**WORDS OF SALVATION (#2)**

***Reconciliation***

“I hate you!” “I’ll never speak to you ever again!” Words like these were part of my growing up years in the town of Whitehaven, Tennessee (a suburb of Memphis). Norman Little, Scott Baker, Charlie van Diver, Mike and Terry Paulsen, Benny and Steve Cox and other boys our age joined my brother Ron and me to form what some might call “The Little Rascals” Club, for rascals we were. As with all little boys who play together we had our fights and quarrels in which the above “death threats” were issued when someone tackled too hard or beaned you with a fastball. But, as also true of all little rascals, the next day we would give each other the secret handshake and become best friends again, with never a thought to the troubles the day before.

That’s reconciliation.

Have you ever had a BF before? Or, better yet, have you ever had a BFF? Sure you have. What person cannot name someone they considered a Best Friend? And life would not be blissfully happy without having someone to call a Best Friend Forever, that special someone who you can confide in with all your private thoughts and dreams, knowing they were safe from any gossip. Someone you can trust wholeheartedly is what a BF means to you.

I lost track of Norman, Scott, Charlie, Mike, Terry, and Benny long ago (Steve became a Christian and we still connect from time to time), thus my BF’s of childhood are not my BFF’s of today. I now think on a different level. My BF’s of today are what I might call “The Brotherhood of the Reconciled.” And my BFF is what I might call “The Reconciler” – the Lord Jesus Christ. I have a special bond, or as the old hymn calls it, “the tie that binds,” that makes my relationship with those of “*like precious faith*” (2 Pet. 1:1) so… so… so… well, so precious. That “tie” that binds our hearts together is that we have all been reconciled by the blood of Jesus. I think Paul can explain it far better than me.

2 Cor. 5:18-21

*Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Our sins had separated us from God’s fellowship and friendship (Isa. 59:1-2). We were now His enemy, not His friend. James describes it perfectly: *“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”* (Jam. 4:4)

But unlike my boyhood reconciliation with Norman, Scott, Charlie and the others, God couldn’t just “forget about it” and “let by-gone’s be by-gone’s.” The wages of sin is death and so the butcher’s bill had to be paid (Rom. 6:23). For friendship to be restored, which is the meaning of the word reconciliation, God “*reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ*.” How? “*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*.” (Warning: If you read that verse prayerfully about five times, you will start weeping).

On the childhood playground when friendship was broken someone usually had to take the initiative to say “I’m sorry” to restore the friendship so the game could go on. Oh sure, sometimes one of us would say, “I’m gonna take my ball and go home!” Game over. But then tomorrow, when unspoken childlike forgiveness restored the friendship, we simply rebooted and everything was hunky dory again. Play ball!

But with God it is a more serious matter. I can’t just say “I’m sorry,” or worse, act like sin never happened, and like my boyhood Etch-A-Sketch toy just turn it upside down and shake it to clean the slate. To clean the slate with God blood must be shed. But not my blood, for it is worthless, but with Jesus’ blood, for it is priceless. The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, had to die (Jn. 1:29). But even that was not enough for friendship and fellowship to be restored. That is where the apostles come in.

Read again 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 above. The apostles received “*the ministry of reconciliation*.” To them was “*committed the word of reconciliation*.” They became “*ambassadors for Christ*” and were sent forth to “*plead*” and “*implore*” lost sinners to “*be reconciled to God*!” We who had spurned His friendship to become “*a friend of the world*” (Jam. 4:4) could now once again become, like Abraham, “*a friend of God*” (Jam. 2:23). And, like Abraham, because of God’s gracious offer, we can also now make God our BFF(“*Are You not our God …* ***Abraham Your friend forever****?* – 2 Chron. 20:7).

So, who is your BFF? While I often tell others that Benita is my BF on earth, I know I will not be married in heaven (Matt. 22:30), so cannot claim her forever. But in eternity I know that Jesus, who is my Reconciler, will claim my whole-hearted allegiance and therefore He, and He alone, is my BFF.

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all my sins and griefs to bear.
What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer.
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry, Everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged, Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a Friend so faithful, Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness, Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge, Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer,
In His arms He’ll take and shield thee, Thou wilt find a solace there.

Be reconciled to God. – Rick