

On the cross, Jesus restored us to God

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Date: 17 August 2025

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- [0 : 0 0] One of mine was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate. I don't know if you've ever had a party like that or an experience like that.
- ! It's a scene that Jesus describes for us so that we might understand what it means to be reconciled to God.
- To be at peace with God. And that's what Paul has in mind in one sense in Romans chapter 5 when he says in verse 1, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
- And the peace that Paul has in mind is this idea of flourishing, deep-rooted well-being as a result of being in good relationships with the Father.
- So that whatever else is going on in our lives, it is well with our souls. And so this morning as we continue our series reflecting on what Jesus has done for us on the cross, we want to consider the fact that on the cross Jesus has reconciled us to God.
- [1 : 3 5] how Jesus has reconciled us to God. Or to say it like this, how God the Father has reconciled us to himself through what Jesus has done.
- And so we're simply going to ask three questions just to bring us through this passage of Scripture. And the first question we're going to ask is, why did we need it?
- Why did we need to be reconciled to God for peace to be restored with God? And that's a simple enough question to answer.
- The reason we needed to be reconciled to God was because our relationship with God was broken. Our relationship with God was broken. We see that in verse 6.
- Paul says at the end of the verse, Christ died for the ungodly. Jesus didn't die for people who were godly or good or holy or saints.
- [2 : 3 9] Jesus died for the ungodly. In verse 8, Paul says, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. We were people who had sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
- In verse 10, Paul describes us as God's enemies. And Paul includes himself in that.
- While we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him. And so Paul is speaking to people and including himself in it, who were ungodly sinners and enemies, the relationship was broken as a result of how we had lived.
- And this was a two-way dynamic. So it was that our relationship with God was broken and God's relationship with us was broken. Our relationship with God was broken because of how we had lived and who we were in our heart of hearts.
- But his relationship with us was also broken in a sense. And so in verse 9, Paul says, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath? That is God's good anger towards sin.
- [3 : 5 9] What Paul is implying there is that God wasn't at peace with us when we were ungodly or sinners or enemies.
- And so in a sense, it is a two-way breakdown of relationship. But we had no right to be opposed to God.

We had no right to be hostile to God. God is love. God is good. God is holy. God is faithful. God is merciful. God is forgiving.

We had no right to be an enemy of God, to turn our back on God. We didn't have a millimeter of ground to stand on, to point the finger at God and say, this is why I'm angry at you, God.

And yet God had every right to be rightly angry at us. The relationship was broken.

[5 : 03] Our hearts were not as they should be in our minds, in our hearts, in our lives, in our decision making. We saw this in how we used to live. We would hurt ourselves and hurt others.

while we were still sinners, Paul says. And the reason there was such hurt and brokenness in different aspects of our lives, not that they were as bad as they could be, but that every part of our lives were broken.

And the reason was because we were not at peace with God. And God was not at peace with us. And maybe you've seen in your life how, as you've grown older, you maybe had a particular version of life in mind.

This is how life is going to be in five years' time, in ten years' time. And perhaps you've got what you wanted, got what you thought life would be like, and it hasn't satisfied.

Or maybe you've got exactly what you've wanted, and it has satisfied to an extent. And yet there's that creeping realization that sooner or later, like all good things, the things that we find satisfaction in will slip away from us.

[6 : 29] Because we weren't made to find our ultimate satisfaction in the things God has created, though they are for our joy and our delight.

We were made to find ultimate satisfaction in God. And while we were still sinners, while God was not at peace with us, we couldn't possibly find satisfaction apart from him.

And if you've come to trust Jesus, if you know Jesus, as many of us do here this morning, if we have taken him at his word, you realize, don't you, that this was what I was like.

I was an enemy of God. I was opposed to God. I was hostile to God. But what Paul wants us to appreciate more deeply is that God was not at peace with us and could not be at peace with us while we were in that state.

And so why did we need to be reconciled to God? Well, because the relationship was broken. We weren't at peace with him. And more profoundly, he wasn't at peace with us.

[7 : 43] And so that's our first question. Our second question is, well, how did God reconcile us to himself? How did that happen? If we're to have peace with God, what needs to happen is the reason for the animosity, the reason for the hostility, the reason for the right anger of God towards us, that reason, that ground needs to be dealt with.

It needs to be removed in some way. The sin or the ungodliness or the hostility on our part needs to be dealt with. That's how we will be reconciled to God.

It's interesting that Jesus in Matthew's gospel tells a story. He says that if we are going to bring a gift to God and we realize that our brother has something against us, that we are to leave our gift, go and be reconciled to our brother or to our sister, and then come and offer our gift.

And what Jesus is saying there is that as somebody is bringing a gift to God, if they realize that they have done something that their brother now rightly has against them, they need to be reconciled.

They need to remove the grounds for their brother's right anger towards them. They need to go and speak to their brother about that. They need for the grounds to be removed, the reason to be dealt with.

[9 : 15] And when Paul is speaking in Romans 5, what we need to realize is that God is not at peace with us. He has something against us.

Those grounds need to be removed. The reason needs to be removed. But of course, that's something that we couldn't do.

Our hands were tied by the sin that was in our hearts that had alienated us from God in the first place. There was nothing that we could do.

But the good news is that God has done what we could not do. God removes the reason for his good anger towards us so that he might be reconciled to us.

He removes the grounds for his good anger towards us so that we might have peace with God. The good news is that it's not because of anything we have done, but because of what God has done, that we have been reconciled to him.

[10 : 23] And the way in which he has done that is through Jesus. In verse 1, Paul says we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In verse 11, Paul says we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. And so it is through Jesus that God has removed the grounds for his good, right anger towards us.

And more precisely, it is through the death of Jesus that he has removed the grounds for his good, right anger towards us. In verse 6, Paul says, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

In verse 8, Paul says, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. In verse 9, Paul says we have now been justified by his blood, which is another way of saying by his life poured out in death.

In verse 10, Paul says we were reconciled to him through the death of his son. Over and over again, Paul underlines this wonderful truth that it is through the death of Jesus that he has removed the grounds for his right anger towards us so that he can be at peace with us and we can be at peace with him.

[11 : 57] And to think even more closely on the death of Jesus, there are two things at least that have happened when Jesus died. The first thing that happened is that Jesus was made sin.

Paul doesn't spell that out for us here, but he does in 2 Corinthians. Jesus was made sin on the cross. Paul says later on in Romans that the wages of sin is death.

And you reflect on Jesus' perfect life. He never sinned. Then why has he received the wages of sin? Why has he died? Well, the reason he has died is because he was made sin for us.

He has received the wages that we deserve so that all who trust in him will never die, but enter true death into his presence forever.

And not only was Jesus made sin through the cross, but we are made righteous.

[13 : 12] We are made righteous. In verse 7, Paul says, very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person. And as he's building his case here, what he's highlighting again is that we were not righteous.

We were not justified. But then he says in verse 1, we have been justified. He says in verse 9, we have been justified by his blood.

And the word justified and the word righteous have the same root. So that what God has done on the cross of Christ is not only that Jesus has become sin, but we have become righteous.

Righteous. We could never justify ourselves. How could we stand before God and justify how we have lived this life that he has given us?

We could never claim innocence. The ones in the Gospels that Jesus encounters who claim innocence or righteousness are the ones that Jesus is most opposed to, least at peace with.

[14 : 23] And yet here's the good news. God justifies us. Not because of what we have done, but because of what Christ has done.

The ground of our justification, the ground of us being declared righteous before God, is the cross of Christ. So that we can sing on this solid rock I stand.

All other ground is sinking sand. God had every reason to be rightly angry with us, to not be at peace with us.

But the amazing thing is now, because of what Jesus has done and because of what God had planned for Jesus to do, God has no right to be angry with us anymore.

God does not have any grounds to be opposed to us, to not be at peace with us, because of what Christ has done.

[15 : 28] And that is the situation that he wanted for his people. That through the death of Jesus, he has dealt fully with the grounds for his right anger towards us so that we would be reconciled to him.

It is through the death of Jesus, he was made sin, we were made righteous, that we were reconciled to God. As one author puts it, between eternal love and reconciliation, there are these two momentous steps.

Christ has made sin, sinners are made righteous, and it is to those who are thus righteous that God is reconciled. God cannot count your sins against you because your sins are no more.

They are taken by Jesus on the cross. He has brought about peace between God and us.

And what do we bring to this? We bring nothing. Nothing in our hands we bring. Simply to the cross we cling. We simply receive it, as Paul says in verse 11.

[16 : 57] We have received reconciliation. It is a gift to be received. How do we receive it? Simply by believing in what he has done. In verse 1, It is through faith, in other words, through trusting in Jesus, that we receive this peace with God.

We simply take him at his word. That what he says he has done on the cross of Christ, he has done. And praise God, because it is true that God has brought about peace between us, ungodly, sinful enemies of him, and reconciled us to himself.

And he was doing this before ever you were born. This is how much it depends totally on God. We weren't even born, and Jesus was dying for us.

And so we trust him. We take him at his word. And if you're here this morning, and you're wondering, why don't I have peace in my life? If you don't know Jesus, if you don't trust Jesus, the reason that you don't have peace in your life is because you don't have peace with God.

The reason your mind, or your heart, or your decisions, or your relationships aren't as you would love for them to be is because you don't have peace with God.

[18 : 30] If you're wondering, why are the things that give me the most joy and the most pleasure in life the things that also never quite satisfy?

Why is it that the law of diminishing returns continues to operate in my life? Well, Paul tells us it's because we need to be reconciled to God.

We need to have peace with God if we have not trusted in him or believed in what Christ has done. And so I plead with you if you don't know Christ, receive him.

Believe in him that what he has done is to remove the grounds for God to have any anger towards you so that you might be at peace with him and he might be at peace with you.

So how has it happened that we've been reconciled to God? It's through the death of Jesus. Let's consider our last question. What happened next or what happens next?

[19 : 41] Well, we've been declared righteous by God. Paul says God has demonstrated his love for us in verse 8.

God demonstrates his own love for us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And God is at peace with us.

Verse 1, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. So we've been declared righteous. We have a demonstration of God's love in what Jesus has done. God is at peace with us.

These things are objectively true. They are facts. And what next? Well, a lifetime of enjoying and learning to grow in trusting that what God has said he has done is actually what he has done.

A lifetime of learning to delight in this God who has reconciled us to himself. We have been declared righteous.

[20 : 48] That is objective fact for all who trust in Christ. That is the status we have before God. And so now what we do is we live according to what he has done.

We live according to that new nature that we have in Jesus. Jesus. I was chatting to a guy during the week and we were just reflecting about how in each chapter of our lives God has been graciously showing us parts of our own hearts that we didn't even know were there.

The impatience or the anger that bubbles up. And at each point we've kind of are tempted to think well now I'm sorted. sorted. And then you move into the next chapter of life and you realize actually my heart isn't sorted at all.

But this God who has declared me righteous is going to make me more and more like him by the power of his spirit. And so we enjoy a life of learning to walk in his ways as those who have been declared righteous.

And of course it's not just a legal declaration. It's not like we leave the courtroom. Sorry, I've cut out. It's not like we leave the courtroom and God moves on to the next person.

[22 : 09] Can you still hear me? Super. It's not like we leave the courtroom and God moves on to the next person. The fact that we've been declared righteous with God is so that God can welcome us into this personal relationship with him.

And so objectively he is at peace with us. And what we spend the rest of our lives doing is enjoying the peace that we have with God.

So he has declared that he is at peace with us. And we spend the rest of our lives learning to trust that, learning to grow in that. God's And so when Paul says, for example, in verse 3, we also glory in our sufferings, part of the reason we glory in our sufferings is not because we like suffering, part of the reason we glory in our sufferings is because we know that even though we may suffer, we still have peace with the Father.

That even though we may suffer, we still have peace with God through Christ. And so though we may be tempted to think, well, this suffering is because of God being angry at my sin, we realize that, no, I have peace with the Father through what Christ has done.

And so, like Paul says, we glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character, character, hope, so that this Father who has brought about peace between him and us is also the one who helps us to grow through all of life's circumstances so that we might know what it is to love him and to trust him and to have this experiential peace even through challenging times.

[24 : 14] And it's not only that God has objectively declared us righteous and we learn to live in that righteousness, it's not only that God has declared peace and brought about peace and we learn to live in that peace, it's also that God has shown us his love and we learn to live in that love.

So in verse 8, Paul says, God has demonstrated his love for this, for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Here it is, the demonstration of God's love for us.

And what do we do with that? We spend the rest of our lives and into eternity growing in our experience of that love of God.

Verse 5, God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. We've moved from the language of the courtroom and been justified to the language of relationship where the third person of the Trinity has been poured out into our hearts so that we might know more and more clearly, more and more dearly, this love of God that he has demonstrated for us in Christ, that we might taste it and experience it as we grow through the different stages of our lives.

As one author has put it, there's a difference between having a rational judgment, that God is holy and gracious and loving, and having a sense of that loveliness and beauty.

[25 : 54] There's a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, I can tell you that, and having a sense of its sweetness by tasting it.

And so what God has done objectively is brought about peace, he has demonstrated his love, he's declared us righteous, and now what we do is we live in light of his peace, his love, and his righteousness that he has declared over us.

And so in a sense what we do is we be who we are. We learn to live as the people who God has called us to be.

I remember years ago watching Shawshank Redemption, which is not an easy thing to watch, watch, and not for the faint-hearted, but there is wonderful themes of redemption in it.

It's a prison movie, maybe you've seen it. At the end of the movie one of the prisoners gets out of prison, I won't spoil it for you, one of the prisoners gets out of prison and he is working in a grocery shop, a supermarket, a store.

[27 : 06] He's been in prison his whole life, most of his life. And in prison he was behind bars, he had to ask to go to the bathroom, he had to ask to do everything.

And so now that he's in this supermarket working, he keeps asking his boss if he can have a little break, can he go to the bathroom, can he go and do this, that, or the other, and the boss is getting exasperated with it.

He's saying to them, just do it, you're free to do whatever you want. The guy took time to shake off this sense that he was imprisoned.

It took him time to live according to who he was now as this free man. And for us it takes us time to learn to live according to who we are in Christ.

But this is what God has prepared for us. This lifetime of living in the truth of who we are, growing in it, delighting in it, in his peace, in his love, in this reconciliation that he has brought about.

[28 : 21] Or to put it another way, a lifetime and eternity of enjoying our Father who has reconciled us to himself in Christ and who celebrates over those lost sons and daughters.

you know, the prodigal son, what did he bring to the party? Nothing. And yet, it's a wonderful party, it's a lavish party, it's a party that's all at the expense of the Father.

And what do we bring to the party? Nothing. God has brought about peace between himself and us by removing the grounds for his right anger.

He has done it perfectly, he has done it fully, he has done it in a way that we will spend the rest of our lives, the rest of eternity, delighting in, trying to grasp and comprehend, end, and one day we will see our Savior, and one day it will be like that celebration that Jesus describes, and one day we will rejoice as we realize fully all that he has done for us in reconciling us to God.

God. So we want to just take a moment to pray and to ask God to help us to respond to his word. Heavenly Father, we do want to thank you and praise you that what you have done for us in Jesus is to reconcile us to yourself.

[29 : 50] And Lord, we know that we were once enemies of yours, that we were not at peace with you, that we were opposed to you. But Lord, we also know that we have no grounds to be in this state.

And so, Lord, we also recognize that you were not at peace with us, and you had every right, Father, to be rightly angry with us. But Lord, we rejoice that you have removed all grounds for that in Christ, that he became sin, that we have become righteous, and Father, we delight in that, we rejoice in that, and help us, we pray, to live in light of this reconciliation that you have brought about.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.