

The Body of Christ Series

Lesson Seven: Reconciliation in the Body of Christ

Biblical Text(s): Ephesians 2:13-16; Colossians 1:17-23; Romans 5:8-11; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Introduction

This lesson concludes our study of the Body of Christ. We have discussed unity in the Body, what it means to be a part of the Body and developed a deeper understanding of how the Body of Christ functions effectively. This lesson focuses on reconciliation as one of the most fundamental concepts of the Christian message. Reconciliation takes place within the Body of Christ. Through the blood of Jesus we are reconciled back to God and our fellow believers.

There are four key teaching points we will cover in today's lesson:

- Reconciliation as a fundamental concept of the Christian message
- One New Humanity in the One Body of Christ
- Ministry of Reconciliation
- Dealing with Our Differences

Teaching Point 1: Reconciliation

Reconciliation is one of the most fundamental concepts of the Christian message which assumes man's alienation from God because of sin. As presented by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament, reconciliation is viewed as the establishment of peace with God. Through God's initiative of love, he sent his son Jesus to address the hostilities between God and man. While we were God's enemy (at war with him through our sinful thoughts and practices) Jesus reconciled us to God through his death.

Everett Ferguson in his book [The Church of Christ, A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today](#) defines reconciliation as follows:

“To reconcile” meant originally “to exchange” and then “to change from enmity to friendship, to make friends again” The idea of reconciliation is not part of the usual religious language in the Septuagint or Hellenistic Greek. It derives from personal relationships, especially secular diplomatic terminology. The word is exclusively Pauline in the New Testament. Paul describes salvation as humanity being brought into a state of friendship with God. Where there was once enmity, there is now peace.

Reconciliation is from God. God does not need to be reconciled to us. We need to be reconciled to God. It is not by man's initiative that we are reconciled to God through Christ. There is no possibility of true reconciliation until sin has been removed.

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Teaching Point 2: One New Humanity

Ephesians 2 ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **Colossians 1** ²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

We have been reconciled into the One Body of Christ. We have been brought near to God and made one with him and our fellow believers. The sacrificial blood of Jesus brings us to God. The blood of Christ obliterated the barrier that existed between God and man because of man's sin.

Ephesians 2 ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,

The reconciliation of both Jews and Gentiles occurs in the one body of Christ. Reconciliation with God is the basis for reconciliation among human beings. It is through Christ's death on a cross one new humanity is created. All things have been reconciled through the sacrificial blood of Jesus.

Ephesians 2 ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. **Colossians 1** ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

We are reconciled by Christ's physical body to present us to God as holy in the sight of God.

Colossians 1 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

So what does it mean to be reconciled to God to create one new humanity?

It is in the body of Christ that change takes place to remove the hostilities between human beings. The blood of Christ enables us to set aside differences which are commonplace among mankind. Human beings have divided themselves along racial, social, economic and political lines. The warring factions between the sexes is a continuous battle in today's culture. We are pitted against each other creating divisions, confusion and hatred toward each other.

Our behavior as human beings separates us from each other as well as God. Just as the blood of Christ removed enmity between man and God, it makes it possible for mankind to make peace with each other. This is possible for two reasons. First, reconciled man approaches God through the blood of Christ cleansed of his sins and declared not guilty in the sight of God. There is no discrimination by God as to who is permitted to enter into his presence. It is this same concept that is applied to human relationships – if God can accept men and women from differing economic, class or racial backgrounds why cannot men do the same?

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Second, the new humanity created by the blood of Christ are men and women who willingly accept the favor of God and deal with fellow believers on the same bases as God without pre-condition or requirements other than a love the Father.

Teaching Point 3: Ministry of Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 5 ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

What is the ministry of reconciliation?

God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting our trespasses against us. So we have been entrusted with God's appeal – to be reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus. The Good News – we have made peace with God and with man. This is the Good News message that Jesus charges us to carry forth to the entire world. Paul refers to this as the *ministry of reconciliation*.

Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them.

Ephesians 2 ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

Teaching Point 4: Dealing With Our Differences

The question might be asked, when the people of God fail to agree on matters of importance within the body, how does that impact the reconciliation work of Jesus?

This is a timely topic for the body of Christ today. Satanic forces are at work to destroy the peace of the church today. The church is confronted almost daily with differing views, perspectives, teachings which places barriers and obstacles between the redeemed of God. This topic is deserving of in-depth study and demands more time than we can devote here as a part of this lesson. However, we will hit a couple of key highlights which flow from the biblical text associated with today's lesson while bringing into view several biblical texts as a means to keeping focused on what it means to be reconciled to God and our fellow saints.

As we have already emphasized in this lesson, we have been reconciled by the blood of Christ one to another. Our reconciliation by the blood of Christ is not a provisional event. It is a permanent act of forgiveness and creation into a new humanity (Ephesians 2:15). The reconciling work of Jesus has been accomplished in the Throne Room of Heaven. Our response to differences of opinions, interpretation of biblical texts, or worship practices should be handled in accordance with the teachings of Jesus.

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Let's examine several texts to discern teaching from the Word of God:

1. **Jesus is our peace.** If we claim Christ as our Lord and Master, we are given his peace. Peace between God and mankind; Peace between man and man. As a practical matter this simply says we are obligated to live at peace with each other (Romans 12:18; 14:19).
2. **We will have differences.** How we deal with our differences is what matters most.

The Apostle Paul reminds us in (Ephesians 2:16) Christ put to death the hostility between man. The redeemed of God are not hostile to each other. Rather, they embrace and fully take on the person of Christ to live as reconciled men and women.

Jesus in (Luke 6:37-38) teaches us how to deal with our differences while living as the reconciled men and women of God. Jesus says when you have differences . . .

- a. Do not judge [*one another*], and you will not be judged.
- b. Do not condemn [*one another*], and you will not be condemned.
- c. Forgive [*each other*], and you will be forgiven.
- d. Give [*yield*], and it will be given to you.

What a prescription for practicing peace in God's family.

No doubt, some of us may have experienced difficulties with fellow saints which resulted in hurt feelings, emotional distress, anger or severe disappointment. For some it may be an intellectual exercise to deal with the hurts while emotionally continuing to harbor some grievance against a brother or sister. Jesus calls us to a higher standard of forgiveness

Matthew 6:14-16 ¹⁴For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. **Luke 6:36-38** ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Forgiveness is complete and unconditional. Our Father in heaven sets the standard by which we are called to forgive, turn loose and live above the hurts of this life.

Conclusion

We have been reconciled into the One Body of Christ. We have been brought near to God and made one with him and our fellow believers. The sacrificial blood of Jesus brings us to God. Reconciliation with God is the basis for reconciliation among human beings. It is through Christ's death on a cross one new humanity is created. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting our trespasses against us. So we have been entrusted with God's appeal – to be reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus. Satan attempts to disrupt the peace created by Christ through the shedding of his blood. Our response to his attacks should be done based on the teachings of Jesus.