

## Colossians Ch 1 Vs 19-23

The Reconciling Work of Christ

If you're bible lays out anything like mine you'll find a little man made division between vs 18 and 19 with a little sub-heading there which says something like "reconciled to Christ." But as you study the scriptures one thing that's important to keep in the forefront of your minds is that scripture divisions aren't the inspired Word of God. and So though we'll more than likely follow them for the most part, that doesn't necessarily indicate that the break was inserted in a place which accurately divides the context.

Paul has been building a case for Christ, His sufficiency, His deity, the fact that He is the image or the pinpoint, exact manifestation and representation of the invisible God. The bible tells us that Christ is the express image of His person, no one has see God at anytime, but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. Paul has been illustrating and demonstrating the fact that Jesus is before all things and in Him all things consist, Jesus holds everything together. Not only physically but in our lives personally as well, my emotions, my family, my mental and spiritual stability, Jesus holds my life together apart from Him, my life flies apart. He is the Head of the church, the 1<sup>st</sup> born from the dead that in all things He may have the preeminence, or the supremacy. God has given Jesus Christ preeminence in all things; the only question that confronts us all is have we given Christ preeminence in our lives and in our hearts? Is He on the throne of your heart, not just in word, but in reality, does He dictate the details of your life, the music you listen to, the movies you see, the standards of godliness in your home?

We could all surely think of certain people who name the name of Christ, call themselves Christians whom if they didn't tell you that they were believers you'd never know it, it would seem apparent that Jesus doesn't have the preeminence in their lives. But lets not consider them, let's consider ourselves, the bible says that if we would judge ourselves we wouldn't be judged, but too often we're busy looking at the speck in our brother or sister's eye while neglecting the 4x12 in our own. But Paul has been making an airtight case for the supremacy, the sufficiency, the deity and preeminence of Christ.

But now we come to this division in the scriptures, which has a tendency to cause us to assume that now the subject is changing, but in reality Paul is just continuing to hammer the point in, vs 15-20 would be a more accurate understanding of context. Vs 21 sort of picks up the thought that was left off in vs 14 and vs 15-20 are sort of this parenthetical subject matter inserted by the Holy Spirit to demonstrate (in one of the more powerfully profound places in scripture) the fullness of the reality of the person of Christ. Which, in our finite beanies that we call a brain we will never get, how can we comprehend the depth of the fullness of the person of the God-man Jesus Christ?and Yet the scriptures declare the reality of it, and so for context's sake, lets read again beginning in vs 15-20 and we'll begin our comment on vs 19.

## Vs15-20

(Read vs 19) Now, 3 words to take note of in this vs (the given is that the “Him” spoken of here is Jesus, we know that from the vs we studied last week) so we want to take specific note of the words, “all”, “fullness”, and “dwell.” This little word “for” here in the beginning of this vs being the word that connects the content of this vs to vs 18, the fact that Jesus is God, the fact that He is the head of the body, which is the church, the 1<sup>st</sup> born from the dead, that in all things He may have preeminence “for” or “because” it pleased the Father that in Christ Jesus all, the fullness should dwell.

The fullness of what? You recall back in the book of Philippians we ran across this word in ch 2 vs 7 that was translated “made Himself of no reputation”, and it was the Greek word “Kenosis.”

Which literally means, “He emptied Himself” in regards to Him humbling Himself stepping down out of heaven and becoming a man that He might suffer the death of the cross. But you remember we took the time to emphasize and illustrate that at no time did He empty Himself of *deity*. But rather He emptied Himself or laid aside certain aspects of His glory, His Heavenly riches, and His immortality so that He might taste death for you and me. So when Jesus became a man He emptied Himself of certain privileges that were His by right, but at no time did He lay aside His deity, and that’s what this is in reference to, all the fullness of the divine nature of God dwelt in Him, He was fully God and fully man.

One of the reasons that Paul is drilling this point so heavily is because the Gnostic heresy that he was confronting taught that what God actually did was sort of split His divinity into all these various emanations that proceeded forth from Him. (Sort of spreading His deity around through these various spirit beings, Jesus being one of them (who had some deity but He wasn’t God in His fullness)). and Paul is saying quite to the contrary, it pleased the Father that in Christ all the fullness should dwell. God doesn’t divide Himself up with a little deity for you, a little for you, there’s only one God; remember He stretches out the heavens alone, and spreads abroad the earth by Himself. and So Jesus is either God or He isn’t, there is no in between and the scriptures teach emphatically that He is, He was just as much God when He walked among men as He was before the worlds ever were.

This word “fullness” is the Greek word, “pleroma” (play'-ro-mah) which in short means, “the sum total of all the divine power and attributes.” The Vines Greek dictionary defines it as, “God, in the completeness of His Being.” So the fullness of God’s deity, divinity and attributes isn’t spread out in small doses to a group of spirits, but dwells fully in Christ alone. Which brings us to the word “dwell” which means more than simply “to reside,” a late noted Greek expert by the name of Kenneth Wuest points out that this verb indicates that this fullness, “wasn’t something that was added to His being that was not natural to Him, but that it was part of His essential Being, as part of His very constitution, and that permanently.”

Which is to say that God didn't pour Himself into Jesus at some point after His birth or even conception, but that He was as fully God at conception as He was when He said, "Let us make man in our image" or at any point in eternity prior to that. and Paul reinforces this whole fundamental fact in vs 9 of ch 2 where we read, "*For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*"

Since all fullness dwells in Him, even as He holds my life together, He is the One who fills my life as well. The closer I am to Christ the fuller my life is, but on the other hand the farther I pull away from Jesus the emptier I feel inside, you see all of creation centers around Christ, is held together by Christ, points to Christ, and finds it's fulfillment in Christ (Courson).

Some people want to treat their lives like a TV dinner, they compartmentalize everything, they've got their relationship section, the financial/work section, they've got their recreation section, hobby section and their Christian section. Monday through Friday they concentrate on work/finances, in the evenings they focus on relational aspects of their lives, Saturdays it's the recreational and hobbies, things of that nature and then Sunday they concentrate on Church. But ultimately they find themselves frustrated and ineffective because God never intended us to treat our lives like a TV dinner. But rather more like a chicken potpie — all stirred together, so that at work you've invited God to show Himself real through your life and just help you to be diligent and a good witness.

When you're water skiing or running or whatever you're praising God for His creation and the beauty around you; when we're with our families we're not seeking a break *from* service, but rather seeking opportunities to serve *together*. Compartmentalized lives are *frustrated*, lives that have Christ stirred in the mix of them are *fulfilled*. For in Him dwells all the "fullness" of the Godhead bodily and vs 10 of ch 2, "*and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.*" (Vs 19)

Vs20

Now one thing we want to diffuse right off the bat is this heretical philosophy of universalism, which interprets this vs to mean that eventually, *all* things will be reconciled to God. Meaning that even if you refuse to give your life to Christ in this lifetime that eventually you will still make it to heaven after you've "paid your dues" so to speak in hell. There's a principal rule that we need to be careful to observe anytime it comes to interpreting scripture, and that is that any time a passage of scripture is interpreted correctly, it will never violate or contradict any other passage.

The bible is very clear that man is given a window of time in this temporal life by which he decides where it is he will spend eternity. Those who accept Christ will receive an abiding everlasting life whereby they will live forever in the presence of God to worship and adore Him serving as kings and priests unto our God. and God will wipe away every tear, Rev 21 tells us, *“there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”* Then He who sat on the throne said, *“Behold, I make all things new.”* And He said to me, *“Write, for these words are true and faithful.”* But to those who reject Christ in this life will be forever removed from His presence where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, the bible says that people will gnaw their tongues for the pain and worms will infest them and yet never die. Again the book of Rev ch 14 says that, *“the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night.”* The bible says that man is appointed once to die and then after that, the judgment, there are no 2<sup>nd</sup> chances after this life. By Christ God will reconcile all things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, but notice it doesn't say things under the earth. Once you're under the earth, your “fate” so to speak is sealed.

That's why Joshua said, *“choose this day whom you will serve”* whether it be some pagan god or the god of money or sex or drugs or alcohol or whatever, *“But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”* It's just not worth putting off till tomorrow what can seal your eternal well being today. That's why the Lord says, come let us reason together, and though your sins are as scarlet I'll make you white like snow. Because by Christ He can reconcile you to Himself, because He's made peace with God for you by the blood of His cross, what's reconciliation mean? It means the restoration of a right relationship, in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor ch 7 Paul speaks of a busted up marriage being reconciled, the wife being reconciled to her husband. Something has gone wrong and splintered things up or caused things to be out of sync, but reconciliation works restoration to the marriage.

In these next few vs we see Paul's defense regarding the sufficiency of Christ to reconcile man to God and we see at least 3 aspects of this reconciliation, we see the plan, the means, and the point or the aim of reconciliation. Notice that it's man who needs reconciled to God, not God needing to be reconciled to man, we're the one's that busted up, or splintered our relationship with God, God doesn't need the restoration, we do. The moment that Eve partook of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and she gave to Adam and he joined her, that sin severed mankind's relationship with God.

You see it's not that God's ear is heavy that He can't hear us, or that His hand is short so it can't save, it's that our sin has separated us from Him. Before the sin issue is dealt with we can't be reconciled to God because God can't compromise His holiness and righteousness. The moment that that fruit was ingested man (in essence) declared war on God, wanting our own way and not His. That's what the bible teaches, Rom 8:7 *“the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.”*

But aren't you glad that God didn't retaliate by declaring war on us? But instead He initiated reconciliation, He sacrificed an animal (and I just have a suspicion that it was a lamb) and through the shedding of blood He made a covering for Adam and Eve so that they could walk before Him unashamed once again. Pointing to the ultimate culmination of reconciliation through the blood of the cross of Christ through which He would be able to reconcile as many as would come to Him, to Himself. God would deal with the sin issue through Jesus Christ having made peace through the blood of His cross.

From the very beginning, the moment that sin entered the world God has been reaching out to man seeking reconciliation. Man doesn't reach out to God, God always initiates, man hates God, but God loves man. You say why does man hate God, there is no reason, God has been nothing but good to man, but as it is written, "*they hated Me with out a cause.*" and From the very beginning God has sought to restore man's relationship with Himself, and for the last 2,000 yrs plus, He's been reaching out through the cross to mankind that we might be reconciled to Him.

Look at 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor ch 5 Vs17-21

It's God's desire that we be right with Him, restored to Him in Christ and God pleads through Christ, through the cross, and through the redeemed with lost man to be reconciled to Him, but it's only through the blood of Christ, that's the only way that we can have peace with God. and Let me tell ya, reconciliation brings rejoicing to your heart, Rom 5:11 "*but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*"

Vs21 and 1<sup>st</sup> ½ of 22

Notice the relationship between the mind and the works; we've mentioned before that what we believe determines how we behave. Remember Rom 8:7, the carnal "mind" is enmity against God; the bible makes at least 90 references to the mind. and *Attitude* promotes *actions*, the bible says that as believers we've been given the mind of Christ (that's not to say we always walk in the reality of that mindset, but it's been given to us just the same) but prior to Christ our mindset was carnal, fleshly, which resulted in wicked works. That's why repentance is necessary in order to accept Christ, repentance means a change of mind, if my mind is hatred or enmity against Christ, it's necessary to have a change of mind if I'm to receive Christ. But notice again that God's answer to "alienation" is "reconciliation" in the body of His flesh through death. I think it necessary that as long as we're on this subject that we should correlate Eph 2:13-16 let's look at it together.

So God's plan is reconciliation, the means of which is through the body of His flesh having made peace through the blood of His cross; and now in vs 22 we see 3 reasons; the point, or the aim of reconciliation. Remember we mentioned that God can't compromise *His* holiness and so the sin issue has to be dealt with and here Paul gives us 3 ramifications of being in Christ, the sin issue having been dealt with through His blood and the body of His flesh.

Vs 22 last ½

#1 Holiness, #2 blamelessness, and #3 with out or above reproach in His sight, these are the ramifications of reconciliation. Since God can't compromise His holiness, He makes you holy in Christ, and this word "holy" is closely related to the word "sanctified" it speaks of being set apart to God having been separated from sin. 1 Thess 5:23-24 says, "*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.*"

The resulting work of Christ in reconciling you to the Father is your personal holiness before Him, you being covered in His blood and robed in His righteousness. and Blamelessness, which is an interesting word because this is the same word that was used in the Septuagint (which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT) in regards to the animals of sacrifice that were to be with out blemish, or with out blame, with out fault, so that they might be accepted before God.

Now follow me here what do we read in Rom Ch 12 Vs1? "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*" That you might be with out blemish before God to be offered up to Him in whatever manner He should choose that you might prove out His perfect will in your life, and the NT uses this word in regards to the spotless Lamb of God in both Heb 9 and 1<sup>st</sup> Peter ch 1.

So what we're seeing here is that even as Jesus is with out blemish, in fact perfect before the Father, even so in Christ God sees you just the same, reconciliation gives you a blameless character (doesn't that blow your mind?) Now, "above reproach" speaks of being non accusable, that you're even beyond accusation, Rom 8:33, "*Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.*" The bible teaches us that Satan is the accuser of the brethren, accusing the saints before the throne day and night, but none of His charges will stick in Christ.

Apart from Christ, I'm wicked, faulty, and guilty of virtually anything you might accuse me of, if not physically then in my heart, which is the same thing according to the bible. I've

broken every Law of God in my heart and was in need of a savior even from conception; the bible says that I was conceived in sin, which is to say that the sin nature is present even from conception. We don't sin and therefore become a sinner the day we cried and nothing was really wrong making us a liar. We were already sinners by nature and we merely proved that the 1<sup>st</sup> time we cried when nothing was wrong. We were only proving out what the bible already says, that all sin and have fallen short of the glory of God. But the reconciling work of Christ makes me holy, blameless, in fact above reproach in the Father's sight, qualifying me for fellowship with Him.

Vs23

Now there are a couple of takes on this vs and it depends upon your theology, which view you take. If you believe that once you're in Christ you can never fall from grace you would say those who don't remain grounded and steadfast and are moved away were never really believers in the 1<sup>st</sup> place. Because once you're in Christ, you can never be out of Christ, therefore those people may've had some experience with Christ but it wasn't that of salvation. If you believe that it's not so much a matter of *losing* your salvation as it is *leaving* it, then you may see in this vs the balance of God's initiative and human responsibility. Time doesn't allow us the opportunity to develop this fully as it relates to the freewill of man vs the sovereignty of God. But suffice it to say for now that nowhere in scripture does God alleviate man of personal responsibility for His actions regardless of what God may or may not do for you.

To me the very fact that Jesus told His disciples to abide in Him would testify of the fact that He expects us to be responsible regarding the fact that once we're in Christ we need to abide there, which is to say you have a choice in the matter. You can choose to abide in Christ, or not. To me, and I may be accused of over simplifying this in my own mind; but I simply see a balance of faith and works. We know that no "work" that we do will save us, or merit God's favor on our behalf. However one of the byproducts of salvation *is good works*, the good works that God has prepared for us that we should walk in them.

You show me your faith with out your works, and I'll show you my faith by my works. and So Paul is just emphasizing the fact that the only saving gospel is the gospel of Jesus Christ Him being born of a virgin, leading a sinless life, all the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily, Him laying down His life on the altar of the cross for you and for me and shedding His blood for the remission of our sins. He was crucified for our transgressions, and was raised for our justification, if you remain grounded in the truth of the gospel, then your salvation is secure.

If you vacillate from these truths then the fact is you're not grounded and you've moved away from the hope or the assured expectation of the gospel. Galatians is clear, any other gospel is not a gospel at all and the warning is given, *"if we, or an angel from heaven, preach*

*any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*” (Or cast into the deepest depths of the pit of hell), so stand firm in the hope of the gospel and be not moved, for apart from Jesus Christ there is no other name given among men, under heaven, by which we must be saved.

and If you're here this morning and have never named the name of Christ, and today the Lord is speaking to your heart, “Choose this day whom you will serve.” You've heard today the reality of your alienation from God due to the sin in your life, but today it's God's desire to work reconciliation in your life, restoration, to make you whole and complete. and You are complete in Him, and if you'll allow Him, He'll restore your life today and reconcile you to Himself.