

Cease and Desist

Jim Elliff

In the Herrera section of Santo Domingo, The Dominican Republic, I found Marino receptive to my message. He owned a tiny shop in this squatter's village and therefore had to tend to his buyers a couple of times during our lengthy discussion. The eyes were the most remarkable thing about this muscular middle aged man. He was a thinker.

In fact, Marino had thought a lot about Christianity. He read his Bible and mused on the big questions. Then he said, "I am under the impression that a person has to have a dramatic experience, a vision or dream perhaps, in order to be converted. I'm waiting for that to come, but until then I can do nothing."

"No," I said passionately, "You don't have to wait for such an experience. The Bible says that 'we [the presenters] are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.' (2 Cor. 5: 20) If we are imploring or pleading with you to do this, then there is an urgency that this is to be done at this very moment, and waiting for a further dramatic experience is not required. You must be reconciled to God *now*."



The Bible teaches that the difficulty in getting to God is not with God; it is with us. The reason a man or woman does not come to Christ is because he or she will not do so. It teaches that all of us, like sheep, have gone astray, each going our own way. (Isaiah 53:6) We do what we really want to do. And this is the reason for the phrase, "Be reconciled to God." It is about establishing peace between enemies.

Do you think of yourself as an enemy of God? Likely not.

Yet God says that you are rebellious and live in competition with God until you become a true believer in Christ. You may do that religiously or as an out and out pagan. You may do it with passion or with apathy, which is just another form of rebellion. Apathy says, "I know that God exists and that Christ is to be Lord of my life, but I really don't think I want to deal with that now." That's true rebellion.

Reconciliation comes two ways. First, it comes from God's side. That is, Jesus Christ died on the cross for the purpose of establishing peace between people like you and God. God's just wrath against sin had to be satisfied and the death of His own Son was the only adequate way to handle that. This is why that the Bible says, "... God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." (2 Cor. 5:19)

But there is also a second aspect of reconciliation—your own affections must be turned from rebellion and independence to trust. Only when this happens is reconciliation complete.

Have you heard the slogan, "Peace at any price!" For some this means that an individual will compromise anything to have a personal peace or individual freedom to do whatever he wants. For others it is something more noble, meaning that the person will pay any price to secure freedom for his or her nation.

For God "Peace at any price" has a deeper meaning. It stands for peace at the ultimate price. The price for your peace with God is, on the one hand, the death of Christ Himself. But on the other it is the yielding of your life to Christ as Lord, trusting in Christ alone instead of yourself to obtain real Life for now and eternity.

When I was a boy I used to play army games. When the opponent saw that he was defeated he was to hold up a white flag of surrender.

God does not receive you while you are cherishing your self-centered lifestyle. You cannot come rebelliously to God. There must be the surrender of your rights, your autonomy, your authority, your personal lordship. God receives you when you come by faith, waving a white flag. And when you see this God's way, then laying down your rights is a welcome thing. Your independence has cost you dearly already, and will drop you into eternal judgment in the end.

God knows your heart, so don't fake it. Once a child was told to sit down. He didn't. He was told again to sit down. He wouldn't. Finally the father demanded in the strongest possible terms that the child must sit down. He did. But he said under his breath, "I'm sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside."

On the table before you and God is the document of peace, sealed by the blood of Christ, to be received only by the man or woman whose self-centeredness and rebellion is defeated. He will have it no other way. And I am one person beside you saying, not for later, but for this moment—"Cease and desist. *Be reconciled to God!*"

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