

“The Preeminence of Christ”
Colossians 1:18-23 [Part 2]

I. DOCTRINE:

CHRIST’S PREEMINENCE DECLARED—Colossians 1

D. Christ’s Preeminence Declared in the Church—v.18-23

- 1. Christ Holds Preeminence in the Church—v.18**
- 2. Christ Has Reconciled the Church to God—v.19-23**
 - a. God’s plenitude is at home in Christ—v.19** “*For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,*”

Last time, we talked about Christ’s fullness as it relates to His deity, and certainly that is an accurate description. However, it seems that the fullness Paul speaks of here is more in relation to the work of Christ in salvation, and specifically, His work of reconciliation. This then becomes the second reason for God to place all His fullness in Christ. We see in Colossians 1:20ff.

- b. God’s placation is in harmony with Christ’s sacrifice—v.20** “*and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*”

Not only was God pleased to fill Christ with all His fullness, but that fullness now becomes the subject of His redemptive work.

This uncovers the remarkable doctrine of **reconciliation**. Reconciliation is one of the outstanding truths concerning the great salvation given to us by God, in Christ. It is one of six key terms used to describe the wealth found in salvation. It’s accompanied by *justification, sanctification, redemption, forgiveness* and *adoption*.

In **justification** the sinner stands before God’s judgment bar guilty and condemned, but is declared righteous by the Judge, and can never be condemned again. (Romans 8:33)

In **sanctification**, the sinner progressively lives out the righteous life of Christ through the Spirit as a result of justification. (1 Corinthians 1:2; Hebrews 10:14)

In **redemption**, the sinner appears before God as a slave who is owned by another master, but is granted freedom by the purchase price of a greater Master. (2 Corinthians 5:18–19)

In **forgiveness** the sinner stands before God as a debtor with an incalculable debt that he could never pay, only to find that his debt is paid in full and forgotten. (Ephesians 1:7)

In adoption, the sinner appears before God as a stranger, and finds he has been made a son. (Ephesians 1:5)

All these blessings are for the one that repents of sin and has faith in Christ. Justification takes place in God's **court room**. Sanctification takes place in God's **theater**. Redemption takes place in God's **slave market**. Forgiveness takes place in God's **heart**. Adoption takes place in God's **living room**. Reconciliation takes place in God's **fellowship hall**.

Why is reconciliation such an important doctrine?

- Reconciliation is important because mankind is at enmity with God.

The whole of natural man's existence is hostility, discord and estrangement to God. This is the description of an enemy. (Romans 5:1-2, 6-10)

But more important than our unholy hatred of God, is God's holy hatred of us.

Everyone is talking these days about offenses.

Someone said:

"We have become so hyper-sensitive, so easily offended, that people actually expect that emotional and intellectual comfort is a basic human right—that you have a right not to be told anything you wouldn't like to hear."

"... all those who are concerned about inequity and injustice. And that is: the just offense that God takes at human sin. Each and every human being has sinned against God. We have belittled His glory. We have esteemed Him but lightly. We have broken His commandments. We have scoffed at His holiness. We have mocked His justice. We have spurned His love. We have distrusted His faithfulness. We have despised His truth. We have treasured false pleasures above Him. 'All we like sheep have gone astray; each one of us has turned to his own way.' And God is offended. And He is justly offended! The offense He takes at sin isn't manufactured by hyper-sensitivity and stupid sentimentality. God is righteously offended by sin."

Now back to verse 10:

- Reconciliation is important because without it we would be forever estranged and separated from God. (Isaiah 59:1–2)

So, reconciliation then becomes a one-way transaction. (Ephesians 2:1–5)

- Reconciliation is important because God took the initiative to reconcile His enemies. (2 Corinthians 5:19)

Paul says we have the ministry of reconciliation given to us by God. That ministry is the proclamation of the gospel, which has the power to resolve and rectify the tremendous gap that exists between God and man. This gap was not just one of distance, but it was one of death.

The **death** Paul refers to is not a figure of speech, as in the parable of the Prodigal Son, “*This my son was dead*”; it is a factual statement of everyone’s spiritual condition outside of Christ.

Paul goes so far in Ephesians 2, as to call us “*aliens*.” (Ephesians 2:12, 19) Now let’s go back to Colossians 1:20 and put this all together. Remember we’re talking about:

- b. God’s placation is in harmony with Christ’s sacrifice—**
v.20 “*and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*”

God is totally satisfied with Christ’s sacrifice for His elect—that’s **propitiation**. Because of that God is no longer angry against His elect because their sins have been taken away—that’s **expiation**. Now in Christ, God is reconciling the world (of believers) to Himself.

Notice in v.20 that Christ is the Sole Agent in reconciliation. “*Through Him*” is emphatic and points to Christ alone as the One who exacts friendship between God and man. The false teachers were saying that angels and other spiritual emanations could bring men closer to God. Paul emphatically states that this is not true. Christ is the only means of a relationship with God that excludes His anger against human sin. (Habakkuk 1:13)

Those who claim God is too loving to condemn people ignore much of the revealed nature of God. God is loving and merciful, but He is equally righteous and holy and cannot ignore sin. Those who teach this one-sided approach to God, sacrifice His righteousness and holiness on the altar of His love and mercy. This is a different god than the God of the Bible. God’s character cannot be bypassed or ignored.

Is it possible that man can somehow please God by his own good works? No, he cannot! The reasons are numerous.

- Man, by *nature*, is *separated* from God (Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:3);
- Man, by his *deeds*, he is *alienated* from God (Colossians 1:21);
- Man, by his *condition*, dead in sin and without life. (Ephesians 2:1-2)
- Man is *incapacitated* and unable to deal with his sin problem (John 1:12-13; 3:3-6; Ephesians 2:1; 4:18-19).

If there is to be reconciliation to God, it must come from God Himself. Reconciliation is not ours not to make, but to take.

The English word “reconcile” or “reconciliation” means, “to cause to be friendly again; to bring back into harmony that which was lost; to make peace.” The Greek words used for this translation are several. For time’s sake, the word Paul uses here is a strengthened and intensified form of the common word. It means, “thoroughly or completely or totally reconciled.” Paul most likely used this stronger term to combat the false teachers who denied that Christ alone was able to bring reconciliation. In using this word, he is saying that the reconciliation that is found in Christ is full and complete and nothing else is needed.

God in Christ is about the business of reconciling “*all things to Himself.*” What exactly does that mean? Well, it certainly doesn’t mean that God is going to pardon everyone, as the Universalist claims.

That’s for next time.

- c. **God’s prospect is to make us holy through Christ’s death—v.21-22**
- d. **God’s precaution is for us to hold firm to faith in Christ—v.23**