

I. Read II Corinthians 5:18-19

- A. It is impossible to understand the use of the term *reconcile* in verses 18 and 19 apart from discussing the work of *atonement* in and by Christ. Underpinning the concept of *atonement* is another crucial truth, the doctrine of *election*. This is the appropriate place to begin our study of *reconciliation*. Read Ephesians 1:3-7 and discuss what it explains to us about the doctrine of *election*.

Instructions: Attempt to identify the key point from each of the eleven passages below.

1. v. 3 – “with every spiritual blessing in the *heavenly places in Christ*” (NAS)
2. v. 4a – “before the foundation of the world”
3. v. 4b – “holy and blameless before Him”
4. v. 4b – “in love”
5. v. 5a – “adoption as sons”
6. v. 5b – “His will”
7. v. 5b – “His kind intention”
8. v. 6a – “to the praise of the glory of His grace”
9. v. 6b – “His grace, which He freely bestowed on us”
10. v. 7a – “redemption through His blood”
11. v. 7b – “of our trespasses”

- B. Next, it is necessary to discuss the term *atonement*. Often, in an effort to explain what it means, well-meaning teachers say that it means *at-one-ment*. This is not entirely incorrect, but it is an entirely inadequate explanation. The word *atonement* is much richer and comprehends God's gracious work of *reconciliation*, which in turn includes very specific things. Four words are especially important if we are to understand the gracious work accomplished in our behalf. First is *penal*. The idea here is punishment for breaking God's holy law. Justice can only be satisfied when punishment is rendered to the account of the offender. Read II Corinthians 5:21 and 1 Peter 2:24 and identify who is punished to satisfy God's standard of justice.

The second word is *substitution*. It must be understood in conjunction with the word *penal*. It explains how the sacrifice of Christ can benefit us. God established the principle of substitutionary (vicarious) sacrifice under the Old Testament administration of the Covenant of Grace. Read the following passage and discuss how *substitution* may be seen in it.
Leviticus 16:1-22:

The third word is *expiation*, which is not used often in Scripture, though the concept is found throughout. It is found in Numbers 35:33. It means simply *to be removed from or released from*. The fourth term is closely related. It is *propitiation*. It means *to turn away, appease; or placate*. Read 1 John 2:1, 2 and discuss how Christ accomplished *expiation* and *propitiation* for us.

- C. A related aspect to Christ's work of atonement is His fulfillment of the requirements of God's law in our behalf. Just as our sin (the consequences of our sin) is imputed to Him in the work of atonement, His righteousness is imputed to us as well. This is referred to as His *active obedience* (the work of Christ on the cross is His *passive obedience*) and is foundational in determining our position before God. Read Galatians 3:27; Revelation 3:5, and II Corinthians 5:21 and describe the position we possess in Christ.
- D. The work of reconciliation is the consequence of the objective work of atonement. Theologian Louis Berkhof explains:

"...the atonement makes its primary impression on the person to whom it is made. If a man does wrong and renders satisfaction, this satisfaction is intended to influence the person wronged and not the offending party...it means that the atonement was intended to influence the person wronged and not the offending party...it means that the atonement was intended to *propitiate* God and to