

The Act of Reconciliation

In the beginning God created Adam and Eve. He covered them with light. They stood before each other naked and unashamed, and it was very good. God gave them an exciting to-do list. Do be fruitful and multiply. Do eat from the fruit of the trees. Do fill the earth. Do have dominion over everything. Do name the animals. No name was out of bounds. Chihuahua, hippopotamus, and cockatiel all made the list.

There were many opportunities among the do's, but Adam and Eve honed in on the one don't: Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They decided they would do that too. They disobeyed and rebelled against God. They chose to listen to the devil in the form of a reptile rather than to the Creator, then something terrible happened.

Their eyes were opened to sin and pain. The darkness they unleashed quenched the light that used to cover their bodies. When they stood before each other, they were naked and ashamed, and rushed to cover themselves. Immediately their relationship with each other was damaged. It remained to be seen what would become of their relationship with God.

God came looking for His children, the crown of His creation. Love rustled through the garden as He longed to cast eyes on them. The sound of His near approach struck fear in their hearts, so Adam and Eve hid from His presence. God called them, and the man eventually answered. He explained how rude it was to answer with no clothes on, thus the reason for his hiding and delay. "Who told you were naked?" God queried. They blamed each other for their sin. Their relationship with God was broken. Enmity had set in. Humanity was at odds with the animals, each other, and now with God. The chasm the rebellion caused had grown so great that God "was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart" (Genesis 6:6). God decided to destroy man and beast with the Flood. Still, in His great love, He could not destroy everyone. He instructed Noah to build an ark. Noah preached God's love and the coming destruction for more than 100 years. God provided a way for all to be rescued from destruction, but only Noah, his family, and some of the animals were saved (see Genesis 7:1-3).

Even then, God's heart was broken that it had to come to this, and He vowed never to completely destroy the earth with water again. Time and time again, humanity's rebellion would cause the anger and judgment of God. It would pain God so much. The Bible records that God would be sorry over the destruction, and would change His mind concerning the judgment that would come upon humans (see Exodus 32:14; Judges 2:18; Jonah 3:10).

The problem was that human beings were doing the sinning, but only God was feeling sorry about it. This continued to rip humans farther away from God. The prophet Isaiah reminded humanity, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). Every relationship stood in jeopardy if something drastic was not done.

God sent deliverance and expressions of love. He sent salvation and acts of mercy, and still humanity had been largely unresponsive. Humans were too far away. Yet instead of writing them off, God wrote Himself in and decided that He would bridge the gap between humanity and Himself. From heaven God declared, "Listen to Me, you stubborn-hearted, who are far from righteousness: I bring My righteousness near, it shall not be far off; My

salvation shall not linger. And I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel My glory" (Isaiah 46:12, 13).

Jesus, the Son of God, laid down His life for us so that we could be reconciled to God. To be reconciled means to mend a broken relationship. We were enemies of God, yet He loved and rescued us from destruction with the cross. "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10).

Though we were far off from God, through the blood of Jesus we are brought near (Ephesians 2:13). Our status changes from enemy of the state to children of the King! When we confess our sins, God promises to cleanse us. Jesus' sacrifice offers forgiveness of our past and a new future. Heaven and all its resources are open to those who accept Christ as Savior. We are given an all-access pass and can boldly come to God and ask for help in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

Why would God go through all this pain to mend our relationship with Him? Relationship is important to God. He is relationship. God is love. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He would not allow our relationships to remain broken. Even the shape of the cross seems to demonstrate the restoration and reconciliation of God. The vertical beam points us to communion with the Father, and the horizontal beam points us to communion with each other. Paul tells us that Christ has broken down the middle wall of separation, and though we were enemies, Jesus became our peace and removed the enmity between us (Ephesians 2:14-16).

This God is simply amazing! He went through the pain of earth, so that we could taste the joy of heaven. Jesus restored our relationship through His dying, but we have to maintain the reconciliation by our living. We must treasure the relationship Christ's spilt blood bought and grow it every day through prayer, Bible study, and worship. "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).