

The Supreme Reconciliation

Colossians 1:19-23

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In Colossians 1:19-23, Paul says, “For it pleased the Father that in Him...”—that is a reference to Christ—“...all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled...”—there’s our theme—“...in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

Now go back to verse 21, where I want to show you our theme of reconciliation. Paul says, “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled.” So now you have been reconciled. You were enemies of God and estranged, but now you have been reconciled back to God. Someone said, “God the Father sent God the Son to reconcile a rebel planet.” That’s the theme of the Gospel.

The word “reconcile” is one of five key words used in the New Testament to describe the riches of our salvation in Christ, along with justification, redemption, forgiveness and adoption. Each one of these words is a picture of our salvation.

Number one, He justifies us; that is, the guilty are declared righteous. The guilty sinner, by justification, is declared righteous. The work of justification is the act of God by which He declares a believing sinner to be righteous, based on the finished work of Christ on the Cross.

Number two, in redemption, slaves have been set free.

Number three, by forgiveness, our debt has been paid and has been forgotten. That’s glorious!

Number four, adoption means that as strangers we are now made sons. We are actually adopted into God’s family. Christians are not only born again or regenerated into the family of God, but they are adopted by God into His family.

Number five, now our word reconciliation means enemies who have become friends.

So justification means the guilty have been made righteous; in redemption, slaves have been set free; in forgiveness, our debt has been paid and forgotten; in adoption, strangers are made sons; and in reconciliation, enemies have become friends.

In the context of our text, Paul is still speaking about the need for Christ’s preeminence. In verse 18, Paul says, “In all things He may have the preeminence.” “Preeminence” doesn’t mean importance or prominence; it means “most important place” or “the top place.” So Christ should

not just be important or be a key figure; He should be preeminent. The Bible says that “Every knee should bow...every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.” So all the fullness dwells in Christ.

The theme of preeminence, in verse 18, is carried all the way to verse 22. It started in verse 9 with Paul praying, praising and then declaring the glories of Christ's preeminence.

Why is Christ to have preeminence? Verse 15 says, “He is the image of the invisible God”—He's the revealer; in verse 16, He is the Creator of all creation; and in verse 18, He is the head of the church, His body. And now in verse 19, “It pleased the Father that in Him...”—that is, “in Jesus Christ”—“...all the fullness should dwell.”

There are three truths about reconciliation in our text. Number one, we see in verses 19-21 the Father's reconciling pleasure. “For it pleased the Father...”—there it is—“...that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled.”

Verse 19 starts with the word “for.” That shows that the basis of the preeminence of the Son was the pleasure of the Father. So at the end of verse 18, it says “preeminence,” and verse 19 says that “It pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell.” It was the Father's pleasure, which means it was His will or His plan.

What is the Father's plan? Verse 19 says, “That in Him all the fullness should dwell.” And what does that mean? It basically means that the full essence of deity dwells in Christ; that Jesus is truly God and truly man in one Person, Jesus Christ. He is the God-man.

Notice the explanation of this in Colossians 2:9: “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” That's the explanation of Colossians 1:19. The fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily. This is one of the strongest, clearest affirmations of the deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ.

Now where is the fullness of the Godhead residing, verse 19? “In Him.” It's not around Him, not upon Him, not over Him but “in Him,” meaning that He is truly God and truly man.

The reason I make that distinction is because there are false teachers who say that Jesus was not virgin born. They say He was just a man, and when He was baptized, at that time divinity came upon Christ. Then when Jesus was dying on the Cross and cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” His divinity had left Him. That's not what the Bible teaches.

Jesus was born the God-man, He lived as the God-man, He died as the God-man, He was buried, rose from the dead three days later as the conquering God-man, ascended back into heaven and is seated “at the right hand of the Father.”

There have been many men who claimed to be gods. But it's impossible for the finite to

become the infinite. If you are God, you are eternal. You don't become a God; you've always been God. No one says, "Hey, I went to a \$39.99 seminar and found out I was divine!" What kind of a dumb god are you that you had to pay \$39.99 to find out you're really divine?!

Jesus Christ is the eternal, preexistent Son of God. The Bible says there is one God in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They all are equally divine, coequal in their essence, eternal and possess all the same divine attributes.

2 Corinthians 5:19 says, "God was in Christ reconciling..."—there's our theme—"...the world to Himself." So God came, in Christ, to bring the world back to Himself. The world, this rebel planet, was "alienated and enemies...by wicked works" and rebellious against God. So the coming of Christ was a "rescue mission" to reconcile sinners back to God.

Verse 19 says, "In Him all the fullness should dwell. The word "dwell" literally means "to dwell permanently." So the divine nature doesn't come on Christ and then leave Christ; He is God in flesh. In Jesus Christ, deity was fused together with sinless humanity for all eternity. From the moment of conception—which has implications regarding abortion—He was the God-man. He was born the God-man, lived the God-man, died the God-man, rose the God-man and He ascended as the exalted God-man, who sits "at the right hand of the Father."

No wonder "Every knee [is going to] bow...and every tongue [is going to] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." No wonder the verse says, "It pleased the Father." It was His purpose and design, so that "in all things He may have the preeminence." How important that is.

Why would God become a man? The answer is in verses 20-21: "to reconcile all things." He came to reconcile a rebel planet and rebellious sinners.

What does the word "reconciliation" mean? It literally means "to change a relationship from hostility to harmony." When a husband and wife are separated or divorced and are then reconciled, they get back together. So God says He is going to reconcile us back to Himself.

In the Bible, reconciliation is God reconciling man to Himself. It is never the reverse: man does not reconcile himself to God. God is the reconciler; we are those who are reconciled. God is the one who initiates reconciliation and makes it happen, by reconciling us to Himself. And how did God do that? He removed the barrier known as sin.

What happened to talking about sin anyway? Today when a preacher mentions the word "sin," people freak out. "Oh, he's going to get judgmental and talk about sin!" You betcha I am. The Bible talks about it. If you ever read your Bible, you'll see the word "sin."

Sin separates us from God. Sin makes us hostile toward God. Sin makes us alienated from God. So we need to come back to God, but God is the one who does the work of reconciliation. How important that is.

Verse 20 says, "having made peace through the blood of His cross." This is how God reconciles us. It is through the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Verse 22 says, "in the body of His flesh through death." On the basis of Jesus' death on the Cross, man can, by God, be reconciled back to Him. So we cannot reconcile ourselves; God reconciles us.

At the end of World War II, when the declaration of surrender had been signed by Japan, many Japanese soldiers were unaware that the war was over. They hid in the jungles on the islands in the South Pacific, some for years. They were not convinced that the war was over.

What a picture that is of God making a peace treaty on the Cross. It was saying to the guilty, you and me, that "The war is over! You don't have to run and hide. You don't have to hide in the bushes anymore. You can come back to God." There is now peace because of the blood of the Cross.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they were ashamed and ran and tried to hide from God. Sin separates us from God. Then God came into the Garden and called to Adam, "Where are you?" The omniscient God knew where Adam was. He wanted Adam to know where he was. He wanted Adam to realize that they had sinned, that they were ashamed and they hid themselves because of their sin. They even sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness. They tried to do whatever they could to cover their sin and reconcile themselves back to God. But it didn't work. So God had to kill an animal to provide its skin to cover them. Blood had to be shed to cover their sin and bring them back to God.

Now notice the object of reconciliation, in verse 20: "all things...on earth [and] in heaven." Don't misinterpret this statement in order to teach a false doctrine known as "universalism." Universalism teaches that in the end, no one will go to hell, because there is no hell, and everyone will be saved. They say even the devil will be saved. No one will be judged and condemned for their sin.

That's not what the Bible says. It says, "The soul who sins shall die" and "The wages of sin is death." You can't avoid that. The only way to be reconciled to God is through the death of His Son. But you must appropriate by faith what Jesus did for you on the Cross, or you will die in your sins and be separated from God. So through the Cross, we can be reconciled.

Now what are the "all things"? The answer is all things that are reconcilable. They come in two categories: all creation, which covers heaven and earth; and all sinners, who repent and believe in Jesus Christ.

Notice verse 21 says, "And you, who once were..." Paul is describing their past, and he'll go on to describe their present. They "were alienated and enemies" and living in "wicked works" in their minds, but now they had been reconciled or redeemed back to God. So Paul shows us the need for reconciliation, the picture of our sinful past. Notice this in verse 21. He describes us as having been "alienated," "enemies" and "wicked" in our thoughts that lead to our "wicked works."

The word “alienated” means “estranged.” It means that we are separated from God. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, who were separated from God, the problem in the world today is that men are separated from God because of their sin. God is holy and man is sinful, and there is this huge gulf between sinful man and a holy God. And the only way to bridge that gulf is not by our good deeds or our religious works or our conduct; it is only by Christ’s death on the Cross. He is the one who bridges the gulf between sinful man and a holy God. He did that by becoming a sinless man, who went to the Cross and paid the penalty for our sins.

In Ephesians 4:18, it says that we were “alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” We were alienated, ignorant and blind.

Now again notice, in verse 21 of our text, that we were actually called “enemies.” Before we were saved, we were actually “enemies” of God. We were more than just strangers or “alienated”; we were actually hostile toward God. It means that we were actively opposing God and willfully breaking God’s laws. And we did it in our minds, as well. We had “enmity” toward God.

In Romans 8:7, Paul says, “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.” What it basically means is that in your preconverted state, when you were lost and unsaved, you were not reconciled to God. You were actually hostile toward and an enemy of God. You were basically running from God. You hadn’t submitted to God; you hadn’t surrender to Him.

So what happens when you become a Christian is that a white flag goes up in your heart. You basically say, “I surrender. I’m not going to run or hide. I believe you died on the Cross for my sins, and I surrender my life to you in faith.”

We also were committing “wicked works.” Notice that our thoughts, that are in our minds, lead to action. What we think determines how we behave. So because we were “alienated” or estranged, because we were “enemies,” our minds were hostile toward God, which resulted in “wicked works.”

This is a description of a world apart from God. Is it any wonder that the world is messed up? We need to be reconciled back to God.

I heard a story of a 17th century, Christian woman by the name of Lady Huntington. She loved the Lord. She invited one of her friends, the Duchess of Buckingham, to hear George Whitfield preach. She received this reply to her invitation: “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 our Ladyship should relish any sentiments so much in variance with high rank and good breeding.”

Wow! She was trying to reach a sinner who didn’t know she was a sinner. It’s so difficult. But the Bible says, “There is none righteous; no, not one....All have sinned and fall short of the

glory of God.”

Now notice the contrast in verse 21. “Yet now...”—it’s their present condition—“...He has reconciled.” This phrase, “He has reconciled,” is in the *eres* tense in the Greek. It means that you’ve been reconciled, you will continually be reconciled and in the future, you will be reconciled. We were “enemies” but now we’re friends of God. How marvelous that is.

The second point about reconciliation from our text is the Father’s reconciling purpose. Verse 22 says, “...in the body of His flesh...”—that is, “in the humanity of Christ” or “in His physical body”—“...through death, to present you...”—that is, “the believers in Colossae and us, as well”—“...holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.”

So we were “alienated,” “enemies” and living in “wicked works,” but now, because of Christ’s Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, we presently are and one day will be completely “holy,” “blameless,” and “above reproach” in the sight of God. That’s a praise-the-Lord, Hallelujah verse! We were enemies; now we’re reconciled. We were unholy; now we’re holy. We were blamable; now we’re blameless. This describes every child of God. This is the believers’ future.

Notice the word “holy.” It is salvation’s climax in this context. One is made holy in three different ways: we have been forgiven of our sins and thus made holy positionally; we are being sanctified and being made holy practically; and one day when we get to heaven, we will be made holy perfectly. So we’ve been positionally declared holy before God—that cannot change; we’re being practically transformed into holiness by the Spirit of God like our holy God; and when we get to heaven, the day we long for, there will be no more sin. We’ll be perfectly holy.

I’ve met Christians who think they’re perfectly holy. And they’ll even argue with you about it. “I don’t sin. If you don’t believe me, I’m gonna punch you in the nose!” The Bible says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” You just sinned by saying you don’t sin, because we’ve all sinned. But one day we will all stand before God perfectly holy. Right now we are positionally holy, and we are becoming holy practically, but sanctification is a process. And one day we will be perfectly holy in the presence of God.

We also will be “blameless.” It means we will be “without spot or blemish.” It’s the total removal of sin and guilt. Ephesians 1:4 says, “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”

Then the word “above reproach” means that there can be no charges against us. That’s why Paul said in Romans 8:33-34, “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.” Since God is going to justify us, forgive us, reconcile us and adopt us, why will He condemn us? He’s not going to. And in Romans 8:1, it says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” If you’re a Christian, you’re in Christ. If you’re not in Christ, you’re not a Christian. Those who are in Christ Jesus are not condemned, so

Romans 8 opens with “no condemnation,” in the middle it has no defeat and it ends with no separation.

This is what is true of all Christians who were at one time “enemies,” estranged and living “wicked works.” They are now “holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.” Not blameless in men’s sight, maybe not in their own sight, but in God’s sight. And that’s what matters.

When will this happen? When we die and go to heaven or when we’re raptured. Christians don’t need to be afraid of dying. “To be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord.” When you die, you’ll be in heaven with Jesus.

But I’m still living in Menifee, so if you want to pray for someone, pray for me. Someday you may read in the newspaper, “Pastor John Miller of Revival Christian Fellowship died.” Don’t be sad for me; I’ll be in heaven waiting for you to come up there. I’m ready to go. My bags are packed. I’m ready to leave this world.

Or when the Lord comes for the church in the rapture, we’ll “be caught up together...to meet the Lord in the air.” How marvelous that will be. And when we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, we’ll sing and shout the victory. Because He loves us, He sent His Son for us and reconciled us back to Himself.

1 Corinthians 1:7-8 says that we are “eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” That’s the Father’s reconciling purpose.

The third point about reconciliation is the Father’s reconciling proof, verse 23. “...if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.” Paul then goes on in the rest of the chapter to talk about his ministry of preaching the Gospel of reconciliation.

Notice the word “if” in this verse: “If indeed you continue in the faith.” It throws some people for a curve, because they assume it means if you don’t “continue in the faith,” then you’ll lose your salvation. That’s not what Paul is teaching. The word “if” in the Greek is called “a conditional clause of first class.” As a result, some translations rightfully render that phrase “If you continue—and I believe you will....”

In chapter 3, verse 1, the same phrase appears: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above.” It actually says, “Since you were raised with Christ...” Paul is affirming that they were risen with Christ, so they are to “Set [their minds] on things above.”

So this is not saying you can lose your salvation. It’s actually saying that since you’ve been saved, you will continue to be “grounded,” “steadfast” and “not moved away.” Paul, in writing to the Philippians, said, “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of

Jesus Christ.” In the book of Jude, it says, “To Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy....” That is what Paul is talking about. Here Paul is saying, “Since you are “grounded and steadfast...”—or “settled”—“...and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel....”

The word “grounded” conveys the idea of a foundation of a building. The most important part of a structure is its foundation. You can have a beautiful house, but if it’s built on sand, it’s not going to last. So we have to be grounded on Christ.

We also have to be “settled.” The word “settled” here means “strengthened.” The Parakletos, the Holy Spirit, is who strengthens us to live the Christian life. In Ephesians 4:14, Paul says, “We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” Some say it this way: “Our minds grounded in His truth; our hearts settled, filled with His Spirit.”

And the phrase “not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven” is the steadfast hope. Some use the word “perseverance.” But I like the focus to be on God’s keeping power in our lives; that “He who has begun...will complete.” What begins with grace ends in glory.

Now is this a license to sin? Absolutely not! He’s called us to holiness. So if you have the thought that you are saved so you can go out and sin, the questions I have for you are, “Have you really been reconciled? Are you really a child of God?”

I like the story of the prodigal son. He came back to the Father. He went to the pigs for a little while, but he came back. He wasn’t a pig; he was a son. And the Father saw him, ran to meet him, embraced him and received him back into fellowship. The son didn’t lose his sonship during his time away; he lost his fellowship.

I know I’m being “kept by the power of God through faith for salvation.” I know I’m “sealed with the Holy Spirit...until the redemption of the purchased possession.”

But this is not a license to sin. This should be a motivation to love God, to serve God and to be living holy lives that please God.

So we are called, as God’s reconciled people, to preach the Gospel of reconciliation to others, to tell unbelievers that they don’t have to run. They don’t have to be hiding in the jungles. The war is over! God made peace through the blood of His Cross.

Why are you still running? Why are you still an enemy of God? Surrender today. Come to Him today.

So Christians are to be ambassadors. Paul goes on to say, “I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak,” telling others about this ministry of reconciliation. And the Gospel is the Gospel of reconciliation.

The question to you is, "Will you be reconciled to God?"