

"THE CHRISTIAN FAITH ONE WORD AT A TIME: RECONCILIATION!"

Romans 5:6-11

May the Lord of peace Himself give you His peace in every way. {2 Thess 3:16}

Dear People of God,

Conflict is never pretty. It rears its ugly head in just about every way imaginable. It's a **disagreement** between 2 people. It's a **clash** of two good teams vying for a World Cup title. It's an **argument** between a teen and parents. It's a **dispute** between the seller and the buyer. It's a **contradiction** between a defendant's story and a prosecutor's allegations. It's a **fight** between 2 spouses.

And the result? Two parties are split, shredded, torn, damaged, unloved, at odds, incompatible. Ultimately this kind of relationship, unless reconciled, usually has the two sides going in opposite directions!

I think you get the picture. We live, breathe, and sleep conflict. We just get finished with one and then another one comes along. That's the way it is in this sinful world. Conflict started because of a clash between God in heaven and man on earth and it has continued ever since.

So we need word to get us out of this conflict pickle. Not only will it help us in our Christian faith, it'll provide some help for our Christian lives too. Today we turn to our 3rd word. Remember the first two: "**Atonement**" and "**righteousness**"?. As these words begin to pile up each week in our summer series from Romans, we come to the same conclusion of how absolutely necessary these truths are for our Christian faith.

Our one word for this holiday weekend is:

"RECONCILIATION!"

As we consider our next Romans text in this series, this word leaves us:

1. Relieving – because it's accomplished by Christ's death
2. Rejoicing – because it's maintained by God's grace

1

Reconciliation means a settlement, a resolution, a compromise, a ceasefire, a bringing together, make right what once was wrong. In the Greek, the idea is a bringing someone into friendship/favor with God.

For a better understanding of this word, think back to Jacob in Genesis 28. There sleeps Jacob with a rock under his head. One wonders if his rock pillow or his head was harder. He had tricked his blind father {thanks to his conniving mother} into giving him the blessing that rightfully belonged to his brother. But there was hitch to that: now brother Esau was after a pound of flesh from Jacob in revenge. Can you spell **CONFLICT**? Jacob had to high tail it out of his homestead to save his neck and sneak away to his Uncle's place to wait for the smoke to clear back home.

1

In a sense, Jacob has dug his own grave using deception to gain a gift not rightfully his. Both he and his Mom didn't trust God enough to get him the birthright in God's plan, so they took matters into their own hands. On a rock pillow, Jacob rests his head, tired of running, homesick, and without a hope in the world of ever reconciling with his brother.

You wouldn't think this is the place God would appear. But he did – in a dream. There appeared God of Isaac and Abraham atop a stairway that stretched from earth to heaven. Angels of God were ascending and descending on his stairway from Jacob to God and back again. From his pulpit on top of the stairs, God reassured Jacob that He had reconciled him, brought him into friendship/favor with him. **I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth and you will spread out...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring...I am with you and will watch over you.** (Gen 28:13-16) Simply put, God told Jacob: **YOU'RE MY MAN & I'M YOUR GOD!** You get my favor because God reconciled him and not abandoned him.

There's a lot of Jacob in all of us. If you look closely at the printed out text on p 5+6, you'll notice **bolded words** that emphasize who we are by nature: "**powerless**", "**ungodly**", "**sinner**", "**God's enemies**." These are words that describe our complete uselessness and hopelessness before a just and holy God. We are the ones who double-crossed God with our lies, our deceptions, our struggles to have things our way. We are the one who have disobeyed God in every thought, word, idea, and action. We are the ones who have been disloyal to our Creator God that put us here on earth to glorify him. Instead we know all the tricks of the trade that result in broken homes, broken lives, broken promises, and broken relationships ultimately to end up in a broken eternity of hell's judgment and punishment.

Yet there is **RECONCILIATION**. How relieving is that because it's accomplished by Christ's death! You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God's plan happened at the right time. Jesus was sent to this earth for us to suffer and die for our sins. The only way He could reconcile us was to remove every sin of every soul. And when Jesus died to pay our penalty and satisfy God's justice, then God could bring us sinners back into friendship/favor with him.

This weekend, we remember our country's fallen heroes, those who survived, and honor those are even now are in harm's way defending and fighting in conflicts all over the world to protect our freedom to be here today. Some come home and some do not. Some pay a price with their lives physically/emotionally injured and others pay the ultimate price of their lives. **Some might possibly dare to die** for people they never knew. Why? Because they love their country.

God loved you. In Christ, we have peace with God. God has reconciled us, made right what once was wrong, for the flames of divine punishment and wrath have been suffered by the Savior who was innocent. Jesus took on the penalty for our selfishness, our anger, resentments, broken relationships and promises. On the cross, the thorns of our sins were driven into his head. The spikes of God's justice were driven into his hands and feet. The absolute payment for sin was due from his heart and soul instead of ours thus making it no choice than that **WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US.**

Through this demonstration of love, we are now reconciled to God. We are together with him, and that which separated us is now gone and we are back together with God because of Christ's death. That's relieving to know because as you sit there, you may wonder whether those sins of this past week are forgivable and forgettable. The answer is YES – you are **RECONCILED!**

2

If this one word leaves us relieving, then it also leaves us **REJOICING** – because our reconciliation is maintained by God's grace.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him...how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life. Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. We rejoice in our reconciliation because God didn't condemn us when he could have. Instead he condemned his Son. And we rejoice because on the last day when Jesus returns to judge this sinful world, we are not the enemies. We are His children. Through Jesus' life and resurrection, he has opened heaven's doors for us. Our place in eternity is guaranteed. It is secure through Christ. We will be saved by faith in that Son who is alive and will return with his holy angels to take us home.

Let there be no doubt about that. Let there be rejoicing and relief in knowing that every day is another day of God's grace. Our favor with God continues constantly whether we know it or not; whether we acknowledge it or not! Paul wrote to the Colossians: **21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation-- {Col 1:21-22}**

If conflict is never pretty, reconciliation is. Like two people at odds with each and then make up, like two enemies who settle their differences and restore their friendship, be confident and rejoice that God has reconciled us in Christ. We are not enemies. There is no fighting. There is no conflict.

On this holiday weekend, we do not forget the sacrifice it took to earn our freedom to live in this land we called the United States. But let us never forget the sacrifice of our Savior, Jesus who earned our spiritual freedom from sin and death in order that we might live eternally in heaven. That's what reconciliation is all about! May we rejoice and give God our glory and praise. AMEN