

Lesson 51 at StudyRomans.org

Romans 5:10

Romans 5:10 — For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

As we said at the end of class last week, verse 10 is making the same point as verse 9 — if God justified us when we were his enemies, how can there be any doubt that God will save us when we are his children? But verse 10 adds a word that we did not see in verse 9 — the word “reconciled.” And, as we can see from the Handout for Lesson 51, the word “reconciled” is a word that we frequently find in Paul’s epistles.

But before we look at the word “reconciled,” let’s look at the word “enemies.” “While we were enemies.” Is Paul saying that we were God’s enemies or is Paul saying that God was our enemy? Is Paul saying that we were hostile to God or is Paul saying that God was hostile to us?

Paul might be saying that we were God’s enemies because we know that sinners are hostile to God.

Romans 8:7 — For the mind that is set on the flesh is **hostile** to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.

Colossians 1:21 — And you, who once were alienated and **hostile** in mind, doing evil deeds.

James 4:4 — You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is **enmity** with God?

Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an **enemy** of God.

But, on the other hand, Paul might be saying that God was our enemy because we also know that God is hostile to sinners.

Psalm 5:5 — The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you **hate** all evildoers.

Psalm 11:5 — The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul **hates** the wicked and the one who loves violence.

Romans 1:18 — For **the wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

John 3:36 — Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but **the wrath of God** remains on him.

So which is it here? Is this enmity in verse 10 describing our hostility toward God or God's hostility toward us?

I think the short answer is both because both were true — we had hostility toward God, and God had hostility toward us. But I also think that the weight of Paul's argument here in verse 10 leans more heavily on the hostility that God had toward us. Why? Because of that word "reconciled." Paul says that "we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." I think that word "reconciled" suggests that Paul's focus here is more on the hostility that God had toward us because of our sin.

If we look at the Handout for Lesson 51, we can see every use by Paul of the Greek word family translated "reconciliation" in this verse. And

although the Greek words in that word family can be used in either direction, Paul always uses those words in only one direction when he describes our relation to God. We are reconciled to God. God is not reconciled to us.

Why does the direction matter? It matters because, when it comes to our relationship with God, we are always the offending party, and God is always the offended party. That is why Paul always talks about our reconciliation to God and never about God's reconciliation to us. When it comes to our relationship with God, we (the offending party) are always reconciled to God (the offended party).

That is true of our relationship with God, but it is not true of our relationships with each other. When it comes to our relationships with each other, sometimes we are the offended party and sometimes we are the offending party. And Jesus has given us commands to follow in both of those situations.

If we are the offending party, we should turn to Matthew 5. That is where Jesus tells us what we should do if our brother has something against us — that is, if we have offended our brother.

Matthew 5:23-24 — So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and **go**. First be **reconciled** to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

But if we are the offended party, we should turn to Matthew 18. That is where Jesus tells us what we should do if our brother has sinned against us — that is, if we have been offended by our brother.

Matthew 18:15 — “If your brother sins against you, **go** and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

And yes, Matthew 18 gets pulled out of the holster in many different situations, but that opening phrase is the key to understanding when we should follow the procedures in Matthew 18 — “if your brother sins against you.”

There are two requirements in that opening phrase, and the first is that there be a sin. This is not just a disagreement. In fact, the Bible teaches us that there are an entire category of offenses that we should just overlook (1 Corinthians 6:7). For Matthew 18 to apply, there must be a sin. But not just any sin — this sin must be a sin against you. If you have not been personally offended by that brother, then Matthew 18 does not apply to your situation. If there is no sin against you, then you need to look elsewhere for guidance on what to do.

Why do I make that point? One reason I make it because false teachers often use Matthew 18 to argue that you should correct them privately for what they have proclaimed publicly. That is not what Matthew 18 teaches. In fact, that is not what the Bible teaches. Public error demands public correction, as we see very often from Paul.

So, back to Matthew 5 and Matthew 18. If we are the offending party, then Matthew 5 tells us to be reconciled to our brother. If we are the offended party, then Matthew 18 tells us to seek reconciliation with our brother — but note from Matthew 18 that our brother may refuse that reconciliation. Just because we seek reconciliation does not mean that reconciliation will happen.

And notice a key word in both of those passages — the word “go.” If we are the offending party, then Matthew 5 commands us to go (“leave your gift ... and go”). But if we are the offended party, what then? Can we sit around and sulk, waiting for that terrible offender to show up on our doorstep to beg our forgiveness? Not at all! Look at Matthew 18:15 — Jesus again tells us to go (“go and tell him”)! Whether we are the offending party or the offended party, the command of Christ is that we go to our brother.

Jesus told us the procedures that we should follow when it comes to reconciling ourselves to our offended brother or seeking reconciliation with our offending brother. What procedures do we have for our relationship with God? As we said, in that case we are always the offending party and God is always the offended party, but what should those two parties do? What is the procedure to follow?

The answer is that the same procedures are followed. In fact, I think we can safely say that the procedures that we have with God are the reason we have those procedures with our brother. And I think we can see that fact from something else that we find in Matthew 18 — the parable of the unmerciful servant. Remember what the master said to that servant who failed to show mercy to others after having had mercy shown to himself.

Matthew 18:33 — And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, **as I had mercy on you?**

The message of that parable is clear — our model for how we treat others is how God treats us. And I don’t think it is a coincidence that we find that parable of the unmerciful servant in the same context as the

command from Christ that we seek reconciliation with our offending brother.

What if we fail to seek reconciliation with our brother when God has sought reconciliation with us? Has our brother committed some sin against us that is worse than the sins we have committed against God? We know that is not the case. We are like that servant in the parable — we owe God 10,000 talents, while our brother (whatever he might have done) owes us only a few pennies.

Again, our model for showing mercy to our brother and seeking reconciliation with our brother is the example that we see in God and how God has shown us mercy and sought reconciliation with us.

And that really puts a different light on the sin of stewing. The sin of stewing? What is that? We all know what that is. “Brother so and so has really offended me. He owes me a huge apology. And so I am just going to sit here and stew and sulk until I get it.” That is the sin of stewing.

And just how terrible is the sin of stewing? It is just as bad as receiving mercy from God for a 10,000 talent debt while showing no mercy to our brother who owes us pennies. It is just as bad as that. In fact, it is the same as that. I think that is what Jesus is telling us in Matthew 18.

And let me add something to our list of things that we should thank God for every single day of our lives: “God, I am thankful that you did not just sit and stew after I sinned against you!” God did not sit; instead God went! God acted! God came to us to seek reconciliation!

And how did God do that? Paul tells us right here in verse 10 — “we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” And we find that same answer in many other verses. Just look at the Handout for Lesson 51:

- “In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Corinthians 5).
- “That he ... might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross” (Ephesians 2).
- “And you ... he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death” (Colossians 1).

That is what God did to reconcile us to himself. He gave his only begotten Son (John 3:16).

So let me ask again, just how terrible is that sin of stewing and sulking? Well, look at it this way — God sought reconciliation with me by sending Jesus to die on the cross, and yet I am not willing to even pick up a telephone to seek reconciliation with my brother? I don’t know about you, but that looks to me like the difference between a debt of 10,000 talents and a debt of a few pennies, which I think is how Jesus wanted us to see it given the placement of that parable in Matthew 18.

This reconciliation in verse 10 is the reconciliation that occurred at the cross. This reconciliation is the reconciliation that happened when God’s grievance against us was removed by the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Prior to the cross, God was hostile to us. But after the cross, that hostility was gone for those cleansed by the blood of Christ.

But if God was hostile to us prior to the cross, doesn't that mean God did not love us prior to the cross? No, not at all. We know it does not mean that. Jesus commanded that we love our enemies, and the greatest example of that is God's love for his enemies. God loved us while we were his enemies (John 3:16).

That is the same love that God is pouring in Romans 5:5 and the same love that God is showing in Romans 5:8. And God had that love for us while we were his enemies. God had that love for us at the same time that God was hostile to us because of our sin. That love of God is the greatest example anyone could ever imagine of loving one's enemies. And that example is an example for us just like the example of God's mercy and the example of God's desire for reconciliation with us.

How are we to love others? We should follow the example of God. How are we to be reconciled with others? We should follow the example of God. How are we to show mercy to others? We should follow the example of God. In each case, God gave us the perfect example. God gave us the pattern. And we must follow God's example.

When we look at the pattern in Matthew 18 what we see is that, when we are the offended party, we must go and seek reconciliation. That is what God did with us, and he left us that example to follow. When our brother sins against us, the command of Christ is that we go — not that we sulk.

But Matthew 18 also teaches us something else — it teaches us that we each have a role to play in that reconciliation. The offended party goes to seek reconciliation, and the offending party either accepts that reconciliation or rejects it. That is what we see in Matthew 18.

Matthew 18:15-17 — If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he **listens** to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not **listen**, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to **listen** to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to **listen** even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

“If he listens to you.” “If he refuses to listen.” That is the choice that is placed before the offending party. If he listens and restores the relationship, then you have gained your brother. If he refuses to listen, then you have lost your brother. You wanted reconciliation, but your brother did not.

Again, I think we can learn something about our reconciliation to God from that example. We play a role in that reconciliation. We are not reconciled against our will. We can either listen and accept it, or we can refuse to listen and reject it.

What must we do to accept it? The Bible answers that question elsewhere, but we know we must do something. The offended party offers reconciliation, and the offending party decides whether to accept or reject it.

And what is the first step laid before the offending party in Matthew 18? Look at the text: “If he listens to you.” And doesn’t that first step remind us of something else we read in Romans? Faith cometh by hearing! Hearing is the first step for the offending party in the process of reconciliation — both with reconciliation to your brother in

Matthew 18 and with reconciliation to God in Romans 5. The offending party listens to the offended party.

And while we are on the topic of reconciliation, let's consider another question, not about Romans, but about the entirety of the Bible. What is the theme of the Bible? If you had to choose only one word for that theme, which word would you choose? I might choose the word "reconciliation."

The Bible opens with creation and the placement of man in the Garden — but then we see sin, and we see separation from God. (Paul will talk about those events in verse 12.) Isn't the remainder of the Bible directed to undoing the damage that sin caused? Isn't that why Jesus came?

1 John 3:8b — The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

And what was the primary work of the devil? Wasn't it separation? Wasn't it separation from God because of sin? And isn't Satan's work of separation destroyed by the reconciliation we have because of the cross of Christ? Satan separates, but God reconciles.

Adam and Eve lived with God in the garden, and one day we will live with God in heaven. And everything in the Bible is directed to that reconciliation. Everything in the Bible is about God's desire to once again dwell with his people.

But we should note that, although we will someday dwell with God in heaven, we also dwell with God right here and right now. We are members of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19). We are the children of God (1 John 3:1). The church is a dwelling place for God.

Ephesians 2:22 — In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 6:16b — For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

John 14:23 — Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

Reconciliation with God is a blessing that we in the church are enjoying today. In fact, that is what Paul tells us right here in verse 10: “**now** that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” Now that we are reconciled!

This reconciliation is a present blessing! Not just our reconciliation in heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven right now (Philippians 3:20). We can boldly approach the throne of grace now (Hebrews 4:16). Sin no longer stands between us and God. We have been reconciled.

But what does Paul mean when he says that we shall be saved by Jesus’ life?

The fact that we shall be saved by the life of Christ reminds us of what we said earlier about the final verse of Romans 4 where Paul said that Jesus was raised for our justification. Everything we said there about the necessity of the resurrection of Christ to our salvation in Christ also applies to verse 10 here. We shall be saved by his life! Jesus did not remain in that tomb, and everything depends on that historical fact.

But why the future verb tense — “we shall be saved”? Aren’t we already saved? Yes, we are — Paul tells us that elsewhere.

Ephesians 2:8a — For by grace you have been saved through faith.

Titus 3:5 — He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

But Paul also describes our salvation as an ongoing process.

1 Corinthians 1:18 — For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 — Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you — unless you believed in vain.

And salvation is also described in future terms, as we see here in verse 10, and elsewhere.

Romans 13:11 — Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.

1 Peter 1:5 — Who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

So which is it — past, present, or future? The answer, of course, is yes! Our salvation is all three of those things. And we know that is

true because that is how the Bible describes our salvation — in past terms, in present terms, and in future terms.

And I think we all know what that means. We were saved (past tense) when our sins were washed away and we arose from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life. We are being saved (present tense) as we walk in the light, having our sins cleansed by the blood of Christ. And we will be saved (future tense) when, after having been faithful unto death, we hear Jesus say, “well done thou good and faithful servant!”

Romans 5:11

Romans 5:11 — More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

If there is a theme in verses 9-11, it may be the word “more”! That word has appeared in each of these verses, and twice as part of the phrase “much more.”

- Verse 9: “much **more** shall we be saved”
- Verse 10: “much **more**, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved”
- Verse 11: “**More** than that, we also rejoice in God”

Why is Paul emphasizing that word? I think the answer is simple — what word is better to describe what God has done for us, is doing for us, and will do for us? More and more and more and more and more! There is no end to the goodness of God!

John 1:16 — For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

Romans 8:32 — He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Ephesians 2:7 — So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:20 — Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.

Grace upon grace. More upon more. And however much we think God has done for us, Paul says that God is able to do “far more abundantly” than anything we can ask or even imagine.

And what more should we do after hearing how God is blessing us more and more? What we do more is exactly what Paul tells us to do right here in verse 11 — we rejoice. Paul says that “more than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” We rejoice more and more and more as God blesses us more and more and more!

And, once again, Paul reminds us that we have now received reconciliation. That reconciliation is a present blessing that we enjoy in the body of Christ. Yes, one day we will live in the presence of God, but that is not when our reconciliation begins. We are reconciled to God right here and right now if we have obeyed the gospel of Christ and if we are walking in the light. We are members of God’s family right here and right now if we have been added by God to the Lord’s church.

We are dwelling with God right here and right now if we have been added to the household of God, which is the church of Christ.

Romans 5:12

Romans 5:12 — Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

Starting with verse 12 and continuing through the end of the chapter, we enter one of the more difficult sections of Romans. I would not say it is the most difficult section, but it is certainly on the list!

And, as we almost always do, let's start with the first word! And that word is "therefore." Whatever Paul is about to tell us in verse 12, it is the logical conclusion of what he just told us. And what did Paul just tell us? He just told us all about the love of God. So whatever Paul is about to tell us, it follows from the love of God. It is explained by the love of God. Let's keep that purpose in mind as we work through these difficult verses.

And let's start with this question about verse 12 — who is this "one man" through whom sin came into the world? The answer to that question is both easy and difficult.

As for the easy part, the answer is Adam. Paul will tell us as much in verse 14 when he talks about "the transgression of Adam," but we see it even more clearly in the parallel passage from 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22 — For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

There is no doubt that Paul is talking about Adam here in verse 12, but what Paul says about Adam creates a difficulty for us. Why is Paul blaming everything on Adam? Why does Paul say “one man” instead of “one woman”? After all, it was Eve who committed the first sin, right?

Yes, she did. But look at what Paul tells us. Sin came into the world through Adam? Death came by Adam? As in Adam all die? I think if Adam were here, he might repeat what he said to God in the Garden.

Genesis 3:12 — The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”

Poor Adam! There he was just minding his own business, with Eve off doing who knows what, and suddenly Adam is the man who brought sin and death into the world! Isn't this all just a little too harsh? How can we explain it? I think that when we investigate it, we will see why this charge was made against Adam rather than against Eve despite the order of events found in Genesis 3.

To begin, let's notice the word “through” that we have also seen used in other ways in this same context. Paul tells us that sin came into the world **through** Adam. As we know, Eve was not created from dust, but rather she was created from one of Adam's ribs (Genesis 2:21-22). And so, very literally, whatever Eve did could be said to have come **through** Adam because Eve came from Adam. That may be the answer.

But, even if that is the answer, why say it that way? Why not just say that sin came from Eve rather than saying that sin came through

Adam? To answer that question, we need to notice how Paul is using Adam here in verse 12.

Paul is using Adam to make a typological parallel with Christ. Paul tells us that explicitly later in verse 14 when he describes Adam as “a **type** of the one who was to come.” And how was Adam a type of Christ? Although we can see the answer to that question here in Romans 5, we can see that answer most clearly in a parallel passage.

1 Corinthians 15:45-49 — Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ... The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Look at all of the parallels that Paul provides in that passage: first man Adam and last Adam; living being and life-giving spirit; a man of dust and a man from heaven. Paul is using Adam to teach us about Jesus both there in 1 Corinthians 15 and here in Romans 5. Adam (the man of dust) is the representative of the old creation, while Jesus (the man of heaven) is the representative of the new creation.