

HOW TO RESTORE A SEVERED RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

INTRODUCTION

The phrase ***restore severed relationship*** implies that there was a time when there was a good relationship which is no more.

In talking of ***severed relationship with God***, our mind will quickly go to the experience of Adam and Eve when they had their relationship with God severed as a result of disobedience to the law of God. The Bible teaches that the couple was in excellent relationship with God until they sinned against God - ***Genesis 3:6-8*** ⁶*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. ⁸And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*

The scenario was replicated in the life of their first offspring, who murdered his younger brother, Abel - ***Genesis 4:8*** ⁸*Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.*

All of the events stated above point to the fact that what causes ***severed relationship with God*** is sin. Restoration or to restore is a recurring theme in the Scriptures. It is used to refer to those who strayed from the teachings and love of God and having realized their faults seek to have reconciliation with God.

HOW TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

God has always intended that His people should live in a right relationship with Him. This relationship was described in terms of covenant. We will recall that God had rescued His people from Egypt. He committed Himself to them totally. He described to them how they could stay in a right relationship with Him. He gave them commandments to ensure that they have the right relationship with God and one another. The purpose of these laws was to enable them flourish.

Again and again, we read in the Old Testament, how they did not obey these laws and disaster set in as a result. Occasionally, there were

glimmers of hope when they re-committed themselves to the covenant relationship with the Lord.

One of such glimmers of hope was in Josiah's reign. The king stood by the pillar and committed the people to the covenant and that put them in good relationship with God. Josiah did carry out a number of reforms - **2 Kings 23:1-4** ¹ *Now the king sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him.* ² *The king went up to the house of the LORD with all the men of Judah, and with him all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the LORD.* ³ *Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant.* ⁴ *And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel.*

Sadly, this did not seem to have a lasting effect and impact on the people and after Josiah's death, things went back to the way they had been (***strained relationship with God***).

Thankfully, under the new covenant, the laws are not written on tablets of stone but in our hearts. **Deuteronomy 31:9** ⁹ *So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.* **Hebrews 8:10** ¹⁰ *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.* **Hebrews 10:16** ¹⁶ *"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them."*

The moment you put your faith in Jesus and His teachings, God will arouse the indwelling Spirit to strike the right relationship with Him.

HOW CAN WE RESTORE A SEVERED RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

To restore a broken relationship with God, we must of necessity address what brought it in the first place. As already observed in the cases of Adam and Cain, it is **sin** that brings about severance of relationship with God – **Isaiah 59:2** ² *But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.* So the issue of sin must first be addressed.

When Israel started to conquer the *promised land*, sin in their camp broke down their relationship with God and that alone reversed their gains in the war. To continue their possession of the promised land, they had to restore their relationship with God - **Joshua 7:12-13** ¹² *Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you.* ¹³ *Get up, sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the LORD God of Israel: "There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you."* **Joshua 7:25** ²⁵ *And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.* You can see here that Israel stoned Achan, the source of sin, to death.

The first step to a restored relationship with God following a period of wandering or disobedience is a confession of the sin and a repentance to walk differently in the future. Confession is made easier if we remember what **1 John 1:9** says - ⁹ *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

How we go about our repentance entirely depends on us, but we must own up to the sin - **2 Samuel 12:13** ¹³ *So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.*

When the people of Nineveh sinned against God, the people declared a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them - **Jonah 3:5-10** ⁵ *So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.* ⁶ *Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.* ⁷ *And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water.* ⁸ *But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.* ⁹ *Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?* ¹⁰ *Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.*

Understanding God's willingness to forgive is essential to walking back to Him. Remember, the prodigal son returned to his father because of his recognition that his father was kind and forgiving.

Are you feeling guilty and worried by some of the things you have done? Are you wondering if forgiveness is possible? The conviction of sin can bring us to a place of feeling helpless and hopeless. Our shame tempts us to think that no one, much less God, could forgive us. This is one of Satan's tricks to get us to think that there is no hope, that there is no possibility that we can be forgiven or restored. He will try to get us to feel, consumed and trapped by guilt so that we do not feel worthy of God's forgiveness any longer. But we must always keep in mind that there is no place we can go that God's grace cannot reach and there is no depth to which we seek that God is no longer able to pull us out – His grace is greater than all of our sins.

Grace is a gift from God - **Ephesians 2:8** ⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.*

When we sin, the Spirit will convict us of sin such that a godly sorrow will result - **2 Corinthians 7:10-11** ¹⁰ *For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. ¹¹ For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.*

The Spirit will not condemn our souls as if there is no hope, for there is no longer condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (**Romans 8:1**).

The Spirit's conviction within us is a movement of love and grace. Note, grace is not an excuse to sin - **Romans 6:1-2** ¹ *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Grace must not be abused, meaning that sin must be called sin and not dressed in royal robe.*

The level to which sin can be forgiven is ably demonstrated by the life of Prophet Hosea - **Hosea 1:1-3** ¹ *The word of the LORD that came to Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. ² When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the LORD. ³ So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.*

WHY WE SHOULD HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Many benefits are provided for the Christian by the heavenly Father - **Romans 8:32** ³² *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

God provides us the following if we are in right relationship with Him:

- ***Fellowship with the Father – 1 John 1:3*** ³ *that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

John wrote - ¹ *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him - 1 John 3:1.*

As members of the family of God, we as Christians will call each other brother and sister.

- ***Access to the Father - Matthew 6:9*** ⁹ *In this manner, therefore, pray: our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.*

Christians can pray and know their heavenly Father hears and will answer their prayers. Jesus taught His disciples to pray to our Father. Jesus said ³² *...For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things - Matthew 6:32*

- ***Security from the Father*** – When a Christian has a good relationship with the Father, he is secured from all alarms. Our security is more often than not, due to our relationship with the Father - ***John 10:29*** ²⁹ *My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.* A young child believed that his father would not permit any harm to happen to him. The most secure place for the Christian is his heavenly Father's hand. Our Father will not allow untoward incident to happen to us, especially that, that will affect our eternal security.
- ***Inheritance of the Father*** – Children are entitled to their father's inheritance. As children of God, we too are entitled to an inheritance - ***Romans 8:17*** ¹⁷ *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

Every Christian has the promise of God of an eternal home in heaven as part of his inheritance - ***John 14:2-3*** ² *In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

CONCLUSION

Christ's death and resurrection do not automatically accomplish a restored relationship between us and God. We must respond personally,

sincerely and with a commitment to turn away from sin (repent), acknowledging that only Christ save us from or fallen condition.

The gospel or good news is that Christ has died for us, meaning that we can ask for His forgiveness and receive it. There is no magic in this request or exact ritual we must follow. It is simply a matter of turning to God through Christ and through prayer, confessing that we have fallen short of His standards, expressing our desire to have Christ direct our lives for His glory, not ours. It is only this way we can correct our strained relationship with God.