

Weaving the Word

Go and Be Reconciled

Part 23 – February 8, 2015

Welcome to a place where we count the cost to follow the One who paid the price!



Ever heat a TV dinner in the microwave?

Ever then sit down to enjoy it and bite into it only to find that, though hot on the outside it's still frozen on the inside?

I hate when that happens. So does God.

How often do you offer Him half-baked repentance?

You look good on the outside, but inside you're harboring ... *ice!*



A few days before this training on the mount, Jesus and His young disciples had been abused by their fellow Jews, the local religious leaders, who were now plotting Jesus' murder. (Mark 3:6)

Last week Jesus told His apprentices that a murderous heart is just as wicked as murder, and even *more dangerous*, because:



It's easy to ignore the frozen center that hides inside.

He now takes it *even further*, saying they must go and be reconciled, as much as possible on their part, with those who are holding an offense against *them*.

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar [having repented for your sinful thoughts against your brother] and there remember that your brother has something against you, [that probably isn't justified in your eyes; nevertheless] leave your gift there in front of the altar. [It's not ready to be served yet; you're only half-way through God's process of surpassing righteousness of love] First go and be reconciled to your brother; [as much as possible on your part; and, then you'll be done clear through] then come and offer your gift” [with a clear conscience that recalls nothing anyone rightly holds against you]. – Matthew 5:23-24 NIV

God is all about reconciliation that leads to restoration.

It's the very reason Jesus came. So, is it any surprise that He asks His apprentices, those who represent Him in this world, to portray His primary purpose?

“No. But, it’s too late for *my* situation. It’s gone too far.”



It’s never too late to settle a matter quickly. Leave the past in the past; and respond promptly to His voice *today*.

“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.” – Matthew 5:25 NIV

There are two truths here, in regard to reconciliation:

- 1) **The quicker the better** (like pulling off a Band-Aid).
- 2) **It’s never too late ... *till it’s too late*.**

What’s the court that Jesus is referring to?

It’s the Council He mentions in the first half of this teaching.

“... anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin.” – Matthew 5:22 NIV



The Great Sanhedrin was a religious court that met in the Temple. But, there were small Sanhedrins in every town in Israel.

This is Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz. He’s the most recent head in an ongoing effort to restore the Sanhedrin. [www.thesanhedrin.org (click “English”)]

They were the final authority on Jewish law, and until about 30^{AD}, had the authority to put to death any scholar who defied them.



Lesser offenses were dealt with by type.

[Regarding refusing to seek reconciliation, Jesus says] “I tell you the truth, you will not get out [of the prison] until you have paid the last penny.” – Matthew 5:26 NIV

Ancient prison at Philippi

The type of offense Jesus compares our refusal to do all we can to be reconciled to those who’ve hurt us, is that of an unpaid debt.

When we justify a frozen-center refusal to reach out to those who have wronged us, we subject ourselves to a type of debtor’s prison.

And, our only hope of escape is to pay what we owe.

That means I must stop *excusing myself* and *accusing the other*.

No matter how bad *they've* been, I must humble myself to examine myself to see my part in the problem, *or their misperception*.

I must see the malice in my heart as a sin against God, and then honestly express the hurt and grief and anger that are fueling it, so I can surrender it.

However many times it takes.

And then, I must open my heart to God's Spirit, to help me to examine *my* contribution, *if any*, to the conflict.

Even if the only wrong I did was to respond wrongly to a greater wrong they wronged against me ... *it's still a wrong on my part*.

We judge others by their words and actions, ("*Your exact words were ...*") and then ourselves by our *intentions* ("*That's not what I meant ...*"). Seeking reconciliation often begins with flipping that; **we must attempt to examine *our own* words and actions, and *their intentions*.**

We must be willing to sift and see what *we* did that was hurtful or offensive, and be humble enough to take responsibility, and then obedient enough to take the initiative to make contact.

In some situations, *achieving* reconciliation isn't possible.

Yet, in all situations *seeking* reconciliation isn't optional.

We shouldn't even look on it as *benevolence* on our part.



It's a debt.

Not to our enemies, but to our Savior.

It's a debt of gratitude.

This perspective is what makes doing it doable. It's a debt we owe to the One who paid the greatest price – His own perfectly innocent life – to reconcile *His* enemies to God.

Even as *we* were sinning against Him.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. – Romans 5:8 NIV

Are you His apprentice? Do I want to be, what Jesus would be, if He were me?

Then you must choose to pay, in a very small way, what He chose to pay in a very big way.

We can't afford to wait for the other to take the initiative.

If I want to be what Jesus would be if He were me, **I must seek to reconcile with those who sin against me, and love them *first*.**

We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. – 1 John 4:19-20a NIV

Our humility in seeking reconciliation for our part, regardless of their part, might be the catalyst for them to do the same.

Or, not.

There are certainly no guarantees!

They might say, "*Glad you finally see the light!*"

That's *their* problem ... and *prison*.

You are gratefully worshipping Jesus through your obedience.



So, humble your heart and admit your part.

That's the offering Jesus desires.

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. – 1 John 3:18-20a NIV

Do you want to "belong to the truth"?

Do you want to "set your heart at rest in His presence"?

This requires "love" – and love requires "action".

Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear ... – 1 John 4:16b-18 NIV

Lean into the Lord, and allow His love to drive out your fear.

And, go and be reconciled ... as much as you honestly can.

And, you'll have a *taste* of what it means to be perfect in love.