer to that is, NEVER, as long as things remain as they are.

That is the key—things cannot remain as they are, and that is why Peter (in Acts 3:19) called upon people to repent and be converted. There has to be a change. So he was calling upon those people to allow their minds to turn toward God. Notice I said, *allow* .

Atonement concerns itself with the legal, moral, and practical aspects of how to restore God's government, and at the same time, also ensure that rebellion will not happen again in beings of free moral agency.

**I Peter 1:17-21** And if you [meaning Christians] call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

These are scriptures that we would normally read and expound upon sometime around Passover. We normally think of Passover in terms of being reconciled to God. I bring it up here because Passover and Atonement are inextricably bound. Passover involves reconciliation, so does Atonement.

However, Atonement supplies answers and solutions to problems not resolved by Passover. Passover is personal in nature and it provides reconciliation of the individual to God and the beginning of unity with man in the church with Christ. It is through Passover that we learn the price of redemption and reconciliation, that it is no less than that of the Creator, Jesus Christ.

Atonement, however, is universal in nature and provides reconciliation of the world to God—all of mankind at one with God and each other through Christ. There is the Passover connection. Passover shows Satan defeated, but still free to work out his nefarious schemes. He is still free to produce confusion and division, as well as rebellion. But Atonement on the other hand shows Satan defeated and punished by banishment—no longer free to do anything but to bewail his lot.

The emphasis here in I Peter 1:17-21 is on the cost of reconciliation. Now, that is very important to God's purpose because a major portion of our desire

to obey God comes from a sense of obligation to God and Christ with regard to our appreciation for how much was paid for us to be free.

You will never feel this until you begin to understand that this was done for you as an individual. If you had been the only person who had ever sinned in all of God's creation, it still would have taken the life of the Creator to get you free from the wages of your sin.

He did it for you! It is very easy for us to escape responsibility for His death when we conclude, "Well, He did it for all of mankind." Yes, He did it for all of mankind, but He did it for you as an individual. This is the path that one has to take in his thinking in order to recognize the cost that was made for you and me, and in order to come to a sense of obligation. We ought to respond if only out of thanks for what He did. We owe our life to Him.

I have heard of people who have been willing to give virtually everything to somebody who saved their life from drowning, or snatched them out of the way of a speeding automobile, or saved them from some other kind of painful death.

So at Passover we rehearse that, with the understanding that it was done for me and for you as an individual. Now let us go back to Isaiah 59 and broaden the subject out.

**Isaiah 59:1-2** Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

Sin—or iniquity or lawlessness, however you want to read that—is what has brought on the need for atonement or reconciliation. Iniquity, sin, and lawlessness produce the opposite of atonement. Sin, iniquity and lawlessness produce separation—not coming together. It separates and builds barriers between us and God and between us and other men.

He says here that He *will not* hear. We have to understand this. It is not that He cannot hear. What He is telling us is that because of sin, He will not hear. God is not sinning, therefore if there is a separation between a man and

God—between us and God—then it is because *we* have done something. We are the ones who are drifting away. However, to the human being it seems as though God has gone far away, when He has not moved at all.

I want to take you to another place in the book of Isaiah. It is somewhat similar to Isaiah 59, but it gives more detail about what was going on. I think it is also possible to connect ourselves and see the parallel for you and me, and perhaps for the church of God as a whole.

Before I begin this, I need to pick up something from Isaiah 59. We did not go through any of the chapters that are around it, but Isaiah 57, 58, and 59 all go together. They are a whole and maybe there is more to this whole than just those three chapters. But in each chapter he addresses something that is a little bit different.

What we could have picked up (from the other chapters) is something that is interesting. Those people to whom he was speaking (in Isaiah 57-59) were praying to God and were expecting an answer. It is not like he is talking here to pagans. You understand that Isaiah was a prophet to Judah. The Jews were still keeping, basically, the commands of God. They were really on a bad downward spiral, but they were at least still the people of God—the covenant people of God—because by the time Isaiah spoke here, Israel (the ten northern tribes) had already gone into captivity. So this is something that is addressed to the people of God and is therefore something that has much closer parallel to the church of God today—to Christians today.

Now, he shows us there in Isaiah 59 that what was causing the problem was that their lifestyle was in direct contrast to what *they* expected from God. In other words, they were approaching Him like everything was okay. It was 'hunky-dory.' "We are the people of God. We've made the covenant with God." But God was not answering. So their conclusion was that God had gone off somewhere. Then the reply comes back. "No! God hasn't moved at all. You're the ones that are drifting away."

Please keep the church of God today in mind as we go through this.

So these people wanted the good things that they could get from God: security, prosperity, and healing. They wanted good weather, good crops,

and ease in their life, but they were watching these blessings drift away and life was not secure like it used to be.

Maybe they were beginning to experience the same things on their streets as the articles from the *Chicago Tribune* describe. These things are happening on *our* streets. They felt uncomfortable with their world. They were crying out to God, asking Him to do something about it, but it seemed like God was not hearing. Now we will go back to Isaiah 1, where we will get a few more details.

**Isaiah 1:4** Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward.

Is that not interesting? Now we see the iniquities that he was talking about in Isaiah 59.

**Isaiah 1:9** UNLESS the LORD of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah.

Now here God comes into the picture. Speaking through Isaiah, He says in verse 10:

**Isaiah 1:10** Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom;

The people were worrying that their nation was going to have the same punishment that fell upon Sodom. God comes right back and says, through Isaiah, "You are Sodom."

**Isaiah 1:10-12** Give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah: [He is talking about the covenant people here.] "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed

cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this from your hand, to trample My courts?"

That is very interesting because He considered their coming before Him like a mob trampling the doorway of His house.

**Isaiah 1:13-16** Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. [These are not pagan days he is talking about; they are His days that the Jews are keeping.] Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves. . .

How is the breach going to be made—through sin. How is the breach going to be healed? There has to be an action on our part if we are ever going to be at one with God.

**Isaiah 1:16-17** Make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.

It is the same thing in more detail as what Peter said in Acts 3:19: "Repent." That is the way the breach, the separation, is going to be healed. That is the way atonement is going to be made. Atonement is not *all* something Christ does.

That really is the theme of this sermon. We are going to be examining Christ's and the Father's parts, but we need to be impressed that there will never be oneness with God until man does something with his free moral agency.

The problem in Isaiah 1 is a hypocritical people who are just going through the motions. They were going through the ritual as we can see: they were burning incense, they were making the sacrifices. But at the same time, their daily lives were filled with all kinds of unlawful acts—business shenanigans—that, according to God's law, is taking advantage of others. They were lying about the balances and the scales; they were selling shoddy products; they were not conducting business in an upright way.

They were murdering one another through gossip; and lying to one another using charm and deceit. God is saying, "That's a bunch of folderol!"

For people to claim that they are the people of God, go through the ritual of attending Sabbath services, holy days, and yet have a heart that is full of greed, covetousness, anger, hatred, bitterness, envy, and on and on.

What we are seeing in Isaiah—as it pertains to us—is that there must be a relationship between worshipping God and our character (in its practical aspect) out on the streets, in our homes, in the way that we conduct business. We might say: our character away from church, away from services, out of the eyesight of God's people.

How can those who treat their fellows with contempt, greed, envy, jealousy, anger, hatred, revenge, do those things through the week and then come to services before God, thinking that somehow or another they are not separated from Him?

God says in Matthew 5, "If you have somewhat against your brother, leave your gift at the altar and then first go to your brother and be reconciled and then come back because the gift will not be accepted." That is very plain.

Because of all these things, God treated His people in the same way as pagan idols treated their worshippers. Remember the idols are not alive. The idols do not have ears that can hear. The idols do not have eyes that can see, and the idols do not have a mouth that they can talk. So idol worshippers made their lamentations, their prayers, and their praises to their idols and the idol never responded.

God said, "I'm going to be just like an idol to you. When you talk to me, I'm not going to talk to you and when you look at Me, I'm not going to look back at you. I'm not going to see you." So in this way He became as one who is dumb and deaf and He did not respond to what they said.

At this point, I think that it is essential to note that God, in His wisdom, knew before creating mankind that mankind would sin. If there was going to be both reconciliation and character-building, there would have to be a means provided that would not only satisfy the legal requirements, but also contain within it the moral and spiritual influences that would motivate a man to cooperate on his own.

We play a major part in this, because God has given us free moral agency. The Protestant world by and large has convinced Americans and Canadians and western Europeans that Christ did it all for us. That is a bald-faced lie! But sometimes, brethren, *we* act as though it all depended upon God. God gave us free moral agency so that we can **respond** to Him, put His Word into practice, and exemplify before others what God is like.

It would be nice to say that we live lives like Christ so much so that we could say of ourselves what Christ said. Christ said, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father." There is a Person who was really at one with God.

What God is trying to do with all these things that He has provided—namely the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the gift of His Holy Spirit—is to motivate man to **repent**, change, turn to God, resist the desire to continue in sin, work at building character, and learn to live by faith.

Remember I said that God had to come up with something that satisfied the legal requirements and also provide inspiration—motivation—to get man to follow in a certain way. God chose the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. There might have been other ways, but God, in His wisdom, chose this way to do it. Somehow we could relate to a man being unjustly put to death for others.

Now in Romans 5, we are looking at what might be the most difficult passage of scriptures in the book of Romans. It is difficult, I think primarily because the reasoning is sometimes foreign to the western mind. We just do not reason the same way that they reasoned in the Mid-East, back in the days

of the first century, and there are some things that are bit difficult for us to grasp. We are going to begin in verse 10 because it is essential to see what the overall subject is.

**Romans 5:10** For if when we were enemies [separated from Him] we were reconciled [brought together] to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

We see by verse 10 that reconciliation with God is not the end of a process. It does not stand alone. We are reconciled so that we can be saved, and we will be saved because Christ is alive.

**Romans 5:11** And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Passover covers this because Christ died and by faith we believe and give our life to God. We repent and we are then reconciled to God, but that is not the end of the process. Now verse 12 begins this difficult section.

**Romans 5:12-18** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like *that* which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as through

one man's offense judgment *came* to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the* free gift *came* to all men, resulting in justification of life.

Reconciliation is the issue. Let us tear this apart. The chapter is talking about two people. It is talking about Adam and what he did, and how it affected mankind. The other one of course is Jesus Christ—what He did and how it affects mankind. It is not really a comparison, but a *contrast* that is going on here between the two of them.

Catholic doctrine of original sin says that we are all tainted by evil (by an evil nature), and death passes on to us because of Adam's sin. We *have* been affected by what Adam did, but not in the Catholic way.

What we are looking at here is a judgment by God. You will notice as we read that the word 'judgment' appeared at least three times. Verse 16: "For the judgment which *came* from one offense. . ." Who made that judgment? God made the judgment. We are looking at a judgment of God. Adam was the test case. He was the first man. He was the representative man, and what God judged was that as Adam went, so also would all of mankind. Mankind would just follow.

Now here comes one of the more difficult things. God judged things in this way: when Adam sinned, the *entire race* of mankind sinned in Adam. There is a practical explanation for this. Adam carried all of the genes and chromosomes, from which all of the rest of mankind would be created, in his body. So when Adam sinned, everybody sinned and God's judgment was that death therefore passed upon all men because Adam sinned.

If you think that is unfair, consider that this it is not the only place in the Bible where God judges this same way. One of the clearest examples of this is in Hebrews 7, where He judged that Levi paid tithes in Abraham to Melchizedek. But, brethren, Levi was not alive for three more generations after. It was actually Abraham that paid the tithes, but by God's reckoning, because Abraham was the father, grandfather, great grandfather, great, great grandfather of Levi—because Abraham was Levi's great, great grandfather,

Levi also paid tithes to Melchizedek. That is an unusual way of reaching a judgment, but here in Romans 5, sin passed upon all men because Adam did it.

God is also fair the other way, because while you and I were in ignorance, God was not holding sin against you and me the same way. Do you remember what Paul said? Paul said he was forgiven because he did what he did in ignorance. So God did not hold it against him the same way. Death passed upon all of us because we have all sinned.

God's judgment was proven to be true because everybody has sinned. Mankind proved His judgment to be true because everybody after Adam sinned, just as God said they would when He made the judgment.

I want to clarify a sinful nature was not created when Adam sinned. That is not what passes on to man. Death passes on because we sinned in Adam. But we prove God right because we very quickly sin after we are born (sometimes down the road) and we become accountable for sin. We prove God's judgment was correct. But it is not a sinful nature that passes through the birth processes. I do not know of anywhere in the Bible that it shows that something spiritual is passed along through something physical—by genes and chromosomes—through the birth process.

So, Adam was guilty of introducing sin into the creation of man. On the one hand what Adam did separates us from the Tree of Life and from the Holy Spirit, but on the other hand, we sin of our own accord and we prove God's judgment to be correct. So death is also earned, and the judgment is proved to be true.

Before we get to Christ, I want to expand on something here. Let us go back to Genesis 3.

**Genesis 3:1** Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

Now we know what happened—that he deceived them into sin, and then we find in verse 7 that the eyes of both of them were opened. They knew that they were naked. A change in their thinking—a change in their perspective; a change in the way they looked at things—occurred. This is very important to reconciliation. It is very important to the conversion process as we are going to see in just a little bit.

As long as they were united to God (before they sinned)—as long as they were at one with God—they looked at God, they looked at things, and they looked at the processes of life in a way that was not offensive to Him. But as soon as they sinned, their minds changed. Their perspective on the things that they formally looked at in innocence and in purity, began to change, and they began to see evil in things. (They were ashamed of their nakedness.) In addition to that, we find that they hid themselves: "Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden" (verse 8).

This encapsulates the effects of sin. It is separate from God. Adam and Eve wanted to hide themselves from God. Their perspective on the things of life had changed. Now we find that because of these things, God does this:

**Genesis 3:22-24** Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Now the separation is very clear, and mankind is cut off from God and cut off from the Holy Spirit. The episode there in the garden of Eden, as it is recorded, makes it very clear that it was mankind that took themselves away from God, not the other way around. There are no indications in Genesis 3 that Adam and Eve wanted the breach to be healed—not at all. All they did was justify themselves. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent.

**I Corinthians 2:9-13** But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the holy spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Because of the action God took upon the sin of Adam and Eve—Adam and Eve being cut off from the Holy Spirit—all of the cultures of mankind have been built on reasoning that is apart from God's Holy Spirit. You might say that man has been doomed to produce those kinds of cultures that are based on his own reasoning, because access to the Holy Spirit was cut off, and therefore there was a dimension missing in mankind's reasoning processes.

Therefore, the separation can only get wider, unless God acts to heal the breach. Unless God bridges the gap, mankind is unable to do it because (as we just read in I Corinthians 2) spiritual things are not physically discerned; eyes, ears, nose, mouth—they do not discern spiritual things. So mankind is trapped—he is doomed in that regard. Even though mankind was created with a spiritual capacity, it is so limited that it cannot find the true things of God, and therefore man is very easily overpowered by Satan.

Now back to Romans 5:15—actually we are just picking it up from there. God's solution to bridging the gap was as follows: just as mankind was cut off from God through one man, so would mankind be reconciled to God through one Man. But there are contrasts. Adam's sin and death ultimately affected man more or less automatically because it is the easy way to go—the broad way to go.

Christ, on the other hand, followed the straight and the narrow. He lived righteously and He died. His death is more than sufficient to cover all of the sins of all of mankind in order that reconciliation might be effected. But

what He did does not pass upon mankind automatically, and there is the difference, because unless God reveals Himself and people believe and repent, reconciliation cannot occur.

Reconciliation is necessary when parties disagree. Usually in such an occurrence, both parties are wrong at least to some extent and both have to make a sacrifice in order for a reconciliation to occur. However, in the case with God, all of the wrong is on one side. God never sinned. God did not drive us away from Him—not at all. The cause, or the need, for reconciliation is all our doing. But God, in order to accommodate us, makes the *first* move and He sacrificed the thing that was nearest and dearest to Him in order that reconciliation could be possible.

As far as we know, the only Being with whom He could share life was given in order to bridge the gap. Unfortunately, every aspect of this difficult section in Romans 5 is not provided in the context. What Paul has been aiming to do here (not just in this section beginning in verse 12) is to establish a firm legal basis for justification and therefore reconciliation with God by grace through faith in the sinless life and death of Jesus Christ.

Once reconciliation is accomplished, then sanctification can begin in earnest. Let us go to John 6—we are kind of making a jog in the sermon here. It is important that we get this part because repentance will never occur, reconciliation will never occur, sanctification will never occur unless something else is a part of our way of operating our lives.

**John 6:25** And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?"

Remember this is immediately following the feeding of the 5,000 with the five loaves and the two fishes. The people acted like they were going to take Jesus by force—make Him the ruler by public acclamation—and Jesus escaped out of the area and went to a private place. Then when everybody drifted away, the apostles went, at night time, across the Sea of Galilee toward Capernaum again. During the night Jesus walked across the sea. The sea was stormy, and that is when they had their reunion. The people began

looking around for Jesus. They figured the only place that He could have gone was back to Capernaum, so they came back. This is the episode that takes place when they had their meeting again—the 5,000 and Jesus.

**John 6:26-27** Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."

Notice, we are promised here by Christ that He will give us what we need for eternal life.

**John 6:28** Then they said to Him, [now this is their interpretation of what He said] "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"

Understanding the tenor of the times, you can understand this because they felt that all they had to do was do some work that God said that they were to do and salvation would be theirs. They did not understand about faith, justification, and grace. They were looking for the magic formula that would get them salvation. They were trying to **get** salvation—not **give** their lives to God—to get, not to give. It sounds just like the people in Isaiah. Now verse 29 contains the most meaningful pieces of instruction, maybe in the entirety of the Bible.

**John 6:29** Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

The purpose of the manifestation of Jesus Christ—God in the flesh doing all of these good things that He did: preaching the gospel, casting out demons, healing all of these people, and setting an example (such an example that He said, "If you see Me, you have seen the Father")—everything that He did was done for one reason: that people would *believe* .

Now is that too simple? That is the magic formula. But, brethren, this has been the problem from the very beginning. Adam and Eve did not believe God and they sinned. The reason we sin, the reason there is trouble on the streets, the reason there is divorce, the reason there is trouble between parents and children, husbands and wives is because people do not believe God. It is that simple!

He tells us in His book what to do, but we think there is a better way. "There is a way that *seems* right. . ." There it is in a nutshell. This is the basis of salvation; this is the basis of reconciliation. There will be no reconciliation unless there is repentance and there will be no repentance unless we believe—first of all that God *is* and secondly that His word is *true* .

Once we get past those places, we can begin to repent. Once we begin to repent, the reconciliation is absolutely sure because justification will occur, sanctification will continue. We will go right on out to salvation. The problem is, along the line we have to be continually reminded of what it is we are supposed to believe.

Human nature is so overpowering, and habit is so deeply ingrained in us—habits that we have forgotten are even a part of us. But they (our habits) have come out of the world, and they are offensive to God and they separate us from God. Eventually these habits have to be caught and repented of.

Now we begin to see that this being at one with God has more to it than just merely being justified by grace through faith and being reconciled to Him. It is something that only **begins** at justification and reconciliation because God is also building in us His holy, divine, righteous character.

Brethren, what you and I are going through is typical of what people are going to be going through during the Millennium and what people are going to be going through when they come up in that second resurrection.

They are going to have to go through the same basic processes. Reconciliation is not something that is going to occur simply because Satan has been gotten out of the way. A tremendous impediment will be gotten out of the way, yes, but that is not the end of it, because these people who come

up out of the graves in that second resurrection are going to have the same mind as they had when they went into it.

They are going to be deeply ingrained with the way of Satan, deeply ingrained with self-indulgence, self-centeredness, selfishness, and everything else that has created this world out there. They are going to have to go through the same processes of repenting and repenting and repenting and repenting, just as we do. The basis of it is whether or not we believe.

**II Corinthians 5:16** Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

What is he talking about here? Paul is talking about is the same thing that I said was so important back in Genesis 3. When Adam and Eve sinned, their perspective changed. They were moved away from God and they then began to look at the things of life, the events of life, and circumstances of life from a different point of view—a different perspective than they had been before.

You know how this works. If you are standing right beside somebody and both of you are looking at an object (such as a tree), you are both looking at it from the same perspective and both of you see essentially the same thing. But all you have to do is step 20, 30, or 40 feet away and the perspective from which you now observe the tree begins to change. Now you see things that were maybe not visible before when you were side by side with the other person.

That is the way it is with God. When we are at one with Him, we look at things exactly the same way He does. When we are not at one with Him, it is as though we have stepped away from Him and we begin to see things from a different perspective.

This is what Paul is talking about here. From now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Now that we have been converted, He is saying, we do not look upon people as Japanese, Chinese, Jewish, Russian—this is something that begins to fade into the background in terms of importance. The important thing now, to a converted person, is whether the person is converted or unconverted? The perspective has changed, that is all. The

perspective has changed because, in faith, you repented. God gave you His Spirit, and a new item has come into your thinking.

Let us go on a little bit further: "Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh. . ." Paul recounts from his own experience that there was a time when he looked upon Jesus Christ as the great Satan—the enemy of everything that was Judaic. Then he was converted. Now his perspective of Christ is, "Hey! He's my Savior! He's the greatest thing that's ever happened to humanity!" Same Paul, different mind—the perspective has changed.

**II Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Our relationship with God has changed and now all things are new. For us to look at things (to look at life) as we did before is going to be vanity, self-defeating—it will end in death. Now you look at things from the prospect of being in the Kingdom of God, being a king, being a priest, and being God.

What kind of a change does that make with the way that you conduct your life? Do you still look at things the same way as you did before? No. It used to be that Saturday was a play day, Saturday was a workday, or Saturday was a day when you did your own thing. It is not that way now.

It used to be that you looked upon Christmas as maybe one of the high times of the year and Easter too. Now, thumbs down on them. Now we look to God's holy days. Our perspective has changed.

Why have we done this? Because we believe that God is creating Himself in us; we are a new creation. The Captain—the Leader of our salvation, the One who is going on before us—Jesus Christ, is the second Adam. We have made the choice because our perspective has changed to follow Him.

This is why I said there is a contrast in Romans 5 between what happened more or less automatically (because Adam sinned), but does not happen automatically because of what Jesus did. We are an integral part of the process; we have to make the choices to follow, and our choices will never

change unless our perspective changes. The perspective changes because we have been reconciled to God. We have been allowed, if I can make this illustration, to come back into the Garden of Eden and take from the Tree of Life.

That is how atonement is accomplished. It is not a simple legal process.

**II Corinthians 5:18** Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself—not imputing their trespasses to them. (Remember I told you that God does not hold sins against man in the same way that He does those who have knowledge of His way and have been reconciled to Him?)

**II Corinthians 5:20** Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

Now from this section we can also learn that it was to God the Father that we are reconciled to. Jesus Christ was His agent of reconciliation and the result (the '**that**') that occurs is forgiveness. Our responsibility then, as shown in this context, is to carry the same message to others.

Let us go a little bit further because there is one more thing that I want you to get here. I want you to see very clearly that reconciliation of somebody who has been justified and reconciled to God is an ongoing process. It is not something that just occurs in a snap of the fingers. It is not just a legal thing, but it involves all of the practical aspects of life.

**II Corinthians 5:21** For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, **that** we might **become** the righteousness of God in Him.

**II Corinthians 6:1** We then, *as* workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

So reconciliation is an ongoing process whose objective is that we become "the righteousness of God"—that we become God—that we become righteous, as God is righteous, as Jesus Christ is righteous. So the objective is that we might become like God.

Very briefly, right at the end of this, what does fasting have to do with this day? Fasting is a tool and an object lesson. We generally speak of fasting in terms of it being a tool used to draw us close to God. I do not know about you, but most of the time when I think of drawing close to God, I think of God being on one side of the field while I am on the other side. When I draw close to God, I walk over closer to where He is. That is kind of dumb because it does not mean that at all (only vaguely).

What it means is becoming *like God is*—drawing closer to His mind, to His heart, to His character. Coming closer to *what* He is, not *where* he is. The best verse that I know of in the whole Bible for this is in Philippians 2:5.

**Philippians 2:5** Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

This is what God is after—to draw us to the place where we are close to what He looks like and to what He is. He wants His mind to be in us—that is the object. Now what kind of a mind does He have? It says plainly in Philippians 2, beginning in verse 5, that when He became a man, He **humbled** himself and was obedient even unto death.

Fasting is an exercise to humble us before God—to humble our own mind so that we become more like Him. Humility is the key to fasting. We will turn to Isaiah 66 which is one of those memory scriptures—at least we ought to know where this is said even if we do not know the verse exactly word for word.

**Isaiah 66:1-2** Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? [What are you going to do to impress me?] And where is the place of My

rest? For all those *things* My hand has made, And all those *things* exist," says the LORD. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.

"Somebody who believes Me and somebody who does what I say—that impresses Me." Do you want to impress God? There it is. It may be hard to do. It is certainly not hard to understand. Humility impresses Him and humility (as I Peter 5 and James 5 very clearly show) is a choice. It is something we choose to do; we choose to submit to God. That is what Christ did: He humbly submitted to God even to death.

We need God's food—apples, oranges, bread, and all those kind of things that He causes to come up out of the ground. When we eat them in the right amounts and in the right balance, good health is the result and we feel satiated. We feel full because we eat the things that He so generously provides.

Now when we do not eat, our body begins to feel weak and we know immediately that we need to get some food. If we do not get any food, we are going to hurt even more. I know with myself, the main thing that I feel is not hunger, but weakness. I begin to feel a little bit rubbery in the knees and I just do not have the zip, the zing, and the energy. My mind begins to go a little bit dull, and my tongue begins to get a little bit thick. Things just are not working with the smoothness that they normally do when I have my strength. I need the things that God provides.

When we fast we begin to get weak. He wants us to make the connection to the spiritual things; when we do not have things that we can get from him spiritually, we are going to be *just* as weak spiritually as we are physically when we do not have food. We will not be able to do spiritual things without those things that we can get from God and *nowhere* else. You can go to hundreds of different stores to get food to eat and it will make you feel strong physically, but there is only one place you can go to get the food that will feed you spiritually.

Humbling oneself before God is what is necessary to keep us from being separated from God. What can be produced by fasting is a vivid illustration of the attitude necessary for salvation—humility—thus allowing one's mind to change and turn toward God.

**John 13:34-35** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

God is showing through the church that all the prejudices against God and man can be dissolved and overcome through Christ. "New" here implies freshness, rather than from point of time. It is part of that different perspective. Love is merely the exercising of God's Word. Doing what He says to do is new for a convert because it means operating from the perspective of cooperation rather than competition.

The Day of Atonement ought to be teaching you that the initial reconciliation of you to God is not enough. It is the *beginning*. God intends to reconcile the whole world to Himself through His agent, Christ. The next step is to be reconciled with our brothers.

**John 15:13** Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

It is through exercising faith in God, during the trials and experiences of life that God is ensuring that rebellion and separation will not occur again. Being a friend requires more than casual acquaintance. Are you laying down your life? Christ laid His down even while we were enemies.

**Leviticus 16:20-22** And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the

wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

This is the result that will occur to one who will not allow his mind to change and turn to God: eternal separation.

So brethren, the keys to reconciliation with God or men, to respite (a breathing space), to peace, and the restoration of a formerly wonderful relationship, or the establishment of a *good* relationship following a bad one, are shown by this day. Christ had to die to satisfy the legal requirement.

God had to reveal Himself and His purpose and our sins to us so we could humble ourselves and repent. We have to believe God to the extent that we humbly submit in obedience to His way. So the process continues. It is shown by the exercise of fasting. Satan must be put away so there is not the constant irritant seeking to divide.

**I John 4:19** We love Him because He first loved us.

Here is the pattern. Even as Christ loved us while we were enemies, so do we have to love others first. It takes humility to do this—willingly submitting ourselves to God before others and understanding why we do what we do. Then they will understand and come to love us even as we now love God—because He *first* loved us.