

Reconciliation – Every Christian’s Ministry 7th February 2010

Some Stories

1. **The story of Ahithophel** – the results of unresolved resentment: outward show of godliness, friendship and counsel that covers an underlying bitterness that leads to division and death. (See Appendix)
2. **True story of pastor who fell in adultery**, his church was split into pieces and then years later returned to the Lord and the town. He rang Ps Jerry Cook asking if he could attend the Sunday service.
 - Had been rejected by church after church
 - Publically asked to leave one church
 - After love, acceptance and forgiveness restored to a place of serving God.
 - A strong response by many against Jerry Cook

Recently as I was spending some time with the Lord, I felt that He was saying that He wants everyone in His body (the church) to realise that they **all have a major ministry** and that they are to understand that it is more important to Him than others ministries including that of a pastor or full-time worker in the local church.

Everyone who is a Christian has been given the ministry of reconciliation.

This ministry:

- Reconciling people to God and
- Reconciling people to each other

Through the blood of Jesus Christ we have already been reconciled to God and reconciled to others who come to Christ.

- Like us already having the unity of the Spirit, we already have it.
- Let’s not wreck it!

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

- A completely new way of living life and handling difficulties and challenges

¹⁸ Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

- Reconciliation involves not imputing people’s sins to them

Reconciliation takes place when:

- A conflict between various individuals or groups is resolved and

- They can once again resume a normal and healthy relationship.

It **restores peace** between the divided or conflicting parties.

Truth and Reconciliation – in South Africa and Rwanda

- Revealed the truth (didn't try to hide the sin)
- Decided to forgive the sin

The Facts

Our sin separated us from God

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross resolved that huge problem – took a huge sacrifice

We can now fellowship with God as He had originally intended!

Once reconciled to God, God intended that we would be reconciled to each other – takes sacrifice

In Christ - no more of the contention and division and that divides people.

- **Galatians 3:28**

There is neither **Jew** nor **Greek**, there is neither **slave** nor **free**, there is neither **male** nor **female**; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

- **Ephesians 2:14-17**

¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

The foundation for reconciliation is love, forgiveness and acceptance.

- Resulting in **peace**
- Everything **being settled and in order** (like in book-keeping)

Romans 5:8-11 - God's demonstration

⁸ But **God demonstrates His own love toward us**, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. ¹⁰ For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

A ministry of reconciliation requires the reconciler to “die” to their own feelings of hurt and their “right” for justice.

- If we refuse to love, forgive and accept others there is no way that reconciliation can take place. Just as sin separates people from God, it separates us from each other.

Christians should stand out as reconcilers

- Once we are born again we have the Spirit of reconciliation dwelling in us.
- It is our **decision to choose** whether we will love, forgive and accept others.

Matthew 5:24

“...leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

- Reconciliation between people, in God’s realm, is **so important** that it proceeds your using your gifts to serve God!

Hebrews 12:12-15

¹² Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

- When everything is in order (reconciled) we have “straight paths” where the lame are healed
- When things are out of order “rocky unlevel paths” the lame are dislocated

¹⁴ **Pursue peace** with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

- **Pursue:** run after it unceasingly
- **To fall short of the grace of God** means we become subject to the flesh’s efforts and to the law’s judgment, condemnation and death
- **A root of bitterness** causes trouble and defiles many
 - Jesus is returning for an “undefiled church”
 - At present it is huge problem in the world and also in the church
 - Comes from
 - Unresolved jealousy and envy;
 - Resentment - *brooding in anger over that which has happened in your life; wanting those who oppose you to get what they deserve!*
 - Perceived unfairness and prejudice;
 - Unfulfilled expectations;

- Holding onto hurt feelings;
- Unresolved offenses – now “the cold shoulder” and other “I will show them” responses take
- Trusting in man rather than trusting in God

A ministry of reconciliation starts with us knowing that we are reconciled to God.

It then deals with us being reconciled with to everyone in the body of Christ. Jesus and the apostles spoke repetitively about “loving one another” and “forgiving one another”.

We mustn’t minimise the importance of this ministry. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 says that we can have “faith to move mountains” and “give all our goods to the poor” and yet it not profit us at all if we don’t have love.

Jesus spoke about those “who has done miracles in His Name” and yet He “never knew them”

How we carry out this ministry can be more important than the multitude of ministries in which people are involved and strive for

I believe that any other ministry will be restricted or fail until this one is operational.

Jesus made it clear that the world will know us by our love. People in the world are not impressed with what our ministry may be called, but they are impressed if we demonstrate love when it is not easy to do so.

Our Mission as a church is invading our world with the **light, love, liberty and life** of Jesus Christ and His kingdom

- Living, preaching, teaching and demonstrating the light, the love, the liberty and the life that we have found in Jesus Christ and His kingdom so God’s purposes are fulfilled on earth.

The message that motivates our mission - ...that the work of Christ and all that God does is a result of **His amazing love, goodness, grace and power...**”

Part of Our Vision:

We see a Christ-centred church that honors God’s Word; desires His presence and loves to worship Him; demonstrates His supernatural power; and **expresses His amazing love and grace.**

But the truth is:

- People who come into church and amongst its members will not check to see what our mission and vision statements are; they will look at us and see who we are!

- For me this is A DAY BY DAY decision
 - Any wrong attitudes, words or actions MUST be dealt with
- This not me judging you but me examining me
- God brings hurt, damaged, broken, offended, offensive, insecure people into His kingdom
- He then starts a work in them (us), healing them (us), transforming them (us), and then using them to be ministers of reconciliation.

Appendix

Ahithophel and Bitterness

A man who was in the strangle hold of a massive “**root of bitterness**”.

He met a tragic end because he allowed a root of bitterness to flourish in his life.

His was a sad fate, but thankfully, there are lessons that we can learn from his tragedy that will help us to avoid the same fate.

He Looked like a Good Man:

1. He Sacrificed to God – 2 Sam. 15:12
2. He Spoke for God – 2 Sam. 16:23
3. He Was a Counsellor to God’s Man – 2 Sam. 15:12
2. He Was a Companion of God’s Man – Psa. 41:9

In spite of the fact that Ahithophel gave every outward indication that all was well between himself and the Lord and between himself and David, **there was something working in his heart that would destroy everything.** Ahithophel was being eaten alive, from the inside out, by an event that had happened years earlier.

THE TRAGEDY OF AHITHOPHEL’S LIFE

The bitterness that was hidden within the heart of Ahithophel finally came out.

A Tragic Conspiracy– When David’s son Absalom rebelled against his father, Ahithophel saw his chance to enact his revenge upon King David.

Ahithophel joined the rebellion and stood against God’s anointed, **2 Sam. 15:31; Psa. 41:9.**

A Tragic Counsel– Out of his hatred for David, Ahithophel gave Absalom two words of counsel.

- The first recommendation he made was designed to **Disgrace King David, 2 Sam. 16:20-23.** By having Absalom go into his father’s concubines, he publicly disgraced David and created a rift between father and son that could never be healed.
- The second recommendation was designed to **Destroy King David, 2 Sam. 17:1-4.**

C. **A Tragic Conclusion** – Thankfully, David had a true friend in Absalom’s court, a man by the name of Hushai. Hushai had originally planned to go with David when he fled from Absalom, but at David’s request, he stayed behind in the city to try and overthrow the counsel of Ahithophel, **2 Sam. 15:32-37.** Hushai comes to Absalom and professes his loyalty, **2 Sam. 16:16-19.** After he has gained Absalom’s confidence, Hushai contradicts the wise counsel of Ahithophel, **2 Sam. 17:1-22,** which resulted in Absalom accepting Hushai’s counsel and David being warned of what is about to take place and thus David is spared. Of course, the key verse is **2 Sam. 17:14.** God was behind all this intrigue, because David, not Absalom, was the king of Israel!

When Ahithophel sees that his counsel has been rejected and that his plans to defeat and destroy David have failed, he returns to his house, puts everything in order and commits suicide! What a tragic end to what had been a good life!

Ahithophel did all these evil things because there was a root of bitterness in his life. He hated David and had merely pretended to be his friend all those years. As that root of bitterness grew in his life, Ahithophel lost sight of his former friendship with David. He lost sight of his walk with the Lord. Everything of value in his life had been choked out and he was left with nothing but bitterness and hatred. The root of bitterness had utterly consumed this man.)

There are three passages that reveal the reasons behind this man's bitterness and hatred toward David. They are: **2 Sam. 11:1-27; 2 Sam. 23:34**. Looking at these two passages together you can see that Bathsheba was the grand-daughter of Ahithophel. David had treated his grand-daughter like she was a plaything and had arranged the murder of her husband Uriah the Hittite.

Considering what David did to Bathsheba, it is no wonder that Ahithophel was angry! And, he allowed his anger to burn for some **9 years**, all the while feigning friendship toward David, biding his time until he could exact revenge. This bitterness ate Ahithophel alive until he was brought to the point of intrigue and murder, **2 Sam. 17:1-4**. Then, when he saw that his plans had failed and the man he hated would return to the throne, Ahithophel took his own life, rather than face David.

Action

1. **Acknowledge you own sin in allowing a root of bitterness to flourish.**
2. **People must be forgiven!** This is not an option; it is a necessity, **Matt. 18:15-17; Matt. 18:21-35; Luke 17:1-5; Eph. 4:32**.
3. **Past events must be forgotten!** What happened yesterday can never be changed. But, you do hold the key to tomorrow. You should never allow the hurts of yesterday to control your life today. It is a shame when we drag around the baggage of what someone said, what someone did or how we were hurt. It does nothing but strangle the spiritual life right out of you!
4. **Hatred and anger must be forsaken! Eph. 4:26-27**, give serious warning concerning anger within our lives. It allows our adversary, the devil, a foothold, or a beachhead from which he can attack every area of our lives! You must bring your bitterness to the Lord!