

Broken Connections

Romans 5:5

The last two messages have been on the person of the Holy Spirit. Like a mighty wind across the pages of time, the Holy Spirit has engaged the powers of darkness who are determined to control the heart of man.

From the Garden of Eden in Genesis until John sees the church in Heaven in Revelation, as long as there is a broken connection between even one man, woman, or child and their creator God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will not stop waving the banner of hope to heal that broken connection.

Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. (Romans 5:5)

The love of God is the root from which comes all of the redemptive grace of God, both in giving His Son to die for sinners and in giving His Holy Spirit to dwell within believers, thus creating hope in us. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all included in this redemptive love of God. All three are a part of the process of bringing lost persons into the new life of salvation. It is the action of all three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which saves us, not the work of any one member apart from the other two. In God's redemptive plan, His Son paid the price, and His Holy Spirit empowers you to live like His Son.

Hope to heal the broken connection: from God's point of view, if you are in Christ, if you have accepted the Gospel message and been 'born again,' the main broken connection has been repaired. This is step one, the new beginning. You have stepped out of darkness and into the light. You have declared your allegiance and have become a disciple, a follower, a student of Jesus.

At this point, do you know all you need to know? No is the correct response. There is much to learn. The disciple begins a life-long journey of what could be called a pursuit of holiness. We soon learn that though the main broken connection has been repaired through Jesus death on our behalf, many broken connections still remain. These connections can be labeled commandments, laws, principles, precepts, teachings, habits, traditions, and so on. And though correcting these broken connections don't add points to your salvation scorecard, they do add value to your life, your witness, your ministry, and ultimately fellowship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Many years ago, I worked for a contractor in Portsmouth, Ohio, who won a contract for a maintenance garage for Metropolitan Housing services in Portsmouth. According to the site utility plan, all the utilities had been marked. A backhoe disagreed. A long forgotten

abandon alleyway ran through the middle of the lot. Along that abandon alleyway was phone service to the Bonefiddle section of Portsmouth. You guessed it. There were a lot of broken connections in Bonefiddle that day.

The hope that God gives through his unfailing love, made alive in you through the indwelling Holy Spirit; your surety, your seal, proof that you belong to God; ever-present working in your heart, repairing every broken connection.

This is how it works: **²¹Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.**"

²²Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"

²³Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. (John 14:21-24)

So, the disciple begins to learn the commands of the Lord and begins to obey them. This learning and obedience Jesus says is evidence of love on behalf of the disciple. Love is then returned by the Father and the Son and an added perk: Jesus reveals

himself to the disciple: and another perk: the Father and the Son move in; make their home with the disciple.

All of this is the result of the disciple returning love for love. The love of the God repaired the main connection. The disciple responds to that love through obedience.

I'm sure you have heard, 'the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.'

In a world full of distractions, this is quite a challenge. Even while writing this sermon, my mind went down many rabbit trails. Distractions are everywhere. Even in your quiet time, TV off, books closed, alone with the Lord, did I feed the cat? Where did that come from? It happens to you too, doesn't it? Please tell me it does.

Hope to heal broken connections: keeping the main thing the main thing.

Scripture is very clear on the main thing: the main thing is love.

In the second century BC, a group called the pious ones formed. Their purpose, due to the influence of Greek culture, was to call their Jewish brothers back to God's ways.

The group set a high standard in obeying every detail of the Law, praying and fasting publicly to set the example, down to even tithing herbs and spices.

In their beginnings, their intentions were probably good, but by the time Jesus came on the scene, the pious ones, better known

as the Pharisees, were corrupt, self-righteous, and hypocritical.

In Matthew 22, verse 35, one of these pious ones, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Careful Jesus; this is a test. Even the smartest and best rabbis don't agree on this question. Believing that there were over 600 laws coming from the Old Testament, there were times when performing one religious duty, you could be violating another, according to the pious ones. So, which ones were least important, ones that could be ignored while keeping others?

If the greatest commandment could be established, then all the others could possibly be ranked in order. The rabbis of the day couldn't agree. The Pharisees hoped that Jesus would put his foot in his mouth, and they would have accusation against him.

His answer: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment.³⁹And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Instead of giving them a loophole that allowed them to obey one commandment but ignore another, he gave them a commandment that contains all the commandments of God in two simple

sentences: “Love the Lord” and “Love your Neighbor”. You see how it works? If you love the Lord, you will not have any other gods; you will remember the Sabbath day; you will not misuse his name. If you love your neighbor, you won't murder him, steal from him, take his wife, gossip against him. With his answer, he did not gratify their desire to prove themselves to be scholars; he didn't even give them any wiggle room so that they might keep one commandment, while ignoring another. He didn't let them off the hook, but rather he put them on the hook. He said, “all of the Law and prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matt. 23:40)

But, if the Pharisees would have had our super computer technology, they could have entered all the pertinent data, and avoided all that embarrassment, unless it crashed.

Our daughter, Cathy, couldn't get an appointment with a dentist close to home before June. So, Ellen called around and found a dentist here. Cathy came Sunday evening. Her appointment was Monday.

She had some infection that needed to be dealt with. A prescription was call to the pharmacy. We went to the drive through to pick it up. The computers were down, not just for this pharmacy, but all in the chain.

I thought; what a good illustration as to why the world is in such a mess. People have been seduced to depend on governments, policies, programs, systems,

all man-made, and in modern times, based and dependent on technology. But, when the technology fails, we can't do anything; we don't know what to do.

When mankind moves away from God's simple, uncomplicated plan of love which represents the technology that he designed, to make government, society, and families run smooth, and would never fail, by necessity, man must write laws to keep themselves in check. These laws will be complicated, inferior to God's simple plan, sometimes unenforceable, and doomed to fail, just like all the laws, rules, and explanations that were added to God's Law.

By design, God's plan of loving him and loving our neighbor, gives us freedom for self-government. However, rejecting his plan leads to chaotic bondage bound in page after page of legal document that you and I can't understand. God did not design man to live this way.

God's people have been called to live together in love. Broken connections with God and others can be repaired. Jesus came not only so we could heal our broken connections with God and others, but we could also heal our broken connections with ourselves.

Living for and loving God is not about following laws written on tons of paper or chiseled on tablets of stone. It's about honoring laws of love written on our hearts. We do not live by the old letter of the law. Our new birth is not a legalistic call to

follow regulations but a joyful invitation to let God's Spirit fill and direct our lives.

Jesus said that he would reveal himself to us if we have and obey His commands. If we love God and love our neighbor, most, if not all of the broken connections will be repaired.

When the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit take up residence in your life, old things pass away, you become brand new.

And that's not all. A day is coming when we won't have to worry with broken connections anymore. I'm looking forward to that day. How about you?

A day is coming when we won't have any more aches and pains; no more disappointments. Are you looking forward to that day?

A day is coming when we will see him face to face. Are you ready for that day?

As beautiful as this world is, I know that day is going to be worth the wait.

Make sure that you are ready. Don't take any chances. He could return at any time.