

The Supreme Reconciliation

Colossians 1:19-23

Pastor John Miller

I'll read verses 19-23 as our text. Beginning in Colossians 1:19, Paul says, "For it pleased the Father,"—that's God the Father—"that in him,"—that's God the Son, Jesus Christ—"should all fulness dwell; 20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him,"—here's our theme—"to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." Now Paul makes it personal, "And you, that were sometime alienated,"—he tells the believers that in their preconverted days they were alienated from God—"and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now,"—their present standing was—"hath he reconciled,"—again, there's our theme—"In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: 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." Again, as I read that passage, I was so painfully aware of the fact that we could not really exhaust or exude or draw from this text all the truths that are hidden or found there.

In our text we are introduced to the subject of reconciliation. If you're taking notes tonight, we're going to have some points for you on the screen. This is the work of Christ as reconciler. The world that was enmity against God, that was away from God, He reconciles back to God. You see that in verses 20, 21. God the Father sent God the Son to reconcile His rebellious planet. That's almost a summary of the message of the Bible—God the Father sent God the Son to reconcile a rebel planet. As we say John 3:16 is the whole Bible in one verse, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That's God sent His Son to reconcile us.

The word "reconcile" is one of the five key words used in the New Testament to describe the richness of our salvation in Christ along with justification, redemption, forgiveness, and adoption. I want you to see these as they appear on the screen. The first word of our salvation is justification. It means the guilty are declared righteous. I'm going to give you these five words in simple definition. (I'm just warming up to my text, by the way, I haven't gotten to the text. This is transition.) Justification is the guilty are declared righteous. The second word is in redemption salvation has set us free. We were slaves and have been set free. We're justified, guilty, declared righteous; slaves have now been set free, redemption. Here's the third word, forgiveness, by that we have the picture of our debt is paid and forgotten. Also, the word "forgive" literally means to carry away. Remember John the Baptist pointed to Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, who carries away the sin of the world."

The fourth word is adoption, strangers are made sons. The fifth word is our theme tonight, in reconciliation enemies are become friends. I've been saying this for many years and still haven't launched into it, but my desire has always been to do a five-part series on Sunday morning where we look at each one of these words in their text and expound them in five

sermons. Let me mention them again: Justification, the guilty are declared righteous; redemption, slaves have been set free; forgiveness, our debt has been paid and forgotten; adoption, strangers are made sons and daughters; reconciliation, enemies become friends.

Paul is setting forth in this text the preeminence of Christ. In verse 18, Paul says, “. . . that in all things he,”—Christ—“might have the preeminence.” We looked at that last Wednesday night. Remember, preeminence is not prominence, but it's preeminence, which means that Jesus Christ is to have first place—no one higher than Christ in our minds, in our hearts, in our thoughts, in our lives, in the church, or in all things; and all things means all things.

Why is Christ to have first place? Because we saw in verse 15 that He, “. . . is the image of the invisible God,” He's the revealer. We saw in verse 16 that He's the Creator of all things. He is the Creator. He's the source, He's the sustainer, and He's the goal of all things. Thirdly, we saw that He is the head of the Church. Tonight, we actually have a fourth reason why Christ is to have preeminence. Actually, this hymn, which many scholars believe is the text, does not conclude until you get to verse 20, so this is a hymn of praise. They actually sang this, probably, in the early church. Paul gives us one more reason for Christ's preeminence. We have the revealer, the Creator, the head of the Church, and now we have the reconciler of all things. Jesus is the One through whom God the Father reconciles a fallen world.

Just real quick, the need for reconciliation is because man fell in the garden. What is wrong with our world today is that man has fallen, and those who misunderstand that aren't able to find the solution to man's problem. The solution to man's problem is reconciliation, is redemption, is adoption, it's justification. God provided the solution to bring fallen, sinful man back to God. That's the message of the Bible.

From this text I want you to see three truths about the supreme reconciliation. First, if you're taking notes, the Father's reconciling pleasure. The Father was pleased that in Christ the fullness would dwell and that He would produce reconciliation. Now, this is the heart of the passage. I'm going to take longest tonight on the first point, so don't be timing me, okay? You're going to say, “If that's just his first point, we're in trouble tonight.” I'm going to take most of my time on point one, and then we'll look at the other facets.

Go back with me and let's look at verses 19-21. “For it pleased the Father,”—that's His pleasure, His plan or purpose or will—“that in him,”—that is, in Christ—“should all fulness dwell; 20 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.” Notice he doesn't mention under the earth. He mentions in heaven and on earth and then says, verse 21, “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works,”—that's our BC days—“yet now,”—that's their conversion—“hath he reconciled,”—reconciled to God.

The connection, go back to verse 19, the word “for” shows that the basis for the preeminence of the Son was the pleasure of the Father. The big picture is God the Father was pleased, it was His pleasure, that in Christ, “. . . should all fulness dwell.” The Father's pleasure is His will or

plan. What is the Father's will or plan? Verse 19, ". . . that in him,"—this again is a reference to Jesus Christ—"should all fulness dwell." What does that mean? This is such an important text in your Bible. It means that full essence of deity dwells in, permanently, Jesus Christ. Peek at Colossians 2:9. Paul says, "For in him,"—that's Christ, again—"dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." I don't know how anyone can read these verses and still try to deny the deity of Jesus Christ. By the way, these are great verses to be familiar with when a Jehovah's Witness knocks on your door.

How many of you have never had a Jehovah's Witness knock on your door? You must not live in a house, I guess. If you've never had a Jehovah's Witness knock on your door, you just moved in last night. They will knock on your door. It's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when; and when they do, you'd better know your Bible and be able to share the Person and work of Jesus Christ with them.

It means that in Him dwells all the fullness of deity in bodily form. This is a clear reference to the fact that Jesus Christ is fully or truly God and fully and truly Man at the same time. The fullness of deity—I want you to see this—is in Him, not around Him, not upon Him, but in Him. Why do I emphasize that? Because there are those who give Christ a prominent place that say, "The Man, Jesus, had the Christ come upon Him." They say, "When He was baptized that the Christ came on the Man Jesus. He wasn't virgin born. He wasn't a sinless Man, He was the Christ who the Christ came upon Him, and when Jesus was hanging on the cross and cried, 'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me,' that the Christ left Him." That's ancient heresy, and it's not what the Bible teaches. Jesus existed from all eternity. He preexisted Bethlehem. He was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was God in flesh. He lived a sinless life. He died on the cross a substitutionary death and rose from the dead three days later, right? proving His deity. He's the God-Man exalted in heaven.

Write down 2 Corinthians 5:19. It says, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," so all the fullness of the divine essence dwelt in Jesus Christ. Note also that the fullness of deity dwells in Him. That word "dwells" actually means to dwell permanently—never, ever been a time when Jesus was not God; never, ever will be a time when Jesus will not be God. God is immutable and unchanging. Jesus wasn't created. He's not a creature. He's not a man on whom the Christ came, He is the eternal God. "In the beginning was the Word." Amen? He's the eternal, preexistent, second Person of the Godhead, and it dwells in Him permanently. This is the way I like to state it: In Jesus Christ deity was fused with sinless humanity for all eternity. Deity was fused together at the moment of conception in the womb of the virgin Mary for all eternity.

I have people ask me, "Is Jesus in heaven in the same body He had on earth?" The answer is yes, but glorified body. Jesus died on the cross in a sinless, mortal body; but when He was raised from the dead, He was raised in an immortal, eternal body. When He ascended, He ascended in that same body. He is seated and exalted. Guess what? When we get to heaven, we're going to see the same Jesus we read about in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Won't that be cool? All the stories you've read about Jesus. I love that old song, Tell me the story of

Jesus, write on my heart every word; tell me the story most precious. We're going to see Jesus face to face. You're going to be able to reach out and touch Him, and He's going to reach out and touch . . . I believe He's going to grab us and give us a big bear hug when we get to heaven. How marvelous that will be!

Why would God become a man? The answer, verses 20-21, " . . . to reconcile all things unto himself." Again, this is the whole message of the Bible, and I'm going to try to force myself as best I can to keep it simple. What does reconciliation mean? It literally means to change, a change of relationship from hostility to harmony. When two people are reconciled, it means that they were at enmity with each other. When maybe a married couple broke up or they've separated, we'll use the term, even sometimes the divorce takes place, if they are reconciled, God brings them back together in harmony. So, we were estranged—we're enemies, sinners—separated from a holy God, salvation is bringing us back into a relationship with Jesus Christ and God our Savior. God is the One who reconciles.

Now, if you're taking notes, I'm going to give you a bunch of little tidbits to write down. God is the reconciler. Nowhere in the Bible does it teach that we do anything to reconcile ourselves to God. We don't get on the phone and say, "God, I want us to get along. I know You hate me, You don't want me, You don't like me, but I want to do something to make You happy and to reconcile myself to You." No, God took the initiative, God did the work on the cross, and God is the One who draws us by His grace. He is the reconciler; we are the reconciled. Again, that may seem like an unnecessary point, but it's what's clearly taught in the Bible. What God removes the barrier of our fellowship with Him, sin—have you ever heard that word, "sin," s-i-n, whatever happened to sin—He removes that through the work of the cross and thus we're able to be reconciled back to God.

Now, look at verse 20. It says, "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross,"—and then verse 22, just a quick peek—"In the body of his flesh through death." So, reconciliation is God taking the enmity, dealing with it at the cross, and bringing peace. Do you know what the word "peace" means? The etymology of the word "peace" means to be one. There is no peace to the wicked. We're estranged from God. This is why when you get saved and you're reconciled, you have peace with God and you experience the peace of God. You can't get along with others until you're right with God. That's what reconciliation means.

Paul mentions, " . . . peace through the blood of his cross," and as I said, verse 22, "In the body of his flesh through death." The basis of our reconciliation is the cross of Christ. The cross stands center stage. It is the centerpiece on God's table of redemption—the cross. That is what causes the reconciliation. The basis of our reconciliation is the cross of Christ. We cannot reconcile ourselves to God.

In World War II, I understand that when the war ended in the South Pacific with Japan that there were Japanese soldiers still on some of the South Pacific Islands that did not get word that the war was over. They were hiding in the jungles eating bananas and coconuts, and they were still looking for the enemy. They were living in fear, and it was in many cases months and

months later before anyone reached them and said, “The war is over! The peace treaty has been signed! You can come out of the jungle.” That’s a classic picture of what Jesus did on the cross—the war with God is over, the peace treaty has been signed. You don’t have to run from God, you don’t have to hide from God. You can come back into a relationship with God. What a beautiful picture that is! So, we can have peace with God. Read Romans 5. Paul talks about the results or blessings or benefits of being reconciled or justified before God.

Notice in verse 20 the object of reconciliation is, “. . . all things.” You’ll notice the text says, “. . . in earth, or things in heaven.” Notice what it does not say. It doesn’t say under the earth. Don’t misunderstand what it says here, “all things,” and conclude, contrary to Scripture, what some known as universalists teach that in the end even the devil and demons will be redeemed or reconciled or saved. That’s not taught in the Bible. This is not “all things” that are of the devil or of fallen angels. He’s not saying even the unsaved—people who reject the gospel—will eventually be saved. He’s not teaching universalism. “Well, what does it mean?” It means all things that can be redeemed and reconciled will be, and it falls into two categories: The first is creation, and the second is sinners. All creation will be restored.

Have you ever watched the news and there’s a hurricane here, a tornado here, and there’s a tsunami and an earthquake here. Just a few weeks ago we had an earthquake in New York City and people were freaking out, so they think we’re crazy living in California. Well, now New York has earthquakes. The world is under the curse—all creation, even animals—so there’s going to be a restoration or reconciliation of creation. You read about this in Romans 8 where all creation groans and travails, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. That’s when we come back with Christ in His Second Coming, and He reverses the curse and redeems the earth. It’s known as the Millennium or the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth when we’ll actually have heaven on earth, Christ reigning, and all of creation will be in harmony. That’s going to be a great, great time. Amen?

Guess what you won’t have in your backyard in the Millennium? Gophers. I hate to kill those little critters, but I just had one tear up my backyard. Now, the frogs are hiding in the gopher holes back there, which is cool. I’ll live with that.

We’re going to see all of creation reconciled—the lion lies down with the lamb, a child will pick up a poisonous snake and you’ll start to go, “Huh! Put it down! Put it . . . oh, I forgot we’re in the Millennium. It’s cool. You can play with it.” Christ will reconcile all of creation.

Secondly, and this is the focus more of the text, sinners, and that’s why in verse 21 Paul uses the phrase, “And you.” Notice how he makes reconciliation personal, “And you, that were,” that’s your past. We, as sinners, will be reconciled to God. Paul shows us the need for reconciliation with a picture of our sinful past. Look at verse 21 with me. We, “. . . were sometime alienated,”—that means that we were estranged or separated from God. Remember when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden what happened? They ran from God. They hid from God. Adam was hiding, and God said, “Adam, where are you?” By the way, God knew where Adam was. It wasn’t like God said, “Well, I just made him, now I lost him. I don’t know what

happened to him. Where are you at?” He wanted Adam to know he was lost. “Adam, where are you?” “I was afraid and I hid myself.” God had to kill an animal and make a skin to cover their nakedness. That was a prefigure of the cross of Christ—their nakedness would be covered in the blood of Christ so that there could be reconciliation.

Write down Ephesians 4:18 where Paul says, “. . . alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Before we were reconciled, we were alienated from the life of God, we were ignorant, and we were blind. Notice also, verse 21, we were enemies. Again, we don’t like this picture of mankind, but this is what the Bible teaches. So, more than just strangers, we were hostile toward God. Every unregenerated sinner in the world today is in enmity with God. The natural heart and mind of man is at war with God. That’s why God has to come and soften our hearts, convict us, and draw us by His grace to salvation. I don’t believe that He saves us against our will, but I don’t believe regeneration precedes faith, I believe that we must believe in Christ. But we can’t do that but what God convicts us and draws us and by His marvelous grace saves us. We were alienated, we were enemies.

Write down in verse 21, note that, “. . . in your mind,” our minds were against God. Write down Romans 8:7. It says, “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God . . . it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” You may not recognize that, but that’s what the Bible teaches—that we’re enemies.

Thirdly, we had wicked works, verse 21. Our thoughts led to wicked actions. What a picture of sinful mankind, and it’s true of all who are unsaved. But then notice the change, “. . . yet now,”—you—“hath he reconciled.” That statement, “hath he reconciled” is in what’s called the aorist tense which means that it’s a past experience that has a present benefit and carries on into the future. So, we were enemies, but now we are friends. That’s the first point.

Here’s the second facet or truth about reconciliation, it’s the Father’s reconciling purpose. Write it down, verse 22. Look at it with me in your Bible. “In the body of his flesh,” there’s really no break between verses 21 and 22, it’s talking about His incarnation, “through death,”—His crucifixion—“to present you,”—now it goes off into the future—“holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.” What a great verse! You ought to highlight, underline, write “Wow!” on the margin of your Bible. You ought to put a little heart. I put a little heart with an arrow through it. This is one of those really great verses. This is how every reconciled sinner will be presented before God the Father when we get to heaven. “. . . to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight,” that’s like, “Yes! Thank You, Lord!” This is the believer’s future. This is how the Father will present us in heaven. This is true of every Christian. This is how we will be faultless before the throne.

Let’s break it down, verse 22, “. . . holy,” this is salvation’s climax. Now, you’ve heard me say a million times, and here we are again because it’s such a central Bible theme, salvation has three tenses: past, present, and future—I’ve been saved; I’m being saved; I will be saved. Holiness, the same concept as sanctification, has three facets—I am made holy before God

righteously, positionally; I am then made holy practically in sanctification as I walk with God right now, that's progressive; then, I will be made holy perfectly when I stand before the throne of God. There'll be no sin in John Miller, and that's going to be really cool! I don't know about you, but that's my King. I'm kidding, by the way. It's true of every one of us—positionally, holy; practically, progressively holy; and then perfectly.

One of the problems we have is because we're not perfect yet we freak out. "I had an evil thought," or "I did an evil deed," or "My heart wasn't right with God," or "I thought an evil thought," and we think, Oh no! I can't get to heaven now. I'm not going to go to heaven now. You forget that you're positionally in Christ and He's imputed to you His righteousness, and that cannot change. You're growing in grace. Growing in grace isn't going from here straight up, it's growing here, a little stumble and fall; you're growing here, a little problem here, but you grow a little bit more. Overall, you're making progressive progress, but until you die or you're raptured, you'll never be perfect. Do you find that to be true?

When we're raptured or when we lie in the grave, when we're in heaven, we'll be eventually resurrected. We'll have a perfect body, and there'll be no more sin. That's holiness. Then, " . . . unblameable," verse 22. It means without spot. In Ephesians 1:4, "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." That has the idea of our present standing positionally and our future position in heaven or our perfect holiness before God.

Then, " . . . unreprouvable," tells us there is the idea of it means no charge will be brought against us. Write down Romans 8:1. What does it say? "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." That's unreprouvable. Romans 8:33-34, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth," so we will be faultless before the throne. All these are true of all Christians, " . . . holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight." Maybe not in your sight, maybe not your wife's sight, maybe not in your husband's sight or in your friend's sight, but in His sight now we are in Christ. Our future is heaven. This is the believer's death or rapture when we will be righteous before God.

Write down 1 Corinthians 1:7-8, " . . . waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," Paul says, "Who shall also confirm you unto the end . . . blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." That's the Father's reconciling purpose. God saved you for a purpose—to make you more holy here and perfectly holy in heaven, faultless before Him.

Here's the third truth about reconciling, the Father's reconciling proof, 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." Go back to the beginning of verse 23. "If ye continue in the faith." This is what's called a conditional clause of first class. In the English Bible we sometimes assume that it's conveying the idea that God saved you by His grace and that you are righteous in Christ, but if you don't continue to hold onto your faith, to hold onto God, to live a perfect life or live a good, holy life, that you can lose your salvation. It would almost seem to say that in the text, but I

believe 1) it's contrary to the overwhelming, clear teaching of the Bible; and 2) the conditional clause of first class conveys also the idea of "since." Let me give you a peek.

Look at Colossians 3:1. It's used the same way there. Paul says, "If ye then be risen with Christ . . . Set your affection on things above." Paul's not questioning that they are risen with Christ, Paul is saying, "Since you have been," or you are risen with Christ, this is what you should do. That "if" there could be used for if you hang on; but it can also be used, which would be consistent with Colossians and the clear teaching of the New Testament, that it's conveying the idea that hanging on, holding on, continuing, believing will be the evidence—listen to that word clearly, evidence—of your salvation. He's not questioning they will, he's saying it will be evident or manifested or shown that you are true Christians because you will continue, verse 23, " . . . 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," and we're going to finish Colossians 1:23 by going into depth on what it means when Paul says that he's, " . . . made a minister," in preaching the gospel next week.

So, the evidence, verse 23, of true salvation is continuance in the faith, and that is the body of truth which is given to us in Scripture. Notice the three descriptions, " . . . grounded and settled . . . not moved away." Someone said, "Grounded in our minds in the Word of God, settled in our hearts through the strengthening of the Holy Spirit, and not moved away, a matter of our will, that we actually would trust in Christ."

Remember when Jesus told the parable of the wise and foolish builders—one house on the sand, the other house on the rock? What do we want to be? We want to be wise builders, right? Hear His Word and obey. The wise builder heard the Word and obeyed. The unwise builder heard the Word but didn't obey. We need to obey the Word of God. We are not sinless, but we should sin less and less the longer we walk with Christ. That's what it means to be grounded in the Word of God—wise builders, obedient to God's Word.

"Settled" is the strength of the Holy Spirit. God strengthens our heart by His Spirit to walk in the life that pleases Him. The "not moved away," verse 23, write down Ephesians 4:14 where Paul says that we should not be children, " . . . tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," but that we, "may grow up," in Christ. This is the way we want to live our Christian life: grounded, settled, not moved away. We don't want to go back to the old life.

Notice in context, " . . . the hope of the gospel," I love this, verse 23, "which ye have heard, and which was preached . . . whereof I Paul am made a minister." How do we get reconciled to God? We heard the gospel. What is the gospel? Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, Christ was buried, Christ was risen from the dead, right? And, we believed, we were saved, and that's the gospel which was preached. That's why I said next Wednesday night we're going to be looking at Paul's gospel, Christ-preaching ministry, "The Marks Of True Ministry." How do we get saved? By hearing the gospel, by believing, and we want to continue rooted, grounded, settled, and be not moved away.

I love the fact that we preach the gospel, and when he says, “. . . to every creature,” that means that the gospel is for everyone who is lost, “. . . which is under heaven,” and Paul was made a minister of the gospel.

Now, we are, as Christians, called to be ambassadors. That means that we are to tell other people that the peace treaty in the cross has been accomplished. Be reconciled to God. We're all to be ambassadors of Christ preaching, like Paul, the gospel message saying to others, “Be reconciled to God.” We tell people, “You don't have to run from God. You don't have to hide from God. You don't have to worry about God's wrath or judgement, the cross of Christ has made peace. Just turn from your sin and believe in Jesus Christ. Be ye reconciled to God.” Amen? Let's pray.