

“The Preeminence of Christ” Colossians 1:18-23 [Part 3]

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
 - b. **God’s placcation 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.*”

Last time we began looking at the remarkable doctrine of reconciliation. We saw three reasons why reconciliation is such an important doctrine?

- Reconciliation is important because mankind is at enmity with God.
- Reconciliation is important because without it we would be forever estranged and separated from God.
- Reconciliation is important because God took the initiative to reconcile His enemies.

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. But here, Paul uses a strengthened and intensified form of the common word. It means, “thoroughly or completely or totally reconciled.” Most likely used this stronger term to combat the false teachers who denied that Christ alone was able to bring reconciliation.

You will find the word, “*reconcile*” and its equivalences in many other passages of Scripture, (Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:18-20) but you won’t find this exact word. For example, when Scripture speaks of “*peace with God*” (Rom. 5:1), of Christ as “*our peace*” (Eph. 2:14), and of His work of “*establishing peace*” (Eph. 2:15-17), this is reconciliation.

So, what does it mean as he used it here? It means or includes the following five things:

1. A change from a hostile to a friendly relationship.

2. The friendship is not one that merely reinstates people on speaking terms when previously they weren't even looking at each other. It means a real bringing together again; a true reuniting; a genuine re-connecting that is real.
3. It emphasizes the completeness of the act. It is not a mere patching up of an argument, or a compromise to smooth over a problem.

That means that the hostility that existed has been laid aside and loving, intimate friendship has been truly established.

4. It is a true picture of free grace. It is not that two who had a dispute or quarrel just decided to come together and settle it voluntarily. This word implies that only one of the parties takes up the action to settle the hostility, and that One is from above. The Greek [kata] in the word means “down from,” and that suggests that the action comes down from above.
5. It carries the idea of restoring something that was there before. It really is a transliteration of the Latin from which it is translated. They (humanity) were at one time conciliated and now they are reconciled.

This is seen in the prefix of the word, [apo], it means “back.” It hints at a restoration of something that was lost in the past and now has been retrieved.

All this is found in this one word, “reconcile.”

1) **The Source of reconciliation**—v.20 “*through Him*”

Now as we continue in v.20, notice the words “*through Him.*” They are emphatic and point to Christ alone as the One who restores 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.

If there is to be reconciliation to God, it must come from God Himself, through Christ alone.

2) **Scope of reconciliation**—v.20 “*to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven*”

Notice the next phrase. God in Christ is about the business of reconciling “*to Himself all things.*” What exactly does that mean? Well, it certainly doesn’t mean that God is going to pardon everyone, as the universalist claims. That would violate a cardinal rule of Biblical interpretation, which says, that no passage of Scripture, properly interpreted, will contradict any other passage of Scripture. There are many passages that would contradict universalist views. The clear and emphatic teaching of Scripture is that fallen angels and unregenerate people will spend eternity in hell. Matthew 7:13–14; Revelation 20:11–15; Matthew 25:41, 46

Some say this passage looks forward to the Great White Throne judgment where redeemed and unredeemed alike will acknowledge the sovereignty of Jesus Christ and in that sense, there will be a reconciliation. However, that doesn’t seem to fit the meaning of being reconciled. There is no peace in being separated from God in the Lake of Fire.

However, there will be a final day of reckoning. So, if one wanted to call this being reconciled by way of judgment, then maybe so. (But, it seems that there is a great difference between reconciling an enemy to friendship and sentencing an enemy to punishment.)

It is clear that the benefits of Christ atonement apply only to God’s elect (His chosen) people. All others will have no reconciliation with God.

It seems best, given the context, that “*all things*” refers to redeemed people and the rest of creation that is under the curse of fallen man’s sin. Paul tells in Romans 8:22-23 that the whole of creation groans while it waits for the final event of redemption to become reality. That is the “*redemption of our bodies.*”

It helps to understand the depth of corruption that sin brought into creation. On the sixth day after God had finished His work of creation, Genesis 1:31 says, “*God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. . . .*” However, this good and innocent creation would soon be immersed in sin and corruption which would cause all of creation to fall. That fall damned humanity and the fallen angels. It set in place the 2nd law of thermodynamics which says that all things lose energy and end up in corruption. If God did not intervene, the entire universe would collapse and be totally destroyed. Sin ruined the harmony of the creatures between the creation (the creation is at odds

with the creatures) and the creatures and God. Romans 8:20 says the creation “*was subjected to futility*,” which means that God, Himself subjected it. It wasn’t willingly so, but He put it in that place. “*Futility*” has the idea of “being without success; unable to achieve a goal or a purpose.” The creation as it now exists does not look like or do what God originally intended for it.

There are any number of global and national agencies that exist whose whole purpose is to save the planet. They attempt to restore what is naturally devastated by nature or humanity. However, it is a futile effort, because the earth and universe is continually being devastated by man’s fall. Nothing but the Creator, Himself can turn that back because He’s the One who subjected it in the first place. Decay, disease, pain, death, loss, disaster, pollution and every other kind of evil will not cease to ravage our world until the One who imposed the curse removes it. See: 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1

Because of this corruption the whole of the universe “*groans*” as though suffering the pains of childbirth. Romans 8:22

We live on a cursed earth, floating in a cursed solar system, residing in a cursed galaxy, positioned in a cursed universe. The time is coming (and seems to be speeding up) when the sinfulness of this present age coupled with the influence of Satan will bring some terrifying effects on the earth. They will come by natural calamity and supernatural instrumentality and will peak during the Tribulation. Jesus spoke of these times in Mark 13:19-20.

Immediately after the Tribulation Christ will come in glory and set up His earthly kingdom, at which time the earth will take on many drastic changes that reverse the 2nd law of thermodynamics. (See: Isaiah 6:6-9; 65:25; 24:23; 30:26; 35:1; 60:19-20; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1)

Now we’ve said all of this to show that the “*all things*” in v.20 applies to that which God has planned to redeem from the fall. This includes people and the rest of creation. However, this does not include the fallen angels. Satan and all the fallen angels will be tormented forever in the Lake of Fire. See: Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:41

According to Romans 8:23 the final redemption of our bodies (the new bodies given to us at Christ’s coming) will cause extend redemption to the physical universe. That’s what the creation is anxious to see.

The “*all things, whether on earth or in heaven*” simply speak of the completeness of God’s plan in Christ to reconcile His own, and for the universe.

3) Success of reconciliation—v.20 “*making peace by the blood of his cross.*”

Here we have what the whole world is seeking. Peace. This is the most allusive and desired blessings in all mankind. Everyone wants peace. But, while sin reigns and Satan interferes in human events, there will be no true peace.

True peace for humanity is a relationship with the Living God through Christ’s work of salvation. The companion passage to this is Ephesians 2:14-17.

There is an obvious racial tone in this passage, but what I want you to see is how peace was accomplished. It was “*through the cross.*” All the hostility of God against sin was carried out on Jesus on the cross.

The word and concept of “*peace*” literally pictures the binding together of that which was broken.

Man’s relationship with God had been broken and Christ brought that brokenness together. So, now instead of disruption there’s harmony. Instead of hostility there’s peace. In secular Greek, peace was actually only seen as an interlude between times of war. But when Christ made peace with God for broken mankind, the war between God and man ended.

Paul uses this word as a historical fact that has already taken place. It is a completed action. It speaks of Christ’s crucifixion as an efficacious finished work. John 19:30

So, peace with God is not just the absence of strife. It describes the situation where two things come together, and the absence of friction no longer exists. They were separated. There was friction and now that is removed and the two become one with each other.

Peace conveys the idea of inner rest, wellbeing and harmony. That then, makes peace with God the ultimate state of reconciliation. This is part of the gospel message that we preach. Acts 10:36

Jesus sought to comfort His disciples in John 16:33 with His peace.

People have the idea that peace is some fluffy pillow that one floats through in life and nothing bad can ever happen to you because of it. Peace can be external, but more likely it is an internal state even in the midst of hardship, disappointment, loss and pain.

Adrian Rogers

“Bible peace is not the subtraction of problems from life; it's the addition of power to meet those problems. You don't keep this peace; this peace keeps you. It's peace that passes understanding. You can't get it from a bottle; you can't get it from a syringe; you can't get it from a psychiatrist, or a psychologist, a well-meaning friend or a book; you can't even get it from a principle. You get it from God. Jesus said, "My peace I leave with you" (John 14:27). That's your legacy. It's peace that the world cannot give, and it's peace the world cannot take away.
Find your peace in Him.”

Peace is found in the sacrifice of Jesus as a substitute for sinners. This is found in the blood of Christ's cross. What does that refer to? Next week!

- c. **God's prospect is to make us holy through Christ's death**—v.21-22 “*And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,*”
- d. **God's precaution is for us to hold firm to faith in Christ**—v.23 “*if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.*”