

Guidelines for the Exercise of the Lord's Day Prophesying

Message Two : The Ministry of Reconciliation

I. Overview:

It is helpful for us to have a basic understanding of reconciliation: the need for reconciliation is enmity; the meaning of reconciliation is to make peace; the instrument of reconciliation is Christ; the means is the cross; and the scope is all things in the heavens and on the earth. Ambassadors of Christ represent God, the highest authority in the universe, and the apostles were authorized by Christ. Two steps are required for men to be fully reconciled to God: the first reconciles sinners to God from sin, and the second reconciles believers living in the natural life to God from the flesh. The extent to which we can bring others to God and into God is always measured by where we are with respect to God. These two steps are portrayed by the two veils of the tabernacle. Only a heart that has been fully reconciled to God is enlarged; a narrow heart indicates only partial reconciliation. If we can forgive others and forget their offenses against us, we are enlarged persons. The result of reconciliation is peace with God and the ability to walk in the paths of peace.

II. Truth and Enlightenment:

Day 1 —

A. Explain what it means to be an ambassador of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:20.

In 2 Corinthians 5:20 Paul says that we are ambassadors, as God entreats through us. As ambassadors of Christ, we carry out the work of reconciliation. God Himself entreats through us because we are one with Christ and with God, and Christ and God are one with us.

B. Explain the condition of the Corinthian believers.

Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 5:20 about being reconciled to God is not directed to sinners but to the believers in Corinth. They had been partially, but not fully, reconciled to God. In 1 Corinthians 1 Paul calls them saints, those called by God into the fellowship of His Son; thus, they had been reconciled to God to some degree.

Day 2 —

A. Explain how Paul ministered to the Corinthian believers.

Although saved and reconciled to God halfway, the Corinthians still lived in the flesh—that is, in the soul, the outer man, the natural being. The veil of the flesh, of the natural man, still separated them from God; therefore, their natural being was a separating veil, and they needed the second step of reconciliation.

B. Explain the relationship of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies to reconciliation.

In the Holy Place are the blessings of the Spirit, the lampstand, and the incense altar, but not the direct presence of God. To gain God Himself, we must be further reconciled and enter the Holy of Holies, being brought into God's presence. This reconciliation brings us out not only of sin but also of the flesh, the natural man, and the natural being.

Day 3 —

A. Explain how the new covenant ministry is a ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness.

This ministry imparts the Spirit of life into the believers, issuing in a state that the Bible calls righteousness. Before we were saved, we were in a condition altogether condemned by God. After we were saved, we were brought into a state in which God could justify us. This is righteousness. Our self produces sin.

B. Explain the experience of God's righteousness in married life.

Suppose a brother and sister hear a message on the need for further reconciliation. The husband begins to condemn his disposition, the wife condemns her peculiarity, and they both condemn their natural life. As a result, there is the possibility that they may be brought into the Holy of Holies to enjoy the Lord. They will be in a condition that may be called the righteousness of God.

Day 4 —

A. Explain how Christ died for our sins and also for us as the flesh, the old creation.

Many Christians know only that Christ died for their sins. They do not realize that Christ died for them as the flesh, as the old creation. Christ died for our sins so that they might be forgiven by God, but this is only the

initial stage of reconciliation. Christ died on the cross not only for our sins but also for us, so that our outer man, our natural being, may be terminated and we may become the righteousness of God.

B. Explain the three areas in which believers become the righteousness of God.

The new covenant ministry brings us back to God to such an extent that we actually become the righteousness of God. Not only are we justified by God, but we even become the righteousness of God. This condition of righteousness is worked out first in individuals, second in the church, and third in the millennial kingdom. Although the kingdom age has not yet come, we can have a foretaste of the righteousness of the kingdom in the church life and in our family life.

Day 5 —

A. Explain how the two steps of reconciliation are portrayed by the two veils of the tabernacle.

The first veil is called the screen. A sinner who was brought to God through the reconciliation of the propitiating blood entered into the Holy Place by passing this screen. This typifies the first step of reconciliation. The second veil still separated him from God, who was in the Holy of Holies. This veil needed to be rent so that he might be brought to God in the Holy of Holies. This is the second step of reconciliation.

B. Explain the first step of reconciliation.

In the Old Testament, when a sinner came to God, he first had to come to the altar to have his sins forgiven through the blood of the sin offering. After experiencing the forgiveness of sins, he could enter the Holy Place. This is the first step of reconciliation, the step by which a sinner begins to be reconciled to God. This was the situation of the believers at Corinth, and it is also the situation of most genuine Christians today.

Day 6 —

A. Explain why being fully reconciled to God requires an enlarged heart.

Many dear and precious brothers who are elders and co-workers are very strict and straight. Such brothers need to be enlarged in their heart. When we become enlarged in our heart, we should not become loose. Rather, we should continue to be strict and straight concerning ourselves.

B. Explain how the size of our heart depends on the degree of our reconciliation to God.

We may be great in our own eyes, yet our heart may be extremely narrow. For example, if a certain one makes a mistake, we may have nothing to do with him unless he repents. This is a sign of narrowness. Our narrowness is a strong indication that we have been reconciled to God only partially. How large our heart is depends on the degree of our reconciliation to God.

III. Conclusion:

Both in our family life and in the church life, we probably have been offended many times. Have we kept a record of all the offenses? Do we remember how our husband or wife offended us, how a certain elder offended us, or the offenses caused by the saints? We need to forgive and forget all offenses. We may forgive, but it is difficult to forget. This difficulty with forgiving and forgetting is caused by a heart that has not been adequately enlarged. Thus, we see once again that our hearts need to be enlarged. To be fully reconciled and fully saved will cause us to be truly enlarged in our hearts. Therefore, we need to experience and enjoy Christ as the instrument of reconciliation to the fullest extent.