

Reconciled with God
2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

There have been many recalls in the news lately. Did you hear about the latest Recall? Well this one is centered on a faulty problem that will affect all of society. It is called the "Serious Internal Non-morality" recall. Regardless of the model or the year all units are affected and are being recalled back to the manufacturer. The problem was discovered and linked all the way back to the very first original prototype model - ode named "Adam" and "Eve". These units and every model that came after had a list of "Serious Internal Non-morality" issues or S.I.N. for short. Some of the symptoms experienced by this S.I.N. dysfunction was loss of direction, lack of peace, depression, foul vocal emissions, selfishness, ingratitude, fearfulness, rebellion, jealousy.

Now don't panic there is good news, there is a patch that can override this dysfunction of "Serious Internal Non-morality". The manufacturer has provided an authorized repair service free of charge to any who return and seek the free fix. Just dial 367-448-3637 ext. 7 or dial FORGIVENESS if the letters help you remember where the fix can be obtained. Once you seek that free repair, the service technician will clean out the defect and install an entire new system that includes Love, Kindness, Joy, Peace, faithfulness, gentleness, patience, goodness, self-control. For further information about this procedure you are referred to your service manual, the Holy Scriptures for details.

Finally they have put out a strong warning at the conclusion of this recall it says: WARNING: continuing to operate a human being unit without corrections voids the manufacturer's warranty, exposing the unit to dangers and problems too numerous to list, and will ultimately result in the destruction of the human unit and it will cease to exist. Action is needed immediately before it is to late.

Okay, by now I am sure you know that this is a false Recall. But why isn't it? They put in recall notices about cars, foods, baby products, why not human beings. Each of those items were recalled because they were defective, flawed in some way, causing sickness, dangerous situations, and sometimes death. So why aren't humans on the recall list, we are flawed, we are the descendants of flawed humans just as they were descendents of their flawed forefathers and foremothers all the way back to the first humans who turned against God in the garden.

The flaws and defects of sin cause us to be spiritually diseased, sick and even leads us to death eternal. So why not publicize a the recall for all humans?

I believe if Paul was writing to churches today, he maybe very well use that recall idea, the idea that we are like cars or food that is defective and need to have a correction. We are like a computer that is open to a virus and so needs a programming patch to overcome the weakness. We are like appliances that need to be taken back to the shop to be refurbished so that we work right.

But Paul doesn't know about recall notices or computer patches, instead he uses the term "reconciliation". He writes, "so if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Everything old has passed away; see everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconcilliation." He is saying that Christ, who needed no reconciliation with God since he is God, and so has come to reconciles all people to him and through that we are given the ministry of reconciliation. "Reconciliation" is one of those words we don't use commonly in ever day conversation that much. We understand to be recalled, and if you work with computers at all you understand patches, that correct software glitches, and you understand even refurbishing, but reconciliation, that's just one of those hundred dollar words that we hear and don't think much about. Lately we have heard of it more dealing with how to pass a bill in Congress like the health care bill. But when it comes to religion, faith and God what does it mean to be reconciled.

The word itself "Reconciliation" has several meanings: 1) to cease hostilities, 2) to negotiate an acceptable agreement, 3) to restore a person to good standing, 4) to make good again. So which definition is Paul talking about here. Is it one, two, three or four. And the theological answer is- YES! Yes to all four meanings.

First off we have to remember Paul had a strong connection to the church at Corinth, having lived there with them for around a year and half. But at the same time their relationship was severely strained by the time this second letter is written. In his first letter, Paul had addressed a number of issues that had bubbled up since he had left them, how to take communion properly, which spiritual gift is best, and such things. Now by the time we get to this second letter, we know that Paul's authority and teaching were being questioned. In chapter two of this letter, Paul tells about how he is pained to visit with them, that he is filled with much grief and despair. He then goes on in Chapter three to say that he is certain they don't need his credentials again, posing the very question, "Do You?" He knows that they are questioning him, challenging each other over which apostle, which leader of the church is right. There is quarreling and fighting amongst the church members over the practices of faith over how

ministry is performed, and over which person is right and who is wrong. So by chapter five Paul is in fact defending himself and giving his credentials once again showing why he is an Apostle of Christ, an ambassador of Christ. Paul is simply saying that through the sacrifice of Christ, their quarreling and opposition is not appropriate, because Christ has also appointed each one of us to be his ambassadors, he has made you his people, work together and put away all those childish things.

That's easier said than done sometimes. We hold on to grudges and to quarrels. We many times will fester in resentment and bitterness, not moving on, or working as if we are one of God's own people. Reconciliation only works if we accept it. That is the coming to acceptable terms meaning in the one definition. It means Jesus has given us reason not to quarrel, not to hold grudges and resentments, not to live in bitterness, but we have to respond to that offer. We have to be changed, to be made a new creation and live it from this moment on. Work together. Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation. Christ died for you and gave you life, washed you clean of mistakes, grudges, bitterness, and sickness. He has given you a freedom to live anew, now live it, love others as Christ has loved you.

Of Course, The challenge is still there for each of us also, Christ has died for us and given us a new start, washed us clean and yet we hold on to those past deeds and mistakes, we hold them against others and against ourselves. If we say we are reconciled to Christ then we are to live it, reconciling ourselves in forgiveness, grace and mercy to all others in our lives. We are to live as best we can not to repeat the sins of our past, to fall into those old ways and to hold on to the past, but to live as people of salvation, as people of God made new and restored. We are made good again. Righteous of God. Right with God. Who now calls us his children, loves us as a parent loves his own children.

We were broken, sinful, open to decay and viruses, and weak. But God put in a recall, he refurbished us and made us new again. He lifts us up and makes us restored. He makes us righteous in his kingdom forever through his own Son, who bled and died so that our punishment is ended. Now we are to live as restored people, made good again through Christ's reconciliation. Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you now and throughout this Lenten Season. Amen

Let us pray for the whole People of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Lord Almighty, we gather before you this day as humble, weak, servants of your creation. We come to your in prayer to turn to you, to repent of all our sins and wrongs that we have done and have left undone. Continue to lift us up, to make us new, wash us of our sins, forgive

us and send us forth once again as your witnesses to your awesome grace and mercy. We give you thanks for this great gift of forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ your Son.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

Almighty Creator, you have made us and we are yours. We come before you now as people who know of our limited life, our weaknesses and our pains and sorrows. We turn to you for hope and strength, for the salvation that will break us out of this life and give us new creation through your Son. You loved us so much that through his sacrifice you have created us into new people, given us everlasting bodies in your heavenly kingdom. You offer us the forgiveness of sins, that blessing of the Holy Spirit and that gift of the promise of eternal salvation all won for us through the sacrifice of your own Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

Gracious Father, we pray for your Holy Church. As servants of Christ we are given a freedom through the forgiveness of sins, to serve you and all people as you would have us do. As your witnesses to that glory, fully redeemed and forgiven, washed clean and made new we rise up to seek out those who still need to know of your glory. Use your church and all our members Lord, send us as your ambassadors so that we may reach out to those burdened with pain and sinfulness, to show them your blessings and forgiveness.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, there are many who still to reach out to you and feel that presence of your mercy and love in their lives. There are many that need to feel that freedom from pain, from guilt, from sickness, from fear, from anxiety and worry. Grant your healing spirit to lift up the afflicted, to strength those facing adversity, to stand beside those who are alone, to give hope to those who are depressed. Be with all those that will be dealing with physical and mental anguish and grant them healing. With prayerful minds and heavy hearts we lift up all those needs and remember before you all those who are hospitalized, shut-ins, hurt and forgotten, and expecially, Howell Crawford, Norma Kreidler and all those we mention now in our prayers to you.....

Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.