

Title: Reconciliation
Text: Romans 5:9-11

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In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve sinned against God. The first result of sin was broken relationships. Their relationship with God was broken. Their relationship with each other was broken. Their relationship with God's creation was also broken. Genesis 3:7–8 tells us what happened after they sinned. "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."

After they sinned, they covered their bodies from each other. Today, covering our bodies is normal, but this action meant something much deeper. It meant their close relationship was already broken. Before sin, they lived in complete unity. Genesis 2:24–25 says: "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."

Before sin, they were one in heart and life. But after sin, they became ashamed of each other. They covered themselves and hid. Their relationship became distant. They lost the close unity they once enjoyed.

Genesis 3:8 continues: "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." They hid from God. Their friendship with God was broken. They no longer enjoyed God's presence. Instead, they ran away from the Lord God.

Then Adam said in verse 12, "The woman you put here with me gave me fruit, and I ate it." Earlier, Adam called Eve, "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." She was part of his own life. What complete unity they shared! But after sin, Adam blamed his wife. He refused to take responsibility for his own sin. Their unity was broken. Sin came between husband and wife. It also damaged human relationships.

Verse 13 says, "Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'" The woman answered, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." The woman blamed the serpent. The serpent was one of God's creatures. Satan used it to deceive Eve. But Eve blamed God's creation instead of herself. The relationship between humanity and the rest of creation was also broken.

Verses 16 through 18 show more results of sin. Childbirth became painful. Marriage became full of conflict. The ground was cursed, producing thorns and thistles. People had to work hard for food. Then God sent Adam and Eve out of Eden. Their separation from God was complete.

Sin broke every relationship. It separated people from God. It separated people from each other. It also harmed God's creation. The Old Testament shows these broken relationships. We read about wars, disasters, sickness, suffering, and death. All these remind us what sin has done. Sin brought separation from God and from one another.

The French writer Romain Gary tells a touching story called *The Wall: A Christmas Tale*. The story happens on Christmas Eve. Christmas should be a time of joy, hope, and peace. A poor college student lived far from home. He returned to his small rented room after a long day. He was tired and hungry. Soon he heard strange sounds next door. He thought a man and woman were together.

A young woman lived next door. They had never spoken. He believed she was kind and innocent, almost angelic. Now he thought she had made a terrible mistake that holy night. He felt deep disappointment, loneliness, and despair. He lost all hope. That night, he took his own life.

The next morning, people found two bodies. The student had died. The young woman had also died. She had taken poison because she was so lonely. The sounds were not sounds of love. They were cries of pain. One thin wall caused a terrible misunderstanding. Two precious lives were lost.

At the end of the story, Romain Gary talks about "the wall." He says walls bring deep loneliness. They can even make people lose hope. This story teaches us an important lesson. Walls between people can destroy lives. Many walls are invisible. They are built by misunderstanding and indifference. They separate hearts. They hurt families, churches, and communities.

Broken relationships are everywhere in our lives. We see them among pastors in the same annual conference. We see them among church members in the same church. We also see them between pastors and church members. Family conflicts exist in almost every family. Broken relationships are also common in politics, business, and society.

Jesus Christ came into the world to heal broken relationships. He came to bring reconciliation between God and people. He came to restore what sin had broken. He restores our relationship with God. He restores our relationships with each other. He even restores our relationship with God's creation.

Some Swedish innovators created a smart machine. This machine gives food to crows when they bring trash. As many of you know, crows are very smart birds. They are so smart that they protect their food from other crows. Sometimes, they even carry their food bowls to high places, like telephone poles. These innovators trained crows to pick up small pieces of trash.

For example, the crows collect cigarette butts from the streets. They put them into a special trash

box. Then, the machine gives them food as a reward. After their training, the crows began helping clean streets. This is a creative way to solve city trash problems. Human technology and animal intelligence are working together. If this idea succeeds on a larger scale, it could help a lot. Humans and nature could work together for a cleaner world. They could live together in harmony. This shows that cooperation can bring good results. When different beings work together, they can create something good.

Now, let us return to today's Scripture passage, Romans 5:9–11, together. "Since we have been made right with God through Christ's blood, we will surely be saved from God's righteous judgment. We were once God's enemies. But we were brought back to God through Christ's death. Now we have peace with God. We also rejoice in God through Jesus Christ. Through Him, we have received reconciliation."

The cross of Jesus restored our broken relationship with God. Through Christ, we have peace and joy with God. But God did not stop there. He calls us to help restore relationships with others. Listen to 2 Corinthians 5:18–20 from The Message. "Everything comes from God. He restored our relationship with Him through Christ. Then He gave us the work of restoring relationships. God brought the world back to Himself through Christ. He forgave our sins and gave us a new beginning. God has given us this message of reconciliation. We are Christ's representatives in this world. God uses us to help people make peace."

The God who restored us through Jesus also calls us. He calls us to restore relationships with others. When relationships are broken, we bring God's peace. This can happen in families, churches, and communities. It can happen at work, school, and everywhere else. Christ brought us back to God through His sacrifice. Now we share His love with others. We help heal broken relationships wherever we can. We become people of reconciliation.

Family conflict is one of the most painful things in life, isn't it? A member of my previous church had two daughters. Their relationship had been broken for many years. The younger daughter lives in Tucson. The older daughter lives in another state. When she visits her parents in Arizona, she does not visit Tucson. She never goes to see her younger sister. The younger daughter also does not visit her parents. She lives nearby but stays away.

I served that church for one and a half years. During that time, I met the older daughter many times. But I never met the younger daughter. The parents celebrated the father's 90th birthday with their family. During that celebration, he asked me for prayer. With tears, he shared his deepest wish. He wanted his two daughters to reconcile before he died. He is one of the most positive people I know. Even at ninety years old, he sang in the church choir. He still calls me sometimes to check on me. But behind his happy smile is deep family pain.

I have eight brothers and sisters. I briefly shared this during the Cross-Cultural Appointment Training. A large family brings many blessings. But it can also bring many conflicts. We grew up in extreme poverty. When I was young, schools did not provide lunch. Students had to bring their own lunch. I could not bring lunch until eighth grade. That poverty made our family conflicts even stronger.

Even today, this remains one of my deepest pains. That is why I have a hope for my retirement. I hope to return permanently to South Korea and help bring peace to my family. I believe this may be one of God's important callings for me. I ask for your prayers. Whenever I visit Korea, I continue doing what I can. But the wounds in my family are deep and have lasted many years. Reconciliation is not easy.

My dear friends, we are all different. As you know, my English is still limited. I also grew up in a different culture. Let me share two simple examples from my own experience. They may help you understand me better.

In Korea, we shake hands differently. When greeting older people, we hold hands gently. That shows respect in Korean culture. I greeted people this way during my ministry in Korea. But I later learned about American culture. Here, a firm handshake shows warmth and respect. It says, "I am glad to meet you." I did not know this for several months. I learned it after serving in an American church.

Here is another example. In Korea, we avoid long eye contact. This is especially true with older people or people in authority. We often look at their mouth or below their chin. We learned this from childhood. Long eye contact can seem disrespectful in Korea. But America is different, isn't it? Here, eye contact shows honesty and attention. If you avoid eye contact, people may misunderstand you. They may think you are hiding something. Learning eye contact has taken me a long time. To be honest, I still struggle sometimes.

We really are different, aren't we? Every person is unique in God's eyes. God created each person in a special way. We are different in many ways. We have different languages and cultures. We have different backgrounds and life experiences. We have different foods and traditions. Should we only live with people like us? Should we choose only people with similar backgrounds? That may feel more comfortable. It may feel easier and less stressful.

But that is not God's will. That is not the calling God has given us. Our calling is what The Message says in 2 Corinthians 5:20: "God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them."

Dear friends, let us become people of reconciliation. God reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ. Now let us be reconciled to one another.
In every place and with every person, let us become one in Christ.
Amen.