

RECONCILIATION OF MAN TO GOD

Introduction and Review

The Order of Salvation in the Reformed View (Ordo Salutis)		
Election/ Predestination	This is the foundation of salvation, referring to God's eternal choice of individuals for salvation in Christ, based entirely on His grace and purpose, not human merit.	Ephesians 1:4-5 Rom 8:2-30
Gospel Call	The outward proclamation of the gospel to all, calling sinners to repentance and faith in Christ.	Romans 10:14-17 1 Cor 1:23
Inward Call	The work of the Holy Spirit in effectively calling the elect, drawing them to Christ in a way that infallibly leads to salvation.	1 Cor 1:24 Rom, 8:30
Regeneration	The Spirit's sovereign work of renewing the heart, enabling the sinner to respond in faith and repentance. Regeneration brings the individual into spiritual life and union with Christ.	John 3:3-8 Titus 3:5 John 6:63, 65
Conversion (Faith and Repentance)	The sinner, now regenerated, responds to the gospel by trusting in Christ (faith) and turning away from sin (repentance). These are distinct but inseparable aspects of conversion and are both gifts of grace	Mark 1:15 Acts 20:21 Eph 2:8-9
Justification	The legal declaration of righteousness, based on Christ's imputed righteousness, wherein the believer is pardoned and accepted as righteous in God's sight.	Romans 5:1; Galatians 2:16
Adoption	God receives us into His family as beloved sons and daughters. Adoption grants us full rights and privileges of God's household. salvation is not only about pardon but also about belonging.	John 1:12; Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:4-7
Sanctification	The ongoing work of the Spirit in making the believer holy, progressively conforming them to the image of Christ.	(Romans 6:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:2
Glorification	The final stage of salvation, where the believer is fully conformed to the image of Christ and dwells, eternally in the presence of God.	Rom. 8:30 1 Cor. 15:42-

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/TheologyDiscussionGroup/posts/23875866875352151/>

- We have already talked about our justification, but it is important to keep that in mind as we are moving forward throughout our study of salvation.
- We must know what has been done for us, what is a legal declaration, what is a change of status, what gives us something, and only then can we live according to the will of God.

- **For example**, our being declared just before God, was a legal declaration, we did not become something new.
- But, in regeneration, we became new people. Because of our justification, we now have a new status, we are now reconciled to God *and* are adopted into His family.
 - *God did not have to adopt us just because we were reconciled with Him.*
- Once again, just a status change, not a change in us.
- Now, because we are reconciled and then brought into the family (a change of status), we now have a change of relationship with means that we now live differently.
- **Justification**: God's instantaneous legal declaration that a sinner, by grace through faith in Christ, is righteous in His sight.
 - **Imputation of Righteousness**: God crediting Christ's perfect righteousness to the believer's account, while their sin is simultaneously imputed to Christ on the cross.
 - **Romans 4:5** "And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,"
 - **Philippians 3:9** "and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—"
 - **2 Corinthians 5:21** "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."
 - **Forensic Act**: A legal declaration by God as Judge, rather than an internal change in the person's character.
 - **Romans 5:1** "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."
- “Then, in justification, God legally declares that we are no longer deemed guilty under the divine law but are forgiven and counted righteous in God’s sight.”¹
- God, not man, gives the answer to mankind’s most pressing question, *what must I do to be saved*.
- Several important facts about justification are to be noted²:
 - Justification comes apart from the law; that is, we cannot earn justification through rule-keeping or our own good work.

¹ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 609.

² List taken from <https://www.gotquestions.org/justification.html>

- Justification is made possible in the sacrificial death of Christ; it is based on the shed blood of Christ.
- Justification is the free and gracious gift of God bestowed on those who receive by faith the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- Justification demonstrates the righteousness of God.
- This means that when we start to talk about reconciliation, adoption, sanctification, and all the other “pieces” of our salvation, they are **benefits from our justification**.
- We can’t be at peace with God or in His family or walk according to His commands without first being legally declared righteous in His sight.

Reconciliation

- “...Jesus provides for us a propitiation³ that saves us from God’s wrath, a justification that saves us from our guilt, and a redemption that sets us free from our bondage in sin. So in a sense, we’ve been visiting the temple, the law court, and the slave market. But now there’s a fourth word to think about. It’s the word reconciliation, and it has to do with personal relationships.”⁴
- In order for reconciliation to mean anything, we must remember that we were (before our salvation) alienated from God.
- **Ephesians 4:17-18** “So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, {18} being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart...”
 - “...to be alienated from God means that we have made ourselves strangers to Him because of our sin.”⁵
 - This is what Paul means when he says “excluded from the life of God...”
- **Colossians 1:21** “And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds...”
 - (**alienated**) means “estranged,” “cut off,” or “separated.”⁶
- Because of our sin, because we walked according to the darkness that was in us, we had not relationship with God.

³ Propitiation describes the means by which the wrath of God is turned away from us. This is why Jesus’ words on the cross are so significant—“My God, My God, why am I forsaken?” The answer is He is the one on whom our sins have been laid as a propitiatory sacrifice to absorb the judgment of God against us so that we might be set free. (<https://learn.ligonier.org/qas/what-does-propitiation-mean>)

⁴ <https://learn.ligonier.org/podcasts/things-unseen-with-sinclair-ferguson/reconciliation-in-christ>

⁵ <https://www.gotquestions.org/alienated-from-God.html>

⁶ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Colossians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 60.

- We were cut off and separated from God...we did not know Him or truly seek after Him.
- “Every human alienation is rooted in our alienation from God. We are at enmity with Him because of our sin, and He is at enmity with us in our sinfulness. So only when reconciliation takes place will our lives begin to be reintegrated. Only when our alienation from God caused by our sin is dealt with can these secondary alienations begin to find a resolution.”⁷
- Now, because of being declared just and having the righteousness of Christ, we have peace with God...we have been reconciled to God through Christ’s work on the cross.
- When we get into the practical section (progression sanctification), we will study more about how our reconciliation with God through Christ means that we too can have reconciliation in our earthly relationships with one another.

Biblical Basis for Reconciliation

- **How did this happen? How were we reconciled to God...moving from enemies to friends?**
- **Romans 5:10-11** “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. {11} And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”
- Notice the language, it was **through Jesus’ death** that we were reconciled. This is not something that we are looking forward to but is our current reality.
 - We must remind ourselves that we are now reconciled to God. There is nothing that we can do that will take that away **or** that will make it better.
- It was not something we did to earn it...it was given to us by our union with Christ.
 - Because we were in Christ, we now have peace with God.
- **2 Corinthians 5:18-19** “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, {19} namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”
- Notice that we are the ones who were reconciled God...**God is not reconciled to us.**
- This means that it was not God who offended us, **but we offended God.**
 - This offense came from us to Him because of our sin. Our sin keeps us away from God.
- There was a barrier between man and God. Man was under God’s wrath and His righteous judgment.

⁷ <https://learn.ligonier.org/podcasts/things-unseen-with-sinclair-ferguson/reconciliation-in-christ>

- **Colossians 1:20-23** "...and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. {21} And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, {22} yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach - {23} if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister."
- "The word *reconcile* is one of the most significant and descriptive terms in all of Scripture. It is one of five key words used in the New Testament to describe the richness of salvation in Christ, along with *justification, redemption, forgiveness, and adoption*. In justification, the sinner stands before God guilty and condemned, but is declared righteous (Rom. 8:33). In redemption, the sinner stands before God as a slave, but is granted his freedom (Rom. 6:18–22). In forgiveness, the sinner stands before God as a debtor, but the debt is paid and forgotten (Eph. 1:7). In reconciliation, the sinner stands before God as an enemy, but becomes His friend (2 Cor. 5:18–20). In adoption, the sinner stands before God as a stranger, but is made a son (Eph. 1:5)."⁸
- Because of Christ, you now have right relationship with God.
- So, biblically, since our sin has been removed, we can have a restored relationship with God the Father.
- We now live at peace with God; no longer His enemy.
- As a believer, we can no longer say that God is against us.
- We have been brought into a right relationship with Him.
- **What is the goal of reconciliation?**
 - Look at **verse 22**, *in order to present you before him holy and blameless...*
 - Does this language sound familiar?
 - **Ephesians 1:4** "...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him."
 - **Ephesians 5:27** "...that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."
 - The purpose of our salvation and our reconciliation is to be holy and blameless before God.
- "Christ's reconciliation makes believers holy, blameless, and beyond reproach **before Him**. God sees us now as we will be in heaven when we are glorified. He views us clothed with the very righteousness of

⁸ MacArthur Jr., *Colossians*, 55–56.

Jesus Christ. The process of spiritual growth involves becoming in practice what we are in reality before God.”⁹

- **What is the outward evidence of the new spiritual reality?**

- He says in **verse 23** “...if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven...”
- “Of all the marks of a genuine Christian presented in Scripture, none is more significant than the one Paul mentions here. People give evidence of being truly reconciled when they **continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast**. The Bible repeatedly testifies that those who are truly reconciled will continue in the faith.”¹⁰
- Again, this will be discussed more when we continue in our study of salvation. This would be under perseverance of the saints and also our progressive sanctification.

- **What do we do with our reconciliation?**

- Thinking back to **2 Corinthians 5:18-21**, Paul writes that God gave us the ministry of reconciliation...He has committed to us the word of reconciliation...he then says in **verse 20** “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”
- Since we are reconciled, we are called to be ministers of reconciliation in the world.
- “The ministry of reconciliation therefore involves more than simply explaining to others what God has done in Christ. It requires that one become an active reconciler oneself. Like Christ, a minister of reconciliation plunges into the midst of human tumult to bring harmony out of chaos, reconciliation out of estrangement, and love in the place of hate.”¹¹
- Paul calls the Corinthian believers to be reconciled to God. If they were already born again, why would they need to be reconciled to God...again?
- “The fundamental problem behind the Corinthians’ misunderstanding of Paul and their discord is that they are not fully reconciled to God...Paul tells them to be reconciled to God because they have fallen short because of their bickering, sinful lifestyles, and participation with idols, all of which necessitate his frank reproof.”¹²
- They were not living in light of what was already true about them; so Paul rebukes them.

⁹ MacArthur Jr., *Colossians*, 65.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹¹ David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 29, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 291–292.

¹² *Ibid.*, 299.