

September 9-15
New Testament Lesson # 36
Be Ye Reconciled to God
2 Corinthians 1-7
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I. Paul had found it necessary to include a rebuke for certain disobedience, such as a case of immorality, in his epistle to the Saints in Corinth.

A. It is important to know that he felt such love for them, that to send a rebuke caused him significant anguish.

“Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you” (2 Cor. 2:4).

B. But as a result he had suffered virulent personal attacks on his character.

C. Nevertheless, he found comfort in forgiving, and taught the Saints to forgive as well (2 Corinthians 2:4-11).

II. The reality is that by forgiving others who have wounded us, we free ourselves from an expansion of our suffering.

A. Some are challenged, even after forgiving, to find that the guilty, rather than repenting, try to shift the burden by “blaming the victim.” One way this is done is to charge the injured as being unforgiving (even though untrue). How does one overcome the challenges of such “multiple and continued offenses?”

B. The answer remains the same, as difficult as it increasingly becomes with repeated offenses. We are to forgive 70 x 7, and for the same reasons as the first injury.

C. While challenging, to continue to forgive multiplied grievances is to climb to the utmost rung on the ladder of true “charity.” Those who forgive multiple offenses will be among those most blessed by the Lord --- and 70 x 7.

D. Many people who have forgiven terrible injustices [Such as Nelson Mandela] came to the same conclusion: to not forgive is like ingesting poison, hoping it will harm one’s enemy. For hating or not forgiving is a poison which corrupts one’s own soul.

III. Paul gives great assurance that those who endure all for the Lord’s sake will receive enormous blessings after this life.

A. He taught, while the Mosaic Law was the best religious code in its time, Christ's Law was far more glorious and would lead to greater glories. "For if that which was done away was glorious [the Mosaic Law] much more that which remaineth is glorious" [Christ's Gospel] (2 Cor. 3:11).

But more particularly: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: (2 Cor. 4:17).

IV. Paul reveals a very important truth to help us understand the Old Testament.

A. He reminds us that when Moses was on Mt. Sinai he covered his face with a veil.

B. But here he is telling us that this act was a witness that there was a veil over the Mosaic Law itself and in fact all of the Old Testament as a whole. That is, the true meaning of the Law and Old Testament writings were veiled with hidden meaning.

C. With the coming of Jesus Christ, that veil was removed, because He fulfilled most of those witnesses.

D. And those who would try to see how all things testified of Him would comprehend the full glories of God. So Paul writes: "Seeing then that we have such hope [of the glories of God] we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a veil [sic] over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament: which veil is done away in Christ" (2 Cor. 3:13-14).

E. Paul is giving us hope that as our hearts turn to Christ and we search the scriptures for their powerful witnesses of Him, "...the veil [sic] shall be taken away." That is, we will more fully understand the scriptures and their hidden witnesses of Christ!

V. Paul further taught that as we come to understand the witnesses of Christ in the scriptures and endure our trials, the Spirit will bless us with a fuller understanding of the glory of God and we will grow into glory after glory ourselves.

A. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even ... by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). (Emphasis added).

B. That is, after enduring well our trials and coming to know Christ through the scriptures, the Spirit will help us grow into more "Glorious Beings" step by step, until we see the image of God in our own countenances.

1. One popular story demonstrating this process is found in how a silversmith refines silver. Given below is a summary of the story.

While reading Malachi's statement about God being a refiner and purifier of silver (Malachi 3:3), a woman's curiosity was aroused and she wanted to find out how silver was actually purified. She sought out a silversmith to explain the process. He explained the process of using extremely high but carefully controlled temperatures to purge out impurities. After learning of the process, she had a final question. How did the silversmith know when the silver was fully refined?

His answer was that when he could see his image in the silver; then he knew that the refining process was complete.

Truly, **the Lord is refining us through our trials. And if we become sufficiently refined through enduring and seeking His face, we will find we "have His image in our countenance" (Alma 5:14, 19).**

VI. Jesus, through His atonement, reconciled us to God, making possible these glorious rewards (2 Cor. 5:17-21). Then He asks us to help Him reconcile others!

A. "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-21).

B. Not too long ago a great servant of the Lord, Marion D. Hanks, passed away. His example showed much about becoming reconciled to God.

1. He once taught the following:

"There are those who have lost faith because of personal tragedies or troubles... Faced with problems akin to Job's, they have in effect accepted the invitation to curse God and die rather than to love God and gain the strength to endure their trials. There is, of course, in the promises of God no warrant that we will avoid the very experiences which we came here to undergo and through which we can learn reliance on the Lord. Jesus said, „In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.“ (John 16:33.) He had tribulation, and he overcame. And so may we, with his help.”

2. Elder Hanks became a living example of his stated faith during adversity. When diagnosed with Alzheimer's, he asked a son to pray with him. He then prayed he would find peace to face this sad ending to his life. He also prayed that the Lord would let him find someone to help while suffering from Alzheimer's.

3. Evidently he did. Those who visited him in his declining years said that while his memory was gone regarding many things, he could remember hymns and the Savior.

And he shared those beauties with many” (from a tribute written by Margaret Blair Young, August 8, 2011 in *By Common Consent*, and reprinted in *Meridian Magazine*.)

VII. So great was Paul’s understanding of the purpose and eventual benefits of tribulations in bringing us to God, he even came to rejoice in his own infirmities (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

“Blessed be God, ... Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted...” (2 Cor. 3-4).

A. When we fully understand and accept all these truths taught by Paul, we too will find ourselves not only comforted, but actually rejoicing in our own refining tribulations