

There are many reasons why Jesus died on the Cross. Time hardly permits us to explore all of them this morning, but as we ramp up to Holy Week, Good Friday, and Resurrection Sunday, let's focus on perhaps the most personal and fascinating of them all. Listen to the Apostle Paul in Romans 5:9-11 and I Corinthians 5:17-21:

9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

17 If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that 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. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Objects of Love Turned Objects of Wrath

The amazing news of the Bible is that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit created us to share with us the eternal love and joy they mutually enjoyed from eternity past. However, when sin entered this world, and us, our relationship with God was horribly fractured. To be clear, this "sin-break" wasn't one of indifference in which we were innocent bystanders. No, we are much more complicit! In Romans 5, Paul used four words that describe how we, as active combatants, have subverted and sabotaged our relationship with God: "powerless" (v6), "ungodly" (v6), "sinners" (v8) "enemies" (v10). In Romans 8:7 he summarized our battle with God with the simple phrase:

The sinful mind is hostile to God.

The Greek term for hostile is *ekthra* which describes an antagonistic, acrimonious, and militant state-of-affairs. This means that every sinful thought is an act of warfare against God. Every disobedience is an act of aggression against his glory and defiance against his will. It may sound rather odd to hear this. Given our therapeutic culture where everyone is a victim, and the evaporation of biblical preaching these days, we seldom think of sin in this way. Or we simply blame "splain" and shove it off to the devil our circumstances, or someone else who made us do it. But, every sin, regardless of where we may place it on our relativistic "bad-to-no-so-bad" scale, deeply damages and further divides our relationship with God. If you will, it "Grand Canyons" the relation gap between him and us. Romans 3:23 speaks to this dynamic when it says:

All have sinned and fall short of God's glory.

Isaiah the prophet adds, (Isaiah 53:6, I Peter 2:25):

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way...

The relational fallout of sinning and turning to our own way is that we have become objects of God's wrath instead of objects of his love. This may be the terrible news of the Bible, but terrible news is never the last news of the Scripture. The resumption of the amazing news is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:9:

**God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation
through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Benefits of Reconciliation

When we put our faith in Jesus and what he did for us on the Cross, our war with God is over (v21, I Peter 3:18). We are reconciled (8x)! Who loves reconciliation after being on the "outs" with a spouse, family member, friend, or fellow worker? How many do you know that making up is far better than fighting? Biblical reconciliation is the reestablishment of interpersonal relations by making things right and removing hostilities. Jesus did that for us. Paul not only describes the lengths God took to reconcile battle hardened, sin soldier sinners like us, but also the benefits we receive because of this reconciliation. Indicate with an "amen" or "woohoo" if you like any of the following...

We are justified by his blood (v9). "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness for sin" Hebrews 9:22 informs us. But Jesus, the "Lamb who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, Revelation 13:8) freely allowed his blood to flow on the Cross of Calvary. Because of his sacrifice we now stand before God "just-if-we-have-never-sinned." Now that deserves another wow!

We are saved through his life (v10). We are justified by the blood of Jesus, but we are saved through the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus was resurrected by his Father because of his sinless life and self-sacrifice. However, if Jesus never exited that tomb, we would still be at war with God and speeding down the highway to hell. But he did, and now we are climbing the stairway to heaven!

God no longer holds our sin against us (v19). "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered...whose sin the LORD does not count against him" the psalmist celebrates (32:1). This purposeful "Divine Forgetfulness" happened at the Cross, but I also like to think of it in terms that God will not charge us for the "sin war crimes" we previously committed against him.

We become his new creation (v17). Until God creates the "New Heavens" & "New Earth" at the end of history, he is currently recreating every one of our hearts until then. Listen to Marian J. Ellis on this point:

The hero of this story is God. For His own glory, God pursues us, reconciles us, and makes us new. Salvation was His idea. The Christian message is that "in Christ" we are made new. This is a work of God alone, who calls us His children and transforms our reality to match our new identity.

When people say, "Let go of the past" that small encouragement is healthier and more biblical than we think. Therefore, we can, we should, and we must, let the past go, because God did, and as his new creations, all our sins and sinful past is gone. No matter where we have been or what we have done, it's no longer who we are or even what God sees, thinks, or remembers of us.

God gives us the ministry of reconciliation (v19). If God could do the hard part and reconcile humanity to himself through the death of his Son, then what is it for us to forgive, reunite, and restore anything that divides us?

Conclusion

The main take away we take away from this radical reconciliation we have received in Christ, is to live into our new identity which Paul entitled, “ambassadors of reconciliation” (v20). As such, it is our duty and delight, to spread the amazing news that God wants all hostilities to cease, and all that one needs to do is surrender to his loving Lordship. Listen to God’s appeal in Isaiah 1:18 :

Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

So, if you are still fighting God, stop it!

You won’t win and you’ll miss out on these incredible benefits and eternity to boot.