

Reconciled by his Death and Saved by his Life

23rd April 1986

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Romans 5:10

The two great and important matters in our text are first the reconciliation of enemies to God, and second, the saving of his friends as they are made so through the peace-making and reconciling work of the dear Redeemer. The freeness and sovereignty and wonder of it all is this, that it pleased the dear Son of God that he himself should reconcile those who were his enemies. This is that which sets forth the glory and the beauty and the blessedness of that work of the dear Mediator—the covenant Mediator between God and men—the man Christ Jesus.

This matter of reconciliation is no small thing. Indeed it cost the blessed Son of God agony and sweat, blood and death to bring about that precious union, communion and fellowship, not only fundamentally and essentially, but sensibly, feelingly and experimentally, between poor sinners and a holy God, bringing them into such blessed acquaintance and nearness as to be one in blessed reconciliation, peace and union. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:14) “God and sinners reconciled.” (*Gadsby’s* 36)

Well, in attempting to look just a little at this first great matter, ‘For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God,’ we will try and notice the solemn condition and the dreadful state that the apostle here speaks of, both in regard to himself, as well as the believers at Rome whom he addressed by the Spirit. ‘For if, when we were enemies.’

Now it is quite impossible for us to think of a more grievous, a more terrible or dreadful condition than this, to be an enemy to God. For if we are such then God is an enemy to us, and therefore who can help us, who can do us any good? But if God be our friend, who or what have we to fear? It is plain and clear and evident, not only from the testimony of the Word of God, but from the feelings of each one taught of the Holy Spirit, that this is indeed and of a truth our awful and solemn condition by nature. We are enemies. It is because of this that we stand so deeply in need of the blessing of reconciliation by the death of Christ, that we

might indeed and of a truth receive in power and efficacy that blessed atonement by which peace—a real peace, a righteous peace, a blessed peace—has been brought about. This precious reconciliation and peace shall be experienced and shall be brought into the heart of every one whom God determined and was pleased to make his friends manifestly, so that all such rebels are made children and all such enemies are made friends, only and alone through the efficacy and virtue and merits and sufficiency of the blood and death of Christ.

We must notice a little further of this solemn state, ‘We were enemies.’ We are born such. We come into this world the fallen sons and daughters of Adam. We are partakers of that fallen human nature which is ours by inheritance from our first parents, which nature is enmity to God. We have a carnal mind, a carnal nature. We are born sinners. We do not become enemies; we are born enemies to God. It is impossible to bring a good thing out of an unclean thing, a righteous thing out of an unrighteous thing, and this being the case we are enemies by nature. We are all bad, we are sin, we are wickedness, and our hearts are “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” (Jeremiah 17:9) We are as opposite to God and his nature as it is possible that the fall can make us. Everything we do in our nature is opposite to God, it is enmity to God. He is holy, we are unholy. He is just, we are unjust. He is righteous, we are iniquitous. He is good, we are bad. He is infinitely holy, and we are desperately wicked and vile. That is our nature; we are sinners, enemies to God.

We being such by birth and nature we are also by practice. We are enemies to God by wicked works. The whole of our lives in our unregenerate condition, however religious or sophisticated our outside might appear, our hearts fight against the God of heaven. We live but to rebel. There is no-one, I suppose, who could declare this more clearly from his own feelings and experience than the writer of this Epistle to the Romans, Saul of Tarsus. The Pharisee of the Pharisees in his unregenerate condition did nothing but show his inveterate hatred, malice and enmity against God and his Christ, murdering, persecuting, his heart as full of fury as it could hold against the God of heaven. Now, my friends, if we know anything of our hearts by nature, we are no better. We are enemies to God by wicked works.

It is in this solemn condition of the soul that we stand in need of being reconciled. It may be that there have been seasons in our experience under the teaching of the Holy Spirit when we have diligently and anxiously enquired as to what the condition and what the ground of our reconciliation is—how we may indeed and of a truth have peace with God and be reconciled to the Almighty, who could with one word or one breath cast us immediately into the pit, if he were just

and dealt with us as our rebellion deserves. But the infinite mercy, the boundless grace, the wondrous love that is revealed and manifest is this: that God sent his Son into the world to die, that his people should be reconciled unto him and that he should be reconciled unto them. ‘When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God.’

It is utterly impossible that a holy, just and righteous God can be reconciled but upon holy, just and righteous grounds. Therefore, it is of necessity that he should send his Son into the world to die for our sins, which he has done.

Peace by his cross has Jesus made;
The church’s everlasting Head. (*Gadsby’s* 925)

Now I want to look just very briefly at the reconciliation by the death of the Son of God in the fundamental act as he agonised at Golgotha, then try and look a little at the sweet, vital, precious, needful experience in the words of our text. This is known by experience. ‘When we were enemies we were reconciled,’ and it is a sweet and blessed experience when we feel this reconciliation and perfect peace between our poor souls and a holy God. It is a most desirable, attractive and blessed experience to receive, know and feel that there is just nothing between our souls and our God but love, blood and peace. That is most sweetly possible, and I hope some have tasted just a little of it.

Let us consider the accomplishment of reconciliation by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ—his vicarious, substitutionary, meritorious, efficacious work which brought about this reconciliation. To this blessed Redeemer, every sin committed by the whole church was imputed, which sin is the cause of separation between our souls and God. Sin separates. Guilt separates. This is the cause of the distance and the difference. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ has borne that sin away, he has died for his people, he has slain the enmity and brought about an eternal peace. God has declared most graciously that he is fully satisfied and pleased with the finished work of his dear Son.

Hell is vanquished, heaven appeased,
God is satisfied and pleased. (*Gadsby’s* 788)

This is how rebels are made children; this is how enemies are made friends; this is how one who has lived only to rebel is brought to love and adore, admire and serve the God of heaven with his whole heart. O the sacred and precious influence of reconciliation through the death of Christ!

Now we will come to the blessed experience of the knowledge and sensible realisation of this reconciliation by the death of the Son of God. How needful and

necessary it is to know this separation and then to be brought to the sweet feeling and knowledge of peace and reconciliation.

First, it is vital for us to understand by experience what we are by nature and practice; to feel ourselves to be enemies to God. I can well remember the solemn season in my experience when the dreadful enmity of my heart really frightened me. So powerful and so dreadful were its workings that it filled me with terror and fear. Enmity is in us by nature. We are enemies. Now it is a solemn thing for one to be brought to feel this in the first instance and exercise of the heart under the teaching of the Spirit, that one lives but to rebel against God. That is a most precious line of the hymn writer which is very much to the point in regard to this:

Indulgent God, how kind
Are all thy ways to me,
Whose dark benighted mind
Was enmity with thee;
Yet now subdued by sovereign grace,
My spirit longs for thy embrace.

Preserved in Jesus when
My feet made haste to hell;
And there should I have gone,
But thou dost all things well;
Thy love was great, thy mercy free,
Which from the pit delivered me. *(Gadsby's 732)*

Well, the time comes when God shows us that we are enemies.

The second thing he shows us is this, that the covenant of works, the law of God—holy, righteous, good and perfect as it is—could never reconcile us to God. What is the work of the law in a sinner's conscience once he is convinced of his sin and his enmity? That holy law in its purity and its power, what does it do? It stirs up the enmity. The law cannot subdue sin, cannot deliver you. It will fill you with bitterness, fill you with despair, and fill you with fury.

But if the Holy Spirit is pleased to reveal the sweetness and suitability and blessedness of the gospel; if he is pleased to show a poor sinner just a little of the love and kindness and condescension and grace and goodness of Christ, and reveals him to the heart as the sinner's suffering substitute; if a little of this love, mercy and grace of God is revealed in the heart, he is immediately reconciled to that good God. He falls down in the dust, ashamed, confessing and humbled and says:

Why me, why me, O blessed God,
Why such a wretch as me?
Who must for ever lie in hell,
Were not salvation free. (*Gadsby's* 680)

A sense of God's goodness and mercy breaks him all to pieces. It immediately brings reconciliation into his heart. His enmity is slain, his anger ends and he is filled with love, worship, adoration, gratitude and humility. That reconciliation accomplished upon the cross is imparted to his heart and he knows a little about it. The enemy is now reconciled; the rebel is now a child; the one who has lived only to rebel now finds merciful deliverance from all that he is of himself, and now says, "O merciful deliverer, deliver me from all that I am of myself and take whole, full and complete possession of me—"Make me wholly thine!" O to feel yourself a happy, pardoned child! You will be reconciled; there will be sweet peace between your soul and your God. This is through the virtue and the merit and the efficacy of the substitutionary death of Christ as it reconciles sinners to God, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to manifest and bring with power that precious reconciliation into the heart.

Now I am not for one moment inferring that these blessed souls will never find again that which rises up within them against the God of heaven. They will, and this is that which has often distressed, puzzled and perplexed a true child of God. One who has been favoured with a sense of God's love, mercy, pardon, peace and reconciliation, feels again that rising up within him which he would not have for all the world if he could help it. But he has to learn that his old nature, his carnal mind, his natural disposition has not altered. No, that remains still the same. In my youthful days of spiritual experience, I used to think that the hymn writer exaggerated when he said:

Sin, armed with all the spleen
Of enmity to God,
Oft rises up within,
And scorns the Saviour's blood; (*Gadsby's* 618)

But my friends, I know it does; it is all too solemnly true. We need the power of the death of Christ to be brought afresh into our hearts to deliver us from our carnal mind which is, and ever will be, at enmity to God. But O how blessed when reconciliation and peace and love and blood are brought afresh into the heart and the enmity and spite and anger are for a season subdued and slain once more!

These enemies then, through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, are loved and received as children and as friends. They are those to whom God has been pleased to grant a spirit of adoption in some measure and degree. 'For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.'

I want to try and look just a little at this life of this precious Saviour who died for his people, and what is included in his living and working on their account and their behalf. Also to look at the blessedness and wonder that such as you and I, if we are brought to know and feel our need, have a living Saviour to go to for constant and renewed deliverance and salvation, manifested and realised. I am sure that those who are much and deeply exercised on account of many things which oppress and burden their souls will stand in need, really and feelingly, of salvation well-nigh every day and every moment of the day. Ah, my friends, we must have a living Saviour to meet our case. We need his salvation: 'Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.'

This precious Son of God, he has risen, he has ascended up on high, he has taken his place and sat down at the right hand of the Father and he ever liveth to make intercession for his people. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." (Hebrews 7:25) It is a most precious and blessed thing that he is the glorious executor of his own will, and he will most blessedly communicate and dispense to his people the benefits and the blessings of his finished work. He has left them a legacy: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." (John 14:27) A testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it has no strength at all. The Lord Jesus Christ has died and therefore his testament is of force. He is the executor of his own will and he lives to make known the blessing and preciousness of his glorious salvation in the hearts of his people. He ever lives to carry on his people's cause above. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only." (1 John 2:1-2) He lives to intercede; he lives to fulfil his blessed office of Advocate; he lives to present his people's cause and case above.

For our acceptance pleads his own,
And proves our cause completely good. (*Gadsby's* 1107)

He lives to fulfil every part and precious particle of his high priestly office in the realms of bliss. He will at last receive his people to himself. He has gone to be their Forerunner. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place

for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:2-3)

Now I want to try and look just a little at this salvation by his life. First the need there is for it! Those who are taught of God by the Holy Spirit and exercised in their souls day by day, continually stand in need sensibly and feelingly of the salvation of Christ. How often that urgent and importunate cry goes out of their hearts: ‘O Lord, do save me from this particular evil, this particular temptation, this particular fear!’ O they solemnly realise and feel the fruits and effects of the fall grievously and so sorrowfully at times.

That we’re unholy needs no proof;
We sorely feel the fall. (*Gadsby’s* 181)

If you feel that, you will want to be saved feelingly and sensibly from all its workings and wretched influence and the terrible effects of guilt, darkness, death, and all the many things which are the effects of the fall. You will want to be saved from them and you will prove that you cannot possibly do anything for yourself or anything with yourself. You cannot in any measure or degree whatsoever raise yourself or deliver yourself from your ruin, your difficulties and your death. No, it is by the power of the blessed Saviour alone. And you will need him. ‘Much more ... we shall be saved by his life.’ He lives! He does live and what a wonderful mercy if we know him, know his voice, feel his presence, feel his power and from time to time have the feeling renewed that by his death we are reconciled to God and that we are saved through him!

It is this world and its powerful influence which has such an affinity with our fallen nature, enticing, bewitching, seducing, tempting and defiling.

Save me from this bewitching world,
That has to death ten thousand hurled. (*Gadsby’s* 954)

We cannot in our own strength nor by our own vows or resolutions for one moment deliver ourselves from the power and influence of the world, which, alas, through the fall is in us as well as about us. We need this precious Saviour. ‘Deliver me and save me, O suffer me not to make such an awful, dreadful end as Demas!’ “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world,” said the apostle. (2 Timothy 4:10) That will at times make the heart of an exercised child of God to tremble. ‘Lord, keep me; do not leave me, not for a moment. If I am left I am sure I shall be overcome.’ Ah, you need a living Saviour, and there is a living Saviour, one who is at God’s right hand.

Secondly, there is Satan. He has tempted men since the beginning of the world. He is experienced at it, and he is mighty and a dreadful enemy. He will plague you, if you are a child of God, and we are no match for him. We need delivering and saving from his operations and influence every moment. We cannot stand for a second in our own strength. We need a Saviour. Have we ever known what it is to smile at the destroyer? Have we ever known what it is to feel that the Lord is round about us to deliver us in time of awful temptation, when we have been well-nigh driven to despair on account of the persistent, constant and increasing efforts of the adversary of our souls to destroy us? “The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. The Lord will not leave him in his hand.” (Psalm 37:32, 33) You will want a present Saviour, a living Saviour, if you are a tempted soul. ‘O Lord, save me! Save me now from Satan’s wiles and snares.’

Save us from the rocks and shelves,
Save us chiefly from ourselves. *(Gadsby’s 706)*

The third thing to look at is that we have no greater enemy, no greater foe, if we are children of God, than ourselves, sinful self. We shall need this precious Saviour, who has died to reconcile us, to manifest himself as this living Saviour, to save us to the uttermost all day long. Have you got what is spoken of in the Word of God as a besetting sin? I cannot name all the various things that beset individuals, but there is one that besets us all, and that is unbelief, and unbelief is absolutely inseparable from pride. You may pray earnestly that the Lord would keep you from falling on account of your besetment. It may appear that we are kept outwardly, but O, the heart sins! A temporary fall will cause the poor sinner to cry with more vehemence ‘Lord save me! Iniquities prevail, let them not have dominion over me! O deliver me, do not suffer me to be overcome by this!’ So you will need to be saved by his life all the day long, not only from the besetment and felt power of indwelling sins, but when you come to the end of the day, it may be your experience is like my experience sometimes. You lay your head on your pillow and inwardly you groan and you sigh and you say, “What a shameful day! O the dreadful thoughts that have gone through my mind and heart this day! How can I lay my head upon my pillow in peace unless the Lord be pleased to smile upon such a wretched sinner and be pleased to say, ‘I freely all forgive!’” Being sensible of all this guilt, and defilement, you will need to be saved from it. You will feel it on your conscience and the death and wretchedness on account of it. You will want Christ the living advocate: “If any man sin”—that is not an ‘if’ of doubt, “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” (1 John 2:1) A redeemer, someone to look to, a living Saviour, an advocate above.

Should conscience accuse us, as oft-times it may,
Here's blood that can take its defilement away.

(Gadsby's 1097)

He lives to save us from the defilement of our sin. Time has almost gone, so just a hint or two in regard to this, 'Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.' We need to be saved from the love of sin. O, well it would be for us if that did not remain in us on account of our fallen condition! But you see sin is the very element of the old nature. It loves it and ever will love it. "Take away the love of sinning," (*Gadsby's* 1053), "Make and keep me pure within." (*Gadsby's* 303) Only one can deliver us from the love of it, and save us from the love of it, and that is this loving Saviour. I trust there are some of us who have that desire in our hearts that we might be caused and enabled to hate sin and loathe and abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes. What will do it? The love of a once crucified and dying Saviour, but now a living Saviour, a blessed advocate and High Priest above. If you get a little of his love shed abroad in your heart you will love him in return.

One last point—we need to be saved from the practice of sin. Do we practice sin? Not willingly, not readily, but being such wretched, fallen sinners, O the thoughts, the motives, the feelings at times, the intents of the heart, the practice of it within! Are we not subject at times to hateful rebellion, murderous thoughts, pride, arrogance, unbelief and all such things, and therefore, guilty of the commission of them in our hearts? We need to be saved from the practice of it.

Well, much more, 'Much more ... we shall be saved by his life.' O may we know much more of the love, mercy, kindness, compassion, pity and goodness of the living Saviour to save us, daily save us, in experience from all our wretchedness and darkness, all our death and distress, all our temptations and fears—to save us from the fear of death, to save us from the fear of hell, to save us from the devices of the wicked, and to save us most from ourselves.

The Lord favour us with a knowledge of Christ and his salvation, that we may truly glory in him as the sinner's friend and Saviour.

Amen.