Reconciled or Reprobate – There Are Only Two Ways

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"
(2 Corinthians 13:5)

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The title of this lesson suggests a concept which is not "politically correct." Many people in the religious world do not realize this truth, while others reject it. It is a fact however, Jesus mentioned only *two* gates (Matthew 7:13-14). God recognized only two types of individuals when He commanded Noah to build the ark (Genesis 6:1ff). There have always been "His" people and those who were displeasing to Him. The Bible nowhere suggests there are three groups of people, those pleasing to God, those displeasing to Him, with the rest falling somewhere in between.

Our title classifies these two groups as "reconciled" or "reprobates." Many would say the word "reprobate" is too harsh. The word is defined as "Rejected by God and without hope of salvation. 2. (n.) A person who lacks morals or principles." This is clear enough, but it is when we look at the synonyms of this word do we see why so many hold it in total repulsion. We normally think of the word as describing one who is "A morally unprincipled person," one who is "base, corrupt, criminal, delinquent, evil, iniquitous, mean, reprobate, sinful, vicious, vile, villainous, wicked, wrong." In the minds of most people, the individual who holds no moral values is what we think of when the word is used. Thus, to say one is either "reconciled" or "reprobate" is drastic.

Many people believe even though a person does not claim to be a "Christian," this person is certainly not a "reprobate." But when we understand the meaning of the original word Paul used in our text, we see a different picture.

The Meaning of the Original Word

This family of words has as its basis the crucible used for the separation of the ore from the dross. The Greek speaking people used these words to refer to different aspects of the smelting process. Sometimes the emphasis the emphasis was on test itself. Most often the idea had reference to which has come through the procedure (we would say, "been put to the test") and is seen to be pure. Also, the thing or person having been found "approved" is to be accepted.

Our Lesson Text Examined

The text assigned in this lesson reads, "Examine you, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye are reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 13:5). There is a very interesting thought found in this verse.

First of all, let us note that the Greek speaking people could also present the opposite meaning of a word by adding the letter "a" to the word. A similar concept is found in the English language. For instance, when we use the word "theist," we speak of one who believes in the existence of God. We present the opposite of a "theist" (an atheist) by simply adding the letter "a" to it.

Applying this principle to the lesson text, we find both the *approved* and *unapproved* in this verse from the same family of words. The words translated "prove" and "reprobate" presents this idea. As suggested above, the word translated "reprobate" does not necessarily convey the thought of a morally unprincipled person, one that is vile, villainous, or vicious. The basic idea of the word is "unapproved" or "unaccepted." So, in this sense, we can say every person is either "reconciled" or "reprobate," that is, *accepted* or *unaccepted* to God.

The Word "Reconciled"

The word "reconciled" conveys the idea of returning to one's favor or being brought into this state. Of course, as it relates to Christians, we see the idea of being brought into God's favor. It suggests the person alienated from God because of sin (Isaiah 59:1-2) who has been returned to His favor.

We read "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 Corinthians 5:18). Notice that *reconciliation* is attributed to God, "who hath reconciled us to himself." It is not the case that God is *reconciled* to man. Rather, *man* is reconciled to God.

The next verse reads "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Again the assertion is that God reconciled mankind to Himself. It was done by "not imputing their trespasses unto them." The non-imputation of sin is explained by Paul. He wrote,

Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin (Romans 4:6-8).

Now, to whom does God not impute sin? It is simple – the person He forgives! In this fourth chapter of Romans, the original word translated *imputeth* and *impute* in these verses is found eleven times. It is translated by three different English words: *impute, count,* and *reckon.* God does not "impute," "count" or "reckon" sin to the person He forgives. Neither does God *count, impute,* or *reckon* unto man a state of existence he does not actually possess. Rather, God forgives sin through the blood of Christ, thus counting, imputing, reckoning the man as righteous. It is not "as if" a person is righteous, but that the man is righteous, based upon the fact that God has forgiven him his sins through Christ.

Paul refers to those who are not acceptable (reprobate) to God as "enemies" of God. He wrote "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10). The previous state was "enemies" of God. However, having now been reconciled, we shall be "saved by his life." This is truly an impressive idea – enemies at one time, now reconciled, now saved, now acceptable – one who is not a *reprobate*!

This reconciliation is attributed to God. Nonetheless, man is not passive in this salvation. The fact that everything necessary for man's salvation was provided by Jehovah speaks strongly of God's grace.

This missing component of God's scheme of redemption is man's receptive and willing heart. Man must accept God's offer of the salvation in Christ. When he comes to God on His terms, he is viewed as righteous, as reconciled, as one who is not a reprobate.

Reprobate and Its Relationship to Living the Christian Life

How then, does the word "reprobate" apply to living an acceptable life before God? Let us notice some areas where we can make definite application.

The Uncommitted. If a person is lackadaisical, they are unapproved, unaccepted, or reprobate. The person who is only partially committed is the person who will allow other things to come between themselves and God. The principle of "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me" (Exodus 20:3) is applicable to man today. The person who is partially committed is the person who has allowed something to stand between themselves and Jehovah. Our God refuses to play "second fiddle" to any person or anything. God demands that we put Him first. He will accept nothing less!

Spasmodic Attender. The person who is spasmodic in attendance is reprobate (unacceptable). The Hebrew writer said "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25). The person who attends worship services when it is convenient is the person who is lacking something in their spiritual maturity. When attendance in the worship services is ranked lower than the things of life, that person falls within the boundaries of being reprobate.

We would not accept spasmodic attendance from the president of the local P.T.A. Are we wise to think God would accept the same from us? There is no employer who would allow a person to come to work only when it is convenient. There is not a single Christian who would suggest an employer would accept the same excuse they give for their erratic attendance.

There is no doubt but when a person is erratic in attendance, they have a severe heart problem. This is not a problem which can be cured by a world renowned heart surgeon. It can be cured only by the individual who has the problem. They must determine for themselves to repent of their sin and come to God on His terms. They thus are no longer reprobate, but reconciled.

The Trouble Maker. The Christian who is contentious and always causing strife, who is always the source of an undercurrent in a local congregation is reprobate (unapproved) before God. The wise man said "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him...and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16-19). One should not take lightly the sin of division, strife, and contention. In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul listed nineteen specific sins and then added "and such like," affirming that they which did such things "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." However, this condemnation is not limited to these specifically named sins. Notice that Paul adds "and such like." This simply means "things like these." The trouble maker, the contentious,

the one who is constantly the source of strife among God's people is reprobate and will be lost eternally.

The person who does not follow the Lord's prescription on handling personal problems is unapproved (reprobate) before God. The way to handle personal problems is simple:

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift (Matthew 5:23-24).

When a person is involved in strife or contention, they must do all in their power to correct the problem. Paul said, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom 12:18). To do less is to show ones self as unapproved, reprobate before God.

Whatever You Do in Word or Deed

Paul wrote "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17). To do something in the "name of the Lord Jesus" is to do it by. His authority. In every aspect of our life we must follow this admonition. Regardless of whether it is concerning our relationship with our brethren in Christ, our family, our fellow man on the job, or our neighbor, we must always keep this principle before us.

There is not a single aspect of our life exempt from living as a "reconciled" one, whose affections are on "things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). The reason for this is stated in the very next verse. Inspiration writes, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). The emphasis here is clearly stated – they died to sin (Romans 6:4ff) and are now to follow their Lord.

Let us always be mindful of this one thing: We are either Reconciled or Reprobate – There Are Only two Ways!

Works Cited

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