

12.2 A Theology of Reconciliation

“Exclusion is never the way forward on our shared paths to freedom and justice. “ Desmond Tutu

From the very beginning, in the book of Genesis, we see God’s desire for reconciliation. After Adam and Eve sinned, *“The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them”* (Genesis 3:21). Though sin brought shame and separation, God, in His mercy, provided a covering—a sign of His grace and the foreshadowing of redemption. Even in humanity’s fall, God’s plan for salvation was already set in motion. In Genesis 3:15, we find the first messianic promise: *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”* This prophecy points to Christ, the ultimate Redeemer, who would triumph over sin and restore what was lost. God’s love and grace have always been at the heart of His relationship with humanity. From the very first moment of brokenness, He prepared the way for healing, demonstrating His relentless pursuit of reconciliation.



Reconciliation is a central theme throughout God's Word, revealing His deep desire to restore humanity to Himself. Jesus' death and resurrection stand as the ultimate act of divine providence, bringing

reconciliation to a world lost in sin. Paul beautifully expresses this truth in Romans 5:10: *“For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”* Christ was not a passive observer in this redemptive work—He was actively engaged as the mediator of a new covenant.

The author of Hebrews explains: *“For this reason, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant”* (Hebrews 9:15). The term *ransom* signifies the price paid for release from captivity, illustrating how Christ’s sacrifice freed us from the bondage of sin. In reconciling the world, God chose not to count our sins against us. Instead, driven by His unfathomable love, He gave His only Son so that we might be restored to Him. As Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 5:19-21: *“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting people’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”* This divine reconciliation calls us to respond—not only by embracing God’s grace but by carrying forward the message of His love and restoration to others.

The Call to Reconciliation in Ministry

The call to vocational ministry within a faith community and the world is ultimately a call to the ministry of reconciliation. Christianity, though rooted in Christ’s love, often experiences divisions due to differences in faith traditions, ethnic backgrounds, theological perspectives, denominational structures, languages, and cultural preferences. Yet, Jesus’ high priestly prayer in John 17:21-22 was a plea for unity:

“That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” This unity does not mean uniformity but rather a beautiful harmony—*unity in diversity*.

Finding A Common Ground

Theological and Christian oneness involves recognizing shared truths while respecting differences. True reconciliation emerges from meaningful dialogue, fostering a spirit of inclusivity that strengthens our bond as believers. A study by Ross Lockhart in British Columbia highlighted the importance of identifying shared values between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, reflecting the broader need for reconciliation in faith and society (Lockhart, 2019). God embraces diversity, and Scripture provides powerful examples of reconciliation through finding common ground:

- **The Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:31):** The father reminds his older son that their bond as family remains, despite differences: *“My son... this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”* Reconciliation was celebrated around the table, a sign of restored relationships.
- **Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John 4:21-24):** Jesus bridged historical divisions by focusing on shared worship, emphasizing that *“true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth.”*
- **Paul and King Agrippa (Acts 26:27):** Paul appealed to their shared belief in the prophets, creating a foundation for conversation.
- **The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:19-21):** James found common ground by simplifying the requirements for Gentile believers, ensuring their inclusion without unnecessary burdens.

The Foundation of Reconciliation

True reconciliation is rooted in God’s justice, mercy, and humility (Micah 6:8). When approaching reconciliation, each party must come with an open heart, recognizing that we are all in need of God’s grace. Christ’s sacrifice is the ultimate act of reconciliation, drawing us back to God and calling us to extend that same grace to others. Paul beautifully captures this in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17:

"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf."

Thus, the greatest common ground for reconciliation is Christ's finished work on the Cross. Through Him, we are reconciled to God, and in turn, we are called to be instruments of reconciliation in our world. As we journey in faith, we embrace the beauty of unity in diversity, knowing that in Christ, we are one. This vision in Revelation beautifully portrays the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan—a redeemed people from every tribe, language, and nation, united in worship. It is a picture of perfect reconciliation, where the divisions of this world are replaced by the harmony of heaven. In that glorious moment, the redeemed sing a new song, celebrating the worthiness of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, who through His sacrifice has brought people from all backgrounds into God's family. Revelation 5:9 reminds us that Christ's love transcends boundaries, bringing hope, restoration, and unity. This vision inspires us today to embrace reconciliation, love, and inclusivity, reflecting the heavenly reality here on earth. As we journey in faith, may our lives echo this song of redemption, proclaiming the goodness of Jesus in all we do.