



Revival and Reformation Lesson 12 3Q 2013

Reformation: Healing Broken Relationships

SABBATH

Read second paragraph, “In this week’s lesson...” thoughts?

The paragraph stated, “They include breaking down the barriers in our relationship with God...” thoughts about this?

What are the barriers in our relationship with God?

- Lies we believe about Him
- Our own selfish natures
- Fear we have of Him
- Guilt and shame in our hearts
- Fear of not being loved, not being good enough
- Hardened heart which loves self and the world
- Pride
- Anger at God for some perceived injustice
- Others?

How are these barriers broken down?

- Lies we believe about Him
 - Broken down by truth
- Our own selfish natures
 - Broken down by surrendering to a God we trust and infused with His love
- Fear we have of Him
 - Trust and love in a relationship with God
- Guilt and shame in our hearts
 - Experiencing forgiveness, repentance and new heart/motives
- Fear of not being loved, not being good enough
 - By being loved by God and other Christians, by experiencing change in heart and moving the focus from self to others
- Hardened heart which loves self and the world
 - Often a painful experience that awakens one to the reality that their way doesn’t work
- Pride
 - Often a humbling experience, met with grace and love
- Anger at God for some perceived injustice
 - Seeing the truth about God as revealed in Christ and understanding the perceived injustice in a more accurate light



What about this as a barrier?

- “Paul always speaks of people being reconciled to God (2Cor 5:19; Rom 5:10; Col. 1:20). He never refers to God being reconciled to us. **In spite of that fact**, however, we should recognize that sin affected both sides. Humanity’s rebellion and sense of guilt alienated it from God, while **God was separated from humankind by His necessary hatred of and judgment on sin (His wrath). Christ’s sacrificial death (propitiation) removed the barrier to reconciliation from God’s side.” (Knight, George, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 74.)**

Thoughts? Does God have a barrier to reconciliation in His heart, on His side, that needs Christ to do something to remove it?

- “Christ’s self-sacrifice is *pleasing* to God because this sacrificial offering **took away the barrier between God and sinful man** in that **Christ fully bore God’s wrath on man’s sin**. Through Christ, God’s wrath is not turned into love but is turned away from man and borne by Himself.” (*Seventh-day Adventist Believe 27*, p. 111.)

What is the barrier between God and man according to this passage?

Is that correct? Is the obstacle to our salvation in God’s heart? Who would want us to believe this?

John the Baptist said that Jesus came to take away the sin of the world.

What happens when we believe the barrier to our relationship with God is God’s attitude? Does it instill trust?

Would such teachings advance or hinder God’s work on earth?

Recently, I have received correspondence from listeners who have thought I have been attacking the church. First, I want to thank each of you for sharing your concerns and giving me an opportunity to respond.

Sometimes, when a doctor diagnoses a patient, and then informs a patient of the diagnosis, the patient feels uncomfortable, embarrassed, and fears being ridiculed or put down. But the doctor doesn’t expose the “defects” in the patient to the patient in order to hurt, criticize, mock, or in anyway attack the patient.

The doctor has a heart of love for the patient and wants to heal the patient, but one cannot heal until one admits what the problem is, so we must start with accurate diagnosis.

When I point these things out I am not attacking the church. I am attacking distortions that have infected the church and undermine our mission, for the purpose of healing in the church. Jump to FRIDAY read question #3:

“If we look at our church, that is, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as a whole, what is the greatest thing holding us back from the kind of revival and reformation that will be needed in



order to reach the world? Is it our teachings and doctrines? Of course not. These are the very things that God has given us to proclaim to the world...”

Do you agree? Do we have a problem with our doctrine about God? About what His character and justice looks like? Has our church, along with the rest of Christianity, been infected with an imposed law construct and therefore a dictator view of God, in which God is angry and wrathful and Jesus must do something to remove a barrier to our salvation from God’s side?

Here is the historic SDA view, written in 1902:

To break down the barrier that Satan had erected between God and man, Christ made a full and complete sacrifice, revealing unexampled self-denial. He revealed to the world the amazing spectacle of God living in human flesh, and sacrificing Himself to save fallen men. What wonderful love! ST Sep 24, 1902

So, in our modern view, in what is being printed today, we have God generating within His heart a barrier to our reconciliation, but the Bible and our founders taught that the barrier Christ came to remove was erected by Satan.

Do we have a problem, an infection? Is it an attack on the church to point it out, or is it love for the church? When a doctor rightly diagnosis a patient with anthrax, is he attacking the patient? If the patient was in denial and the doctor was passionately arguing for the patient to take the remedy, would he be attacking the patient?

I am NOT attacking this or any other church or group. I am attacking an infection of thought, a false construct, a distortion about God that has entered modern Christian thought which undermines our ability as a church to complete the work God has given us to lighten the world with the truth about His character of love!

Thoughts? Do we need more evidence? Are you convinced there is a problem?
Any suggestions on how to solve this problem?

SUNDAY

Read first and third paragraphs, “Paul and Barnabas...” thoughts?

The last paragraph says, “Paul’s ministry was enriched by the young preacher, whom he had obviously forgiven. The barrier between them was broken, and they were able to work together in the cause of the gospel.”

Thoughts?

What does the lesson suggest was the barrier that was removed? The lesson is suggesting that Paul was unforgiving toward John Mark and that it was his unforgiveness that was the barrier.



Do you see how this is a mirror to the theology that claims our problem is God's wrath and unforgiveness, and God must forgive us in order to be reconciled to Him?

I suggest this is in error. I suggest that Paul didn't have an unforgiving attitude toward John Mark, but Paul didn't trust John Mark's ability to handle the responsibilities placed on him and therefore didn't want to rely on him, i.e. work with him.

In other words, the barrier was not in Paul's unwillingness to forgive, but in John Mark's maturity and ability to handle the responsibility. And what changed was the same thing that changed for Peter – think about Peter. He denied the Lord, Jesus was not unforgiving, but there was a barrier to Peter's usefulness, Peter's maturity. After his denial, Peter went out wept bitterly and found grace, resolve, and a new motive of loyalty. Then Jesus could rely upon Peter.

Likewise, John Mark, needed some time to reflect on his fearfulness, his walking away from mission, and determine in his own mind that he was committed, and willing to sacrifice self for the cause of Christ. Evidently, he came to this point and then Paul was able to rely and value John Mark.

Where is the problem in our relationship with God – His ability and willingness to forgive, or our ability to trust and obey Him?

Do you see how this thread of thinking, this theology to make the problem with the offended person's willingness to forgive, subtle protects self. It isn't me, the sinfulness in my heart that is a barrier, it is God's anger, wrath that needs to be resolved. John Mark didn't need reformation – Paul did.

Thoughts?

When a breach in relationship occurs – it is true the offended party must have a forgiving heart, but forgiving the offender alone does not reconcile a relationship, why? What else is needed? The offender must actually experience a change in heart such that they have matured, learned, grown, and are not as likely to continue to make the same mistake over and again.

Read bottom green section, "How can we..." thoughts?

Questions about forgiveness and reconciliation?

MONDAY

Discusses the runaway slave Onesimus and his owner Philemon. Any questions or thoughts about this?

What did Paul instruct Onesimus to do? Go back to his slave owner. Is that all Paul did? What else did Paul do? He wrote a letter to Philemon reintroducing Onesimus as a brother in Christ.

What impact would this have upon Philemon, if Philemon operates under the law of love?



How would Onesimus treat Philemon from this point forward?
Do you notice that Paul did not address the issue of social justice or the morality of slavery? Why not?
Is there any lesson there for us and the mission of the church?
If all people loved others more than self, would there be slavery?

Have you ever found it bizarre that the first words of our Constitution,

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—

were written by men who owned slaves?

What lesson do we learn from this? That good men can be blind to some areas of their own minds. Thus we see Nicodemus and Saul of Tarsus who were good men, but had blind spots in their understanding and application that required maturing.

Today, there are many good people who are teaching penal views of God, but the key for each of us, is a willingness to grow in our understanding of God, to reexamine our beliefs in light of new evidence and to advance where the truth leads.

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read 1Cor 3:5-11:

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸ The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.

¹⁰ By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

What is the principle of unity and relationship Paul is describing here?

That none of God’s workers are to be worshipped. All of Christ’s true workers don’t seek self-glory, but seek to turn hearts to Christ. Thus, we don’t build factions of this group or that group based on the personality of individuals, we unite in the truth about God as revealed in Christ.

All of our building of character must be built upon what Christ has accomplished for us and thus we grow in Christlikeness of character, but also grow in Christlikeness of understanding of God’s character and design for His universe.



Do we have factions in Christianity? Why?

I want to see us all come back under one head, Jesus Christ! What prevents unity?

I suggest it is focusing on doctrines that are separated from the truth about God's character of love.

When we have an imposed law construct then we can have an infinite number of permutations of how arbitrary law is written and applied. Thus theologies get subtle differences that become focal points for divergence and disagreement.

The Catholic Priest and Protestant theologian arguing over whether Christ is offering His "sacrifice" (Catholic position) or "merits" (Protestant position) to the Father to assuage His wrath and obtain our forgiveness, is a classic example.

A trivial point, made into a huge deal, while both are blind to the fact they are bowing before a false god concept of a being who requires appeasement and payment in order to forgive. Why? Because both operate upon the imposed law and think something has to be offered to the offended god. They just disagree on what.

When we come back to seeing God as Designer, Builder and His law as love, the design parameters for life, then we see we are deviant from His original design and God is working to heal and restore us.

Consider a medical analogy – we have an injury and need Physical Therapy. One person is doing exercises with free weights, another is doing exercises with nautilus equipment, and another is actually using heavy objects around the home, and another is doing pushups, pullups, situps, and heavy rubber bands. They each have different "rules" and "exercises" which they argue are the orthodox or correct way to grow stronger and the other ways of exercising are sinful.

But the person, who lives on principles and natural law, realizes that the specific weight used isn't important as long as the application actually strengthens, heals and restores function and doesn't add injury.

Religious application - Does it matter if we have piano or not in our church music? Some churches this is a big deal, no instruments. Others criticize those who won't allow instruments in the church. But does it matter one way or the other? What does matter? Are we growing to be like Jesus in character, loving God and others more than self and developing minds that love truth! If some people come to grow into Christlikeness without a piano and others with a piano, what does it matter?

We are divided because we believe in an imposed law construct from a dictator, and once we believe we understand His rules, then it is imperative we keep those rules and anyone who isn't keeping it is a "law breaker" and therefore must be either confronted, avoided, chastised or punished. And if we can't get everybody to keep the same rules, then we need to have our own club, i.e. denomination of those who agree with our rules.



We need to present the truth about God's character of love! His methods and principles of love and then we see it doesn't matter which weights are used, as long as one is in harmony with God's design for life and growing ever more like Jesus in character!

Thoughts?

Does this mean then that anything goes? No standards as long as one is sincere?

Consider the medical analogy with the weights, will anything work? Or will some applications actually injure or damage?

Spiritually, will anything work to heal the mind, restore the character, return one to genuine unity with God? No, some activities will actually darken the mind and harden the heart.

Thoughts?

WEDNESDAY

There are several things very well stated in this lesson. Read third paragraph, "It is true..." thoughts?

Isn't this well said?

Back to second paragraph, "Christ took the initiative..." thoughts?

What do you think of this idea that "we were reconciled to God while we were sinners"?

The Scripture says, "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ 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!" Romans 5:9,10

Who is the "we" that is reconciled to God through Christ's death?

Which view do you hold, imposed or natural law?

The imposed proponents say that all humanity had their sins, past, present and future, placed upon Christ at the Cross and Christ suffered the legal penalty thus paying the legal price at the cross, removing wrath from God's side and thus humans are legally reconciled even though they are still God's enemies in heart.

Our view would say that the human species was reconciled to God, or put back into its original intended condition in its created perfection and relationship with God in the person of Jesus Christ. And Jesus obtained the Remedy that all humans may freely partake in order to be reconciled to God individually. But, only those who partake the remedy are actually reconciled to God.



This is why Paul talks about Christ being the second Adam and how all humans sinned in Adam and the human race was saved in Christ.

We can see the difference between the work of God to restore the human species back to His original ideal and our individual restoration when we contrast Romans 5:1 with Romans 5:9, note the difference:

Therefore, since we have been **justified through faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... (Romans 5:1)

“Since we have now been **justified by his blood**, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!” (Romans 5:9)

Do you notice in one passage we are justified or set right through faith, but in the other passage we are set right through his blood, which is a metaphorical way of saying His self-sacrificial death?

What is going on? When Paul describes being “justified by his blood” he is focusing on the work God needed to accomplish to heal, fix, remedy, restore the species human back to God’s original intent. Christ did this alone, without any help from any other human. In Jesus humanity became what God intended Adam to be. Thus, “we” the species of planet earth, genetic descendants of Adam, have a Champion, who has made our species perfect and right in every way and restored the human species back to right relationship with God.

But in the “justified by faith” passage Paul is talking about each individual human choosing to trust God, open their heart, and experience the application of Christ’s achievements via the work of the Holy Spirit within.

Again, no legal transaction going on in a courtroom in heaven, but the Designer, Builder, Creator, is actually recreating humanity back to His original intent, through the achievements of Jesus Christ!

Read last paragraph, “Forgiveness is releasing...” thoughts?

Did Christ release us from “His” condemnation? What is implied in this passage?

When we have an imposed law construct, then one must hold that God, in order to be just, must rightly condemn the breakers of His imposed law. So, Christ naturally condemns us, but then, taking the punishment upon Himself He releases us from the condemnation He previously held.

But, what did Christ say to the woman caught in adultery? “neither do I condemn you.”

What did Jesus say to Nicodemus in John 3:17?

For God did **not send his Son into the world to condemn** the world, but to save the world through him.



Jesus was NEVER condemning toward us! Therefore, He didn't have to release us from His condemnation.

When a doctor sees a patient who is ravaged with cancer – does the doctor “condemn” the patient? But if nothing is done to put the cancer into remission is the patient in a “condemned” state? By what? By their condition!

We must reject the imposed law, and come back to the truth about God's law and understand that our condition, our hearts, minds, characters, separate from God are defective and terminal. It is our own unhealed condition that condemns us, not God. God longs to heal us!

But if we believe God is the source of condemnation, then what does that do to our desire to go to Him? Do you see Satan's strategy? Do you see how Christianity has been infected with lies which paralyze our ability to complete our mission?

Will Christ be reconciled to all humans? Does He want to be? Yes, then why isn't He? What is the lesson for us?

THURSDAY

The lesson talks about the three steps in resolving conflict with someone in the church.

First step, talk to them one on one. If this doesn't work, take one or two others with you who are to act as mediators to help bring reconciliation. Then if necessary go before the church, which could mean the entire church or the church leadership team.

What are your thoughts about this?

What has been your experience with this process?

I have found it depends totally on the heart willingness of the people involved.

If people actually want to find healing and pursue the truth, then this process will work well. But what if people are not motivated for healing and truth?

This process can be completely corrupted to promote one's own agenda especially when church politics get involved and the disagreement is with people in position of authority within the institution.

FRIDAY

Discuss question 1