

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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BE CONCILIATED TO GOD!

Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation. For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ's sake, "Be conciliated to God!" For the One not knowing sin, He makes to be a sin offering for our sakes that we may be becoming God's righteousness in Him. (2 Corinthians 5.18-21 CV)

Today, it is common to hear of some ethnic or racial groups seeking reconciliation with one another. In the heart of man, there seems to be a desire for peace, which is what reconciliation is all about. **Reconciliation** means "to make friendly again or win over to a friendly attitude; to bring two parties into harmony or peace with each other." However, the challenge is that many do not know how to be reconciled to one another. They simply do not know how to win each other over to come into harmony. Some ethnic or racial groups demand reparations for wrongs done to their forefathers, whether it was slavery or the stealing of land, and the ones to whom they make the demand see no need to make reparations for something in which they did not participate. So, many people seem to remain at an impasse with no apparent way out, at least to them. However, there is a way out, and it starts with God.

I find it sad that some groups of believers divided along racial lines seem to be stuck in the past as they continue to make demands that others make amends for past actions. What I find particularly disturbing is that seldom do they announce that they have forgiven the ones to whom they are directing their demands. I want to shout from their pulpits: **Be conciliated to God!** This is where all forgiveness begins. It begins with God who has conciliated Himself to the world through His Son. God is the peacemaker, and all peace treaties start with Him through His Son. Lost among the sea of endless sermons is the truth that God is **conciliating** the world to Himself, and that through Christ He intends to **reconcile** all to Himself.

Now, the words *conciliate* and *conciliation* are probably foreign to most people since these words are seldom used in common conversation; but they are vital words in understanding what God has done and is doing. **Conciliate** means "to win over; soothe the anger of; make friendly; placate" and "to gain by friendly acts." We could say that this is the first part of a peace agreement. When two parties are at war with each other, they are enemies. If one party makes peace with the other, then that party *conciliates* with the other, and there is *conciliation*. Thus, *conciliation* refers to one side of a peace deal; that is, one party is at peace with another, but it does not follow that the other party has made peace with the one that has made peace. There is still enmity coming forth from one party. It is as if one waves the white flag of truce, but the other continues shooting.

For a peace deal to be of any value, it takes both parties to be at peace with each other. When both parties have entered into peace with each other, it is called *reconciliation*. Thus, the word *reconciliation* means that both parties are in harmony and at peace with one another. It is a mutual peace agreement. Each party has to make peace (**to be conciliated**) with the other to come into a mutual peace (**to be reconciled**).

Most translations use the word *reconciliation*, but the editor of the Concordant Version has pointed out that it is important to make a distinction between *conciliate* (or *conciliation*) and *reconcile* (or *reconciliation*). The Greek word *allassō* means “to make different, to change.” From this root word are derived two other words: *katallassō*, which is translated into the verb *conciliate* [noun form *katallagē* translated as *conciliation*]; and *apokatallassō*, which is translated into the verb *reconcile*.

Conciliation starts with God alone. **For if, being enemies, we were conciliated to God through the death of His Son, much rather, being conciliated, we shall be saved in His life** (Romans 5.10 CV). When all mankind were dead in their trespasses and sin, Christ died! This is where conciliation starts. The peace treaty starts at the cross. Mankind was incapable of entering into a peace treaty with God. Can you imagine what it would be like if mankind wanted to be at peace with God, but He did not want to be at peace with mankind? It is a sad commentary on our day that many seem to project our Heavenly Father as one who refuses to be at peace with most of mankind. God is love, and He demonstrates His love, for He first loved us!

How that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them. There was enmity between God and mankind, but God has made peace with mankind at the cross of Calvary. In other words, man is no longer God’s enemy because enmity has been removed through His Son’s death on the cross. It is as if God Himself waved the white flag of peace. Through Christ, the entire world, which means all mankind, has been conciliated to God, and God is not counting their offenses against them. Do you grasp the greatness of these words? He is not counting **your** offenses against **you!** Consider how a paraphrased version reads: **That is, that God was in Christ making peace between the world and himself, not putting their sins to their account, and having given to us the preaching of this news of peace** (2 Corinthians 5.19 BBE). Here we discover the very heart of conciliation, making peace, and this is the message that we, as believers, are to be proclaiming to the world that remains an enemy of the cross. God has made peace with the world because of His Son, because of **the LORD JESUS!**

Let us not think that God has given up or that conciliation is a thing of the past, for it is an ever-present peace agreement that will continue until the consummation of the eons. In fact, it is God’s plan not only to conciliate the world to Himself but to be reconciled with all in the heavens and on the earth. Ultimately, there will be a mutual peace with all in the heavens and on the earth. In other words, God fully intends to have reconciliation with ALL. How do we know? Paul tells us so: **For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven** (Colossians 1.19-20 NASB).

Not only has God conciliated Himself to the world, but through His Son, He fully intends to bring about the reconciliation of all. A day is coming when all creation will be in harmony with God; all creation will be at peace, barring none. Think about it! If this is what God has done and is doing through Christ Jesus our Lord, then how can you not be at peace with one another? How can you reckon their offenses against them? How can you not forgive one another, even descendants of ones who may have sinned against your ancestors? Before reconciliation becomes a reality, there needs to be forgiveness on the part of those who have been offended. Without forgiveness, there can be no reconciliation because there will be at least one party who is living in the past and not willing to move beyond it. Forgiveness is an issue of the heart. One who forgives forgets the offense and leaves it in the past or, as Paul did, forgets what lies behind.

Dear beloved saints, especially ones who continue to look to the sins of the past and demand reconciliation, you need to turn to the cross and see Jesus, His blood, and His forgiveness of your sins. It is time to forget what lies behind and press on toward the goal for the prize; and this begins with forgiveness, for without forgiveness, there will be no reconciliation. God has forgiven you, and He has conciliated Himself to you. It is time to get beyond the past and make peace with God, then make peace with others, and then take the message to the world.

Be conciliated to God!