

The Supreme Reconciliation

Colossians 1:19-23

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I want you to follow with me as I read our text, Colossians 1:19-23.

Paul said, “For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.”

Now go back with me to verse 21, as I introduce our theme. Paul says, “And you...”—He makes it personal; it’s applicable to the Colossians and, I believe, to us right now—“...that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works...”—now here’s their present —“...yet now hath He reconciled.” God the Father sent God the Son to reconcile a rebellious, hostile planet. If you wanted me to describe the message of the Bible, that would be a great, succinct description of the message of the Bible.

The word “reconcile” is one of the five key words used in the New Testament to describe the riches of our salvation in Christ, along with the words “justification,” “redemption,” “forgiveness” and “adoption.” I’m a firm believer that every Christian should learn these words. Someday I want to do a series on the key words of the Bible. These words are important in order for you to understand the richness of the blessings of how God saved you in Christ. So let me give you a quick definition of these five words.

“Justification” is God declaring the guilty to be righteous. “Redemption”—slaves are set free. “Forgiveness”—our debt is paid and forgotten. In the doctrine of “adoption,” strangers are made sons. In “reconciliation”—our topic today—enemies become friends.

I want to set the context for you. Paul is still talking about the preeminence of Christ. At the very end of verse 18, Paul says, “...that in all things He...”—that is, Jesus Christ—“...might have the preeminence.” What do we mean by “preeminence”? The word “preeminence” means “the most important place” or “supreme place.” There is the word “prominence” for an “important place,” but “preeminence” means “the most important place.” To many people Jesus is important, but to God the Father, Jesus is to have the most important place in our lives, in our church and in our world.

Jesus is to have preeminence—we saw it in verse 15—because He “is the image of the invisible God.” In verse 16, He is the creator of all creation, and in verse 18, “He is the head of the...church.” Now beginning in verse 19, Paul gives us one more reason for Christ’s

preeminence: Jesus is the one through Whom the Father reconciles a fallen world.

So you might say, these are the reasons for Christ's preeminence: number one, He "is the image of the invisible God"; number two, He is the creator of all creation; number three, "He is the head of the church"; and number four, He is the reconciler of all things. Not only does Jesus redeem us by His blood, but He reconciles us back into a right relationship with God.

I believe this is the greatest need in the world today. God made Adam and Eve in the beginning in the book of Genesis, and He walked with them and had fellowship with them in the garden, but sin came into the world because they disobeyed God. What happened then? Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden; they were separated from God. God had to provide coats to cover their nakedness, so an animal had to die and shed its blood for them to come back into fellowship with God. They were separated from God and eventually died, so death and separation and enmity and hatred and division all came into the world as a result of sin. God sending His Son was a rescue mission to save us and to reconcile us and to bring us back unto God.

From this text, I want you to see three truths about the supreme reconciliation. The first point is the Father's reconciling pleasure, verses 19-21. Let's go back and read that passage. "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him..."—that is, Jesus Christ—"...to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled."

There is a very important connective here; it is the word "for" in verse 19. It shows that the basis for the preeminence of the Son was the pleasure of the Father. You might say, "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell," and it pleased the Father that He had preeminence, because He is the reconciler of all things. So the Father's pleasure is the Father's will or plan.

When it says in that statement that "It pleased the Father," what does that mean? It means that this is the Father's will. This is the Father's pleasure. This is His purpose; that in His Son, Jesus Christ, "should all fullness dwell." What does that mean, "In Him should all fullness dwell"? It means that the full essence of deity dwells in Jesus Christ. It means that He is every bit God, as though He were not man, and every bit man, as though He were not God—in Jesus Christ.

This is important: Jesus was fully man—sinless because He was born of a virgin; He didn't inherit a sin nature. Jesus never sinned, but He was fully human. He got tired, He slept, He wept, He was weary, He had emotion—all the things that we have, Jesus Christ had. He was fully human. And He was fully divine. But He wasn't two people; one God and one man. He was one person.

You go, "I don't understand."

"Neither do I."

You go, "But you're teaching this."

"Yes, because that's what the Bible teaches." If I could understand God, He wouldn't be big enough to take care of me.

This is what theologians call the "hypostatic union." They like to give big names to these doctrines. It means that two natures dwelt together in one person, Jesus Christ. There is nothing more important for you to understand than the nature of Christ: fully man and fully God.

Let me give you one more statement to clarify this. His humanity did not lessen or diminish His deity. And His deity did not lessen or diminish His humanity. It's just as heretical to deny His humanity as it is to deny His deity. He had to be both God and man to be able to reconcile mankind. It's almost as though when Jesus was hanging on the Cross, He grabbed God and He grabbed man and He brought them together, and they met at the Cross of Jesus Christ. What a beautiful picture. Because Jesus is the God-man, He can bridge the gap between sinful man and a holy God. So Jesus is the reconciler because He is the fullness of the Godhead.

Notice that the "fullness" there is "in Him." Not around Him. Not upon Him. But "in Him." In 2 Corinthians 5:19, Paul says it this way: "...God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." So that fullness of deity dwells in Jesus. And that word "dwell" actually means to dwell "permanently." So the point is that Jesus Christ's deity was fused with humanity for all eternity. He is the glorified God-man in heaven.

Some people say, "I can't believe that a man could become God."

You know, "Neither do I." Because a man didn't become God. God became a man. There's a difference. A lot of people believe they're becoming gods, or they can find the inner divine essence. There are a lot of men who have aspired to become divine, but there is only one God Who actually became a man. Paul says in Philippians 2:6 that "Being in the form of God," thought equality with God not something to hold on to, but He emptied Himself—not of His deity but of the display of His deity—and He took on the form of a servant. That means He took on full humanity through the womb of the Virgin Mary. And therefore, He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."

And in Philippians 2, Paul goes on to say that "God hath also highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." He is to have preeminence. So Jesus Christ has the fullness dwelling in Him.

Now why would God become a man? The answer is in verses 20-21. "...to reconcile all things." What is the meaning of the word "reconciliation"? It means to "change relationship from hostility to harmony." The Bible teaches that before man's conversion, when man was separated or estranged from God by his hostile, sinful state, mankind was actually an enemy of

God.

God is the one Who reconciles. This is an important point about the doctrine of reconciliation. God is the reconciler. We are the reconciled. We never reconcile ourselves to God. It's a work that we cannot do. God reconciles us unto Himself through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. That's an important distinction. Otherwise, it would be like any other religion; if you're baptized, if you're good, if you have communion, you can somehow reach up by your good works and can bring God down to you. But that doesn't happen. In religion, man is reaching up to God; in Christianity, God is reaching down to man. And God is the one Who is reconciling man to Himself. God takes away the enmity and the blockage and the obstacles, so that we can be reconciled and brought back into harmony with Him. God removes the barrier, which is sin.

You don't hear much about sin today. "Oh, I can't believe the pastor's talking about sin! We're not sinners!" The Bible says we are. The Bible even says that if you say you haven't sinned, you've just sinned because you lied. I've heard people argue, "I'm not a sinner! If you don't believe me, I'm gonna punch you out!" Veins popping out on their neck. Everyone has sinned. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." The Bible says, "There is no one righteous; no, not one." The sooner that we understand that, the sooner we can appreciate the idea that God wants to reconcile us, even though we sinners.

Notice verse 20: "And having made peace through the blood of His Cross." That's the means by which God reconciles us: "the blood of His Cross." That's a descriptive term to explain the death of Jesus Christ. Notice verse 22: "...in the body of His flesh through death." So you have, verse 20, "And having made peace through the blood of His Cross..." and in verse 22 you have, "...in the body of His flesh through death." The Cross of Jesus Christ is the apex of all history, both secular and redemptive, when Jesus came to redeem us and reconcile us back to God. We can't reconcile ourselves; only God can do that.

At the end of World War II, we were in the South Pacific fighting the Japanese. When the war was over and the peace treaty was signed, there were some Japanese soldiers still hiding in the jungle on some of those South Pacific islands. They were thinking that the war was still on, so they were hiding in fear, looking for the enemy, eating coconuts and bananas and sleeping under the trees. They were afraid. Some of them were actually in hiding for months and years. They couldn't get them out of the jungle; they thought the war was still on.

A lot of people are like that with God. Do you know that the war is over? A peace treaty was signed in the blood of Jesus Christ. God is reaching out to you. You don't have to hide anymore. Come out of the jungles and believe and trust in God. He's opened the door and made the way.

So basically what happened was that we were enemies from God, and the obstacle that kept us from God was our sin. Jesus took care of the sin issue at the Cross. But this does not mean that automatically everyone is saved. You have to repent and believe in Jesus Christ and be born again to be saved. What Jesus did on the Cross doesn't automatically save the world.

(We'll see that in a moment.) But the war is over, the peace treaty has been signed and now all you have to do is let the little white flag go up in your heart. Turn back to God and say, "God, I'm sorry for my sin." God wants you to be reconciled. We can have peace with God.

I want you to notice the object of reconciliation in verse 20: "all things..." and he goes on to say all things that are "...in earth, or things in heaven." That just about covers everything. Now what does he mean by "all things"? Let me tell you what he does not mean. He doesn't mean that Satan is going to be saved. He doesn't mean the demons are going to be saved. He doesn't mean that unsaved people, un-regenerated people will be in heaven.

There is a false doctrine known as "universalism." It teaches that in the end, no one will go to hell. No one will be lost. No one will perish. Even though John 3:16 says that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life," you still have to believe in Him, or you will perish and not have everlasting life. So these words "all things" do not teach universalism, as you compare Scripture with Scripture.

You say, "Well, what is it?" It comes in two categories; "all things" comes in two categories. Category number one: all created things, the creation, the cosmos. Do you ever wonder why there are hurricanes and floods and tornadoes and all of these natural disasters that we call "acts of God"? Poor God is getting blamed for all of it. It's man's sin that brought it upon the world.

Did you know that Jesus Christ is going to come back? He's going to reign on earth, and they'll be no more tornadoes or floods or famine or pestilence or war. He will reign on earth as King of kings and Lord of lords. There will be peace on earth. It's called the Millennium, the thousand-year reign of Christ. I believe it's going to happen, literally. I believe that Jesus Christ comes back in His Second Coming, and He reigns on earth for a thousand years.

The Bible says that at that time, they'll beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears become pruning hooks. Nation won't lift up sword against nation. There won't be war anymore; there will be peace on earth because Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, will be reigning on earth. I look forward to that day; don't you? When we pray, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," that day will be fulfilled. So the restitution of all things is talking about the created world. In Romans 8 it says that the whole creation groans, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.

But there is a second category that is more pertinent to this text, in verse 21, and that is that sinners will be redeemed: "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled." So those who believe in Jesus Christ, repent of their sins and trust Him as Lord and Savior will be reconciled.

I want you to notice what we were before we were reconciled. Look at our past, verse 21. We were "alienated," "enemies" and living in "wicked works." The word "alienated" means

estranged. It means that we were separated from God. Adam and Eve knew God; they had fellowship with God, but sin brought separation. Paul says in Ephesians 4:18 that we were “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our hearts.” So there is that time before conversion when we were actually blind and ignorant, and we were estranged and separated from God.

As we look at these points, remember what it was like to be blind, ignorant and separated from God. Do you remember before you were a Christian you just lived in spiritual darkness? You didn’t know the truth, and you were living in bondage, separated from God.

Notice also that we were “enemies.” So more than just strangers, we were hostile toward God. We were at enmity to God; that we were actively opposing God and willfully breaking His laws. It involved our minds. Our fallen state affected our minds; they were sinful. In Romans 8:7, Paul says, “...the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Have you ever met unbelievers who get angry when you want to talk about Jesus? You can talk about everything else, but the minute you bring up Jesus Christ, they go ballistic. The hair stands up on their neck.

“I’d like to share Jesus.”

“I don’t want to hear about Jesus!”

“Let’s talk about Buddha.”

“Yeah, let’s talk about Buddha.” You can talk about Muhammed or Confucius or any other person, but not about Jesus. They don’t want to talk about God. They’re hostile toward God. They’re at enmity or at war with God.

Then it says that we were wicked in our works, verse 21. “...enemies in your mind by wicked works.” How sad. This is what we want to believe. In our sinful, fallen, un-regenerated state, man is alienated, an enemy, he is doing wicked works and he doesn’t want to accept the fact that he is a sinner. If you tell a sinner he is a sinner, he gets mad at you. Sinners don’t want to know that they are sinners. People who are saints know they are sinners, saved by grace.

A story is told of a 17th century woman named Lady Huntington. She invited one of her friends, the Duchess of Buckingham, to hear George Whitfield preach. Lady Huntington received this reply from the Duchess of Buckingham: “It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting. I cannot but wonder that your ladyship should relish any sentiment so much at variance with high rank and good breeding.”

How many times I’ve met people who say, “Oh, I’m not a sinner. I’m not wicked. That’s disgusting to indict humanity as being in rebellion or sinful or separated from God!” But that’s the truth. Have you ever looked at the world and said, “What is going on?!” It’s because we are alienated from God. We’re enemies and we’re practicing our “wicked works.”

We don't like that in our natural state, but notice this now in verse 21: You go from your sinful past to your present saved condition. "...yet now hath He reconciled." The word "reconciled" here is in the *eris* tense. That means that it happened in the past, and it has affect all the way into eternity future. We were "enemies," now friends of God.

But why did God reconcile us? Here is my second main point about the supreme reconciliation: the Father's reconciling purpose. It's answering the question, "What was His purpose in our reconciliation?" The answer is at the end of verse 22: "...to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight." That's what God was doing. The purpose of God's reconciling work through the blood of the Cross was to present you some day in heaven "holy...unblameable and unreprouable in His sight."

True to the passage, I believe that Paul has in mind not our present standing, wherein we are righteous and holy before God, but our future presentation in heaven. Do you know that someday you are going to be presented by the Son to the Father? We're going to be welcomed into heaven. And when we do get to heaven, this is how God is going to present us: holy, unblameable and unreprouable.

This holiness is salvation's climax. Salvation has three tenses: past—I've been forgiven; present—I'm being forgiven and I'm being made holy; and future—I will be perfectly holy. When you get to heaven, you're going to be totally free of sin. Praise God! What an awesome time! Sickness, sin, sorrow, Satan—gone forever! Praise the Lord! You'll be presented as holy. We don't deserve that. We didn't merit that. We didn't earn that, but God reconciled us through the blood of His Cross.

Notice also that we'll be presented "unblameable." It means "without spot or blemish." It's the total removal of sin and guilt. In Ephesians 1:4, Paul said, "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."

Then notice the word "unreprouable." It means no charge can be brought against us. Isn't that great? This is a can-you-dig-it verse. We just went from enemies, hostile, estranged from God, living in wicked works to being presented holy, unblameable and unreprouable. When we get to heaven, no one's going to accuse us of anything. "Hey, I remember John Miller in high school!" Just this week, I saw a picture of myself in high school, and it scared me to death! It was like, "Thank you, Jesus, for saving my soul!"

You know, there are going to be a lot of surprises when you get to heaven. You're going to be shocked by the people you see there. And even more so, they're going to be shocked to see you there! They'll go, "Didn't we go to high school together? Oh, man, you were crazy! I can't believe you're here!" People are going to look at you and say, "What are you doing here?" It's the grace of God. No one's going to bring any accusation against us. Romans 8:1 says, "There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." At the end of that chapter, Paul says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that

justifieth.” It is God Who sanctifies. It is God Who will glorify us. Notice it is “in His sight,” verse 22.

Because we are in Christ, our future in heaven will be amazing. At the believer’s death when we go to be with the Lord, or at the Rapture—whether we go by death or we “get caught up to meet the Lord in the air”—this is how we are going to be presented to God: holy, unblameable and unreprouvable. We are waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall also conform you to the end blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My third and last point about the supreme reconciliation is in verse 23. It is the Father’s reconciling proof. So we have the Father’s reconciling pleasure, we have the Father’s reconciling purpose and now we have the Father’s reconciling proof. Notice it in verse 23: “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven whereof I, Paul, am made a minister.”

A very important word in verse 23 is “if.” “If ye continue...” When you get to that in the English translation, without knowing the grammar behind it, you might say, “Well, I knew there had to be a catch to this; it’s too good to be true. He took us wicked sinners, and He’s going to present us in heaven unblameable and unreprouvable, but now it’s up to me to hang on. There’s a big ‘if’ there. He saves me by His grace, but I’ve got to ‘stay saved’ by my good works.”

That’s not what he’s saying. That little, tiny word “if” in verse 23 is what’s called a “conditional clause of the first class.” What that means is that Paul is saying, “if, and I believe you will.” It changes the whole thing. He’s not questioning whether or not they’re going to continue. He’s saying, “if, and I believe you will.” Some translations actually render that “since,” and it would be right to do that. “Since you continue.” So he’s assuming their continuance. He’s not saying that you could lose your salvation; he’s affirming them and saying, “since you continue, and I believe you will, being grounded and settled and not moving away.”

Having said that, let me say this: Continuance in the Christian life involves my mind being educated by the Word of God. It involves my heart longing for God and seeking after God. It involves my will; being surrendered to God. You can’t be passive about your Christian life. Evidence that you’re truly saved is that you’re going to want to read your Bible. If I meet someone who claims to be a Christian and they never read their Bible, I question if they have been born again. Nature determines appetite. How can you be a child of God and you don’t want to read God’s Word? How can you not hunger for God’s Word?

Some people say, “I’m a Christian but I don’t like Christians,” or “I’m a Christian but I don’t go to church because Christians are creepy.” The Bible says in 1 John 3:14, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” Do you love other Christians? Are you committed to other Christians? Are you involved with other Christians? This is the birthmark of a Christian. But it also is continuing.

Let's look at each one of these "groundeds" in verse 23. Each one of these come from the world of construction. It's like building a house or building on a solid foundation. This is our Christian life. It needs to be "grounded." I would say that's the area of the mind. We get grounded in God's Word. Remember when Jesus closed His Sermon on the Mount? He gave a parable of two builders: one wise and one foolish. The foolish builder built on sand. Every kid in Sunday school knows that; they sing it. The foolish man built his house upon the sand, and it went splat. The wise man built his house on the rock, which is the Word of God and obedience to it.

Jesus said, "My Word and obedience to it." It's not enough to hear the Bible. You're to be commended; you're in church this morning, and you're hearing God's Word. We read the Bible, I've explained the Bible but now I want to apply the Bible. You must put it into shoe leather. You must build your marriage and your life and your job and your career and your hobbies and your habits—everything—on the Word of God, because the wind's going to blow, the rains are going to come and the storm's going to come and beat upon your house. Some of you who have been married for many years know that your marriage would not have survived if it wasn't built on the rock of Scripture and the fear of the Lord. So be a wise builder; be grounded on the Word of God.

The word "settled" means to be strengthened from the Holy Spirit in the inner person. It would involve the heart. It's a heart that is filled with the Holy Spirit and has purpose to seek God. Settled and grounded.

Thirdly, "not moved away." I love that figure of speech. In Ephesians 4:14, the Bible says, "That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." We know what tumbleweeds are. Tumbleweeds break their roots, the wind comes and they tumble and roll away. God doesn't want Christian tumbleweeds; God wants Christian oak trees. He wants your roots to go deep in the soil of God's love and God's Word. Not be moved away.

Notice the reference in verse 23 to the Gospel: "the hope of the Gospel." You "heard" the Gospel and the Gospel "was preached to every creature." Next time we're going to be looking at Paul, the minister, the preacher of the Gospel.

I want to end with these thoughts: Number one, as Christian, we are called to be ambassadors for Jesus Christ. Our message to enemies and strangers of God and people living in wicked works is that through the blood of the Cross, God has signed a peace treaty. You can come back to God; the war is over. Come out of the jungle. That's our message: to go everywhere we can go—to our family and friends—and let them know that you can have a relationship with God. You can come back to God. God dealt with your sin at the Cross, and now you are free to come back to God. You can be reconciled to God.

I heard the true story of a husband and wife who had a five-year-old son die, and through the death of their son, they were estranged and ended up getting divorced. Years later, the

husband had to return to that city on a business trip, and he went to visit the grave of his son. While he was there weeping over his son's grave, he heard footsteps behind him. He turned around, and there was his estranged wife. His first impulse was to run away. But instead he stopped, and she approached him and they clasped hands. They were reconciled at that cemetery over the death of their son.

In a different way, but every bit as important, God gave His Son to die on the Cross so that sinners can be reconciled back to God. Do you know that God is literally reaching out His hand to you as a sinner right now? He's saying, "Be reconciled." We take that message out, and I want to give that message to you right now.

You are here and maybe you're visiting for the first time, or you've come for many weeks or maybe a friend invited you. But if you are not saved, your sins are not forgiven. If you were to die right now, do you know whether or not you'd go to heaven? I want you to know that Jesus died on the Cross for you. I want you to know that Jesus rose again so that you can be forgiven and that you can be reconciled back to God. There's no reason for anyone who is reading this right now not to get right with God. You can be reconciled to God, and you can have the peace of God. You can have the forgiveness of God, the joy of God and the hope of heaven.

But it's your decision. I'm God's ambassador calling you to be reconciled to God, but you must make the choice. You must surrender in your heart and come to Jesus and say, "I'm sorry for my sins. Please forgive me and come into my life and be my Savior." If you haven't done that, I want to give you that opportunity right now; to invite Christ to come into your heart and forgive your sins.