

The Doctrines of Christianity

[Reconciliation]

Reconciliation is the goal of the six doctrines of **Hebrews 6:1-2**.

Why do we need reconciliation?

Genesis 2:18-25 [NIV] *“The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’, for she was taken out of man.” For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. **The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.**”*

Here we see a good relationship between God and the first humans.

But things did **not** stay this way, this relationship was broken.

Genesis 3:1 [NIV] *“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, **“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”***

The serpent [Satan – see **Revelation 12:9**] put doubt of God’s Word into the mind of Eve.

This was done by presenting them with a “*half truth*”.

God must have told them the reason for their existence, why they had been given life.

Genesis 1:26 [NIV] *“Then God said, **“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”***

They had been created in God’s image and He wanted them to become like Him in character [likeness].

Satan knew this and offered them what looked like a short-cut to fulfil what God had told them He wanted to accomplish so that they could live forever.

Genesis 3:2-8 [NIV] *“The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” **“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”** When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. **Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked;** so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”*

The resulting rebellious sin cause Adam and Eve to hide from God their Creator.

God wanted to continue the fellowship He had with Adam and Eve, but sin had broken this close relationship.

Genesis 3:9-13 [NIV] *“But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*

The guilt both Adam and Eve felt was the result of the rebellious sin they had committed.

Division between the man and woman, the “*battle of the sexes*” had begun.

More need for reconciliation.

Genesis 3:16-19 [NIV] *“To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your **pains in childbearing**; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ **“Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”***

Note the results of this sin, **pain** in childbirth and the land was put under a **curse** and physical **death** was introduced into God’s human creation as a result of their sinful rebellion.

Romans 8:19-22 [NIV] *“The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the **creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.** We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the **pains of childbirth** right up to the present time.”*

Earthquakes and volcanoes are like the pains of children that the earth is going through at this time.

Becoming more frequent and intense as the time when God’s children will be revealed for all to see.

Just as they do in physical childbirth.

Romans 8:23-24 [NIV] *“Not only so, but **we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.** For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?”*

Here is expressed the attitude we as God’s “*firstfruits*” should be, “*groaning inwardly*” for the time of reconciliation.

Romans 8:25-27 [NIV] *“But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, **the Spirit helps us in our weakness.** We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the **Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.** And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”*

If we let Him, the Holy Spirit will assist us in our prayer and our seeking reconciliation with God and praying for all humanity to seek reconciliation with God and one another.

Genesis 3:22-24 [NIV] *“And the LORD God said, **“The man has now become like one of us, knowing good [choosing to know for himself what is] and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the Tree of Life and eat, and live for ever.” So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the Tree of Life.**”*

God in His great mercy did **not** want humanity to remain in rebellious sin for eternity so He cut them off from the tree of life.

Genesis 3:21 [NIV] *“The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.”*

What God was doing by providing skin clothing, was introducing how He was going, in the future, to bring about reconciliation and restore this now broken relationship.

All the rest of the Christian Bible, our Handbook For Life, is the history of how God is working for this reconciliation to be accomplished.

Revelation 21:1-7 [NIV] *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, **“Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”** He who was seated on the throne said, **“I am making everything new!”** Then he said, **“Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”** He said to me: **“It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.”***

The father-son relationship that started with the human Adam and Eve is restored, reconciliation has been accomplished.

Where do we all fit into the picture of rejection and eventual reconciliation?

Romans 3:23 [NIV] *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*

All humanity have followed the same path of rebellious sin that started with Adam and Eve.

Why?

Revelation 12:9 [NIV] *“The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”*

Satan is still around placing doubts in our mind about the Word of God, seeking to destroy any trusting relationship we may have with our Creator God.

John 8:44 [NIV] *“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

Satan feeds people with lies, such as evolution instead of God as the Creator of all things.

Satan seeks to instil pride into humans, the very attitude that has caused his downfall.

Romans 6:23 [NIV] *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Anything we seek to do to win favour with God will end up in death. We only receive the gift of eternal life through faith in what God has done for us through Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:19-23 [NIV] *“For God was pleased to have all his fulness dwell in him [Jesus Christ], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation, if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.”*

Jesus Christ is the key to this reconciliation

This is the gospel message we are to proclaim to the whole world.

Ephesians 2:13, 17 [NIV] *“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.” ... “He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.”*

Through Jesus Christ we now have access to God the Father.

Using the original story as a simile, God is invited us into the Garden of Eden to partake of the tree of life.

Romans 5:6-11 [NIV] *“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, when 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! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”*

We are powerless of ourselves to initiate this reconciliation by our good works, we have to humbly accept what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

If good works could bring about reconciliation, then self-pride would destroy it again.

James 4:10 [NIV] *“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”*

Only a humble attitude of mind will receive the gift of reconciliation from God.

2 Corinthians 5:16-17 [NIV] *“So from now on we regard no-one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”*

The Greek word translated reconciliation is “*katallassō*” which denotes a change, with regard to relationships between God and humans.

God invites us to be reconciled to Him, that is to change our attitude, and accept the provision that God has made for us, whereby our sins can be remitted and we are justified in the sight of God the Father.

Matthew 5:23-24 [NIV] *“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. **First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.**”*

Broken relationships can hinder our relationship with God.

If we have a problem or grievance with another human being, we should resolve the problem as soon as possible.

We are hypocrites if we claim to love God, and show it by bringing to Him an offering of money or talent, while we have an unloving relationship with other human beings.

1 John 4:20-21 [NIV] *“**If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.**”*

Our attitude towards others reflects our relationship with God.

Matthew 18:15 [NIV] *“**If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.**”*

This other person may be unaware that some remark or act has caused us pain.

So we need to approach them in a humble **not** accusing frame of mind.

This should be done without letting anyone else know of the offence caused.

Matthew 5:14-16 [NIV] *“**You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.**”*

Our love, care and concern for the welfare of others will be a shining light that will lead others to become reconciled to their Creator God.

2 Corinthians 5:19 [NIV] *“**that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.**”*

The Greek word translated counting is “*lōgizōmai*” which means taking an inventory.

Once we confess our sins to God and ask for the blood of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice to be a substitute for our deserved death, God will no longer remember our sins [**Isaiah 43:25**].

We have a clean slate.

Our attitude towards others should reflect this in our relationship with them.

Romans 5:10-11 [NIV] *“**For if, when 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! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**”*

What is the process of this reconciliation through Jesus Christ?

a) **We all have one thing in common**, we all need to accept the sacrifices of Jesus Christ to cleanse us of our sins.

We have a regular reminder of this as we accept together the bread and wine of the Communion.

b) Having total faith in the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ, allows God to offer us the gift of Christ's righteousness.

Romans 4:3, 24-25 [NIV] *“What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ... “but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness, for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”*

Romans 5:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”*

Note this faith is in the whole of the Godhead.

Jesus Christ who died for us.

God the Father who will credit us with Christ's righteousness.

The Holy Spirit Who raised Christ from the dead.

Romans 8:11 [NIV] *“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”*

c) Receive the Holy Spirit into our lives.

Romans 8:9 [NIV] *“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”*

We as Christians all have the same Spirit in us, the Holy Spirit.

This indwelling of the same Spirit will bring about our reconciliation with God and other human beings with the same Holy Spirit in them.

2 Corinthians 5:17 [NIV] *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”*

We are in Christ, and Christ in us, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us.

John 14:15-18 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”*

The Holy Spirit in us is Christ in us.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 [NIV] *“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.”*

Once we are reconciled to God the Father through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, God wants us to take this message of reconciliation to the rest of humanity.

Until we are reconciled to God and to one another this message of reconciliation will not be given by us in our congregation to our community.

Nor will any other congregation throughout the world be able to be ambassadors for Jesus Christ.

Without being reconciled to God, no human being will ever receive the gift of eternal life.

Without reconciliation we die eternally, cut off from our Creator.

This is why reconciliation is so important.