

“You just stay on your side of the room. Get away from me with your sneezing and sniffles and cold symptoms. I don’t want to catch your cold.” You could imagine those words being said in any relationship, even close ones between spouses, children and parents, children and their teachers. What would normally be a solid close relationship suddenly turns into one of distance. It isn’t hostility, but if the sick person tries to give you a hug and kiss it might.

Our relationship with God was always strained. It wasn’t the sniffles or the flu that did it. God wanted to stay away from us and we away from God, but it wasn’t because we were sick. It was a whole lot worse than being sick. And our relationship was a whole lot worse than strained, it was hostile. It was because we were sinful. With sins straining our relationship with God it would seem God would want to be far from us. He wouldn’t want to care about us. Why would he have reason to?

Paul introduces us to another word of Romans in the second lesson. It has everything to do with our relationship with God and why things are better. What once was a hostile relationship has now been...

**Reconciled to peace**  
**Only God could change our status**  
**Only God could maintain our peace**

It comes as no surprise to anyone there was a time when we were powerless. We each came from our mothers that way. Our first status in this world was one of completely powerless. We were unable to feed ourselves. We would have gone without clothes. We could provide for ourselves no shelter. That’s our spiritual status too. We are powerless, unable to do anything regarding our relationship with God. Paul called us powerless and ungodly. We were against God, like if the baby in his mother’s arms fought off the bottle or refused to wear the clothes mom and dad provided. Ungodly means we were completely and totally opposite God in every way.

In short, our spiritual status was sinners. God expected perfection. He demanded we have no sins. But we weren’t good right from the start. We didn’t even have a chance. Sinners refuse to give up things in their lives that they make number one over God. Sinners hold on to things, money, family members, just about anything gets to be more important than God. With a status as sinners everyone is a target for the sinner’s frustration. The kind grocery store clerk, the other drivers, the smiling coworker. The sinner would rather mock and pull down people so the sinner can be the focus. Sinners would never sacrifice for someone they thought wasn’t worth it.

Oh, but that’s not all people is it? I mean what about the status of soldiers, veterans, or the founding fathers? What about the status before God of little old ladies and children? The person who jumps into a lake to save a drowning child only to find themselves in danger of drowning, that person’s status must have shot up in God’s eyes. The police officer who gives shoes to homeless people must be adding to a status God thinks is already pretty good. **“Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.”** Fighting a war, helping a child, or giving to the homeless don’t even go as far as dying. But Paul says those acts of love are rare among humans. But what counts? What’s enough to change status before God? Volunteering at church for something, being kind to others, sacrificing ourselves for our children or spouse, these must make us good people. Even if we aren’t daring to die for someone, can we get good enough to be good in God’s eyes?

Paul sees it this way. **“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”** We can’t ever be good enough because alone we are ungodly and powerless. But God’s timing was perfect. We were still opposite of God when Jesus entered the world for people like us. Even though our status and relationship was opposite God, hostile to him, suddenly God was showing us love. And to know just how great that love is this is what true love from God sounds like. **“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”** Unmatched in any worldly relationship is the love of God for you and me in Christ. It goes beyond sweet love between a dating couple. It surpasses even the love of husbands and wives. It goes beyond the love of parents for children. God’s love in Christ is God loving the unlovable. God loving those who were against him. God loving and sending his own perfect Son to show love to those who weren’t perfect.

You and God are not on equal plains in your relationship. He wasn’t the one that needed a change. He was perfect, is perfect, and always will be perfect. There didn’t need to be a two sided agreement where you came some and he came some. There could be no compromise where you both changed a little bit to have a better relationship. God didn’t need change, you did. Yet he took the amazing step of love. Jesus came and gave his life for sinners like you and me in the ultimate act of love. And in that moment Jesus died on the cross your status and mine changed. Jesus took us who were not at peace with God and made us at peace with God. He reconciled us to God.

Linger on the love of God for you. Jesus won peace by great lengths. We were sinners. Not a righteous person or a good person. We were his enemies, hostile to him in our sins. **“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”** Christ died for you. His love doesn’t wait for you to return it first. His love isn’t conditional on something in you. God’s love in Christ for you loves you in spite of your faults. God eliminates the faults of your sins in Christ. He takes them away. Washes your sins away in his blood. With your sins removed, with God holding nothing against you, and God’s love firmly in place in your hearts, your status has changed. You are now reconciled to God. That word of Romans means a changed status. You’re forgiven saints in Christ.

I remember driving up to Sonora Pass in California. From the parking area there was only a small hill to the top where an even greater view awaited. Half way up this “small hill” we discovered it was higher than we had estimated. But looking back we’d already come so far. With legs burning and our breath nearly gone we couldn’t stop. We had to see it through to the end. God’s Son left heaven and God watched as Jesus suffered and endured the sins of the world and died on the cross. With Jesus hanging dead on the cross and us being his enemies would God go the rest of the way? Wouldn’t God finish what he started and preserve us in a newly reconciled relationship of peace till we got to heaven? Of course. And only God could maintain that peace.

Left alone we would go right back where we were before. Our relationship would go back to not being at peace with God. We’d slip back to our old sinful ways. We’d return to making ourselves happy and forgetting about everyone else. We’d become so self-centered that no one would want to be around us. Our natural relationship with God is one of being his enemy and he ours. Jesus was put to death for people who were God’s enemies. Will God get mad at us for that? We might wonder if we actually are forgiven.

The two major negatives needing to be overcome to maintain our peace with God were one that we were enemies of God. For two, God’s Son Jesus hung dead on the cross. God alone overcame both. By the cross of Christ he removed our sins. **“For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son...”** God has nothing to be mad at us for. His Son died and our sins died too. In Jesus we are no longer sinful. Instead of being mad God rejoices in us now. He’s at peace with us and he loves us. God overcame the second major negative that his Son Jesus was dead. **“How much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”** Once our sins were removed in Christ’s death the payment was done. Jesus didn’t need to remain dead. So God raised him to life. We’ve become reconciled to God, our status changed in Christ, and the living Jesus proves it. God will see this through to the end. We will live as Jesus lives.

Watching the fireworks on July 4<sup>th</sup> as many of you probably did too, I should’ve stopped to think that there are places in the world where people hear real artillery and watch real tracer rounds being fired from real machine guns. We only watch fireworks explode in the sky, amazed at their brilliant colors, because we’re at peace. We rejoice in America’s birthday because our status in this country is one of peace. We can rejoice in even better peace. The hostility between sinners and God is over. We’re reconciled to God. Peace is in place and our status changed. Our reconciliation is a present reality. **“We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”** We’ve been reconciled to peace.