

“But All Things Are Of God ...”

“... who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us; we beseech you in behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:18-21).

As in other places the words “all things are of God” must be limited to its context, so must it also be here. Who is willing to say that all the wickedness in our world comes from God? The “all things” of the text are specifically the fact that our relationship to God is no longer based upon a fleshly one; that we are a new creature if we are in Christ, wherein we are reconciled to God.

The word “reconciliation” (or different forms of it) are not frequently found in the New Testament. It appears in 1 Cor. 7:10 where a divorced wife is commanded to be “reconciled” to her husband as an alternative to remaining unmarried. In Ephesians 2:16 Paul writes of Jew and Gentile being reconciled to each other in one body; in Colossians 1:21 Paul wrote of those who had in past been alienated (from God) but who had been reconciled to Him through the body of his death. It is in Romans 5:10-11 that the writer speaks of God reconciling man to himself through His son.

“Reconcile” means “to change from enmity to friendship, to reconcile” (W. E. Vines, Ex. Dict. of New Testament Words, Vol. 3: 260). The word reconciliation means, then, the act of making friends of those who were formerly enemies.

In this Corinthians text five different times the words reconcile (2x), reconciling (1x), or reconciliation (2x) are found. The apostles were given the word of reconciliation that they might accomplish their work of reconciliation; God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself; God reconciled us to Himself and the apostles urge us “be ye reconciled” to God.

While God reconciles us to Himself through Christ, man is entreated to be reconciled to God. This shows that reconciliation is accomplished only when man acts in the reconciling of himself to God. All men are free moral agents and Calvin’s doctrine of irresistible grace is shown to be false. If it were irresistible, there would be no purpose in appealing to men to be reconciled to God. If grace is irresistible, man would be reconciled to God whether he wished it or not.

In problems between men, it is not often the offended party that seeks reconciliation; it usually is the offending party or perhaps a neutral party who steps in to heal a breach neither affected part seems willing or able to mend. Yet in the case of reconciliation to God, it is God who is the offended party, as Paul puts it in Ephesians 2, man is dead through his trespasses and sins; Isaiah tells us that while Jehovah’s hand is not

shortened that it cannot save, our sins have separated us from Him (Isa. 59:1-2). Truly, "all we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6). And yet, despite the fact that man has grievously sinned against God and alienated himself from God, He longs for man to be reconciled to Him.

So God set about to bridge this chasm between Himself and man, His creature. He took his only begotten Son and made Him to be a sacrifice for our sins. "While we were weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6; cp. 2 Cor. 5:21). This sacrifice of Christ satisfies God so that the offenses we have committed against Him can be removed. Therefore, God reconciles us to Himself in Christ.

So the apostles whom Christ chose were sent on the mission to bring about reconciliation between man and God, a ministry of reconciliation. To them was given the gospel, the "word of reconciliation" and from them comes God's urgent, loving message: "Be ye reconciled to God." Will man be touched by God's great love for him or will he ignore God's glorious gift? If the past is any indication of an answer to this question, it tells us a few will accept God's grace, but that most men will turn it down, going further and further into sin. How sad!

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