

10. Unity and Broken Relationships (4Q 2018—Oneness in Christ)

Biblical material: 2 Tim. 4:11, Philem. 1–25, 2 Cor. 10:12–15, Rom. 5:8–11, Eph. 4:26, Matt. 18:15–17.

Quotes

- Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma—which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. *Steve Jobs*
- Throughout life people will make you mad, disrespect you and treat you bad. Let God deal with the things they do, 'cause hate in your heart will consume you too. *Will Smith*
- The greatest healing therapy is friendship and love. *Hubert H. Humphrey*
- Hearts rebuilt from hope resurrect dreams killed by hate. *Aberjhani*
- I suddenly saw that all the time it was not I who had been seeking God, but God who had been seeking me. I had made myself the centre of my own existence and had my back turned to God. All the beauty and truth which I had discovered had come to me as a reflection of his beauty, but I had kept my eyes fixed on the reflection and was always looking at myself. But God had brought me to the point at which I was compelled to turn away from the reflection, both of myself and of the world which could only mirror my own image. During that night the mirror had been broken, and I had felt abandoned because I could no longer gaze upon the image of my own reason and the finite world which it knew. God had brought me to my knees and made me acknowledge my own nothingness, and out of that knowledge I had been reborn. I was no longer the centre of my life and therefore I could see God in everything. *Bede Griffiths*

Questions

What are the broken relationships that need to be healed? How does this relate to unity? What is the difference in defining sin as a broken relationship with God compared to some legal concept? How do we seek to heal broken relationships—what do we need to do? How does God change us from enemies into friends?

Bible summary

Paul references his companions Luke and Timothy (2 Tim. 4:11). He calls Philemon his fellow-worker (Philem. 1–25) He speaks of those who boast of their work for the Lord, and suggests he could do so even more but chooses not to (2 Cor. 10:12–15). We are reconciled by God to God (Rom. 5:8–11). We are not to stay angry (Eph. 4:26). We are to make sure we do all we can to mend broken relationships (Matt. 18:15–17).

Comment

The key to this lesson is to understand that it is only God who can mend us, who can heal us, who can restore our broken relationships—to him and to each other. The best way to understand sin is to see it as a broken relationship—a love killed by selfishness.

Adam and Eve were so afraid of God that when they heard him coming, they ran away and hid. What does this say about what the Fall was really about? Surely the real issue here is one of a broken relationship that led to worry and fear. God has spent much time thereafter trying to persuade us *not* to be fearful, especially not of him. The barrier of guilt and shame becomes part of this broken relationship, and we become slaves to sin. But through the life and death of Jesus, God is revealed as he truly is, so that we may be won to trusting admiration of such a wonderful, reconciling God.

Harmony is restored not by creedal assent or due process of law but through loving agreement with God on his nature, character and actions. This is the answer to the Devil's program of division and separation, of hostility and hateful lies. Now we are in concord with God, no longer in lawlessness as rebels (for primarily sin has more to do with an attitude to God than the actual breaking of laws), but in harmony with all his will and ways.

For it is God who deals with our guilt, who forgives us all our wrongdoing and heals us from the disease of sin. More than legal declarations of forgiveness, God restores the broken relationship and re-makes us in His image once more. "Forgiveness is the answer to the child's dream of a miracle by which what is broken is made whole again, what is soiled is again made clean." Dag Hammarskjöld.

That is what we most want—a true miracle that frees us from the bondage of sin and guilt. The answer is the restoring of the relationship, by bringing us back into harmony with God, by creating an at-one-ment of trust. You don't need any kind of object or reagent or injection--for that won't deal with what went wrong. The simple truth is: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." 2 Cor. 5:19 NLT. It really is as simple as that, and we don't need to make it more complicated!

This is the reconciliation which God makes to bring us back to oneness to him: "That's why anyone who is in Christ is a new being—what was old is gone, the new has come! God did all this by changing us from enemies into friends through Christ. He gave us this same work of changing God's enemies into his friends. For God was in Christ bringing the world back from hostility to friendship with him, not counting anyone's sins against them, and giving us this message to change his enemies into his friends." 2 Cor. 5:17-19 FBV.

Ellen White Comments

True conversion is a radical change. The very drift of the mind and bent of the heart should be turned, and the life should become new in Christ. There should be a perfect trust in God... {BEcho, September 1, 1888}

Come to him with brokenness of heart and contrition of spirit, praying for his grace. The melting power of God can do wonders in subduing the heart, and making it tender and impressible. You may come with full assurance of faith, and he will fill your heart with rest, and peace, and love. {GW92 432-3}

...the great matter to be decided in the conflict was not merely between God and man; every creature that God had created was involved in the conflict. The unfallen worlds saw that the character of God could be vindicated only through this trial and conflict of the two forces. The attributes of God must be made to appear. {YI, April 15, 1897}