

GOD AND CHRIST (PART IV): CHRIST THE RECONCILER OF ALL THINGS COLOSSIANS 01:20–23

Introduction

This passage is one of the great studies of Scripture, the message of reconciliation. Man can now be reconciled to God because of Christ. It is an astounding passage, for it reveals that God has not only reconciled man to Himself, but He has reconciled the whole universe — all of creation — to Himself. And not only this, He has reconciled all things to Himself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.

- I. God has reconciled all things to Himself — through Christ (v. 20).
- II. God has reconciled those who were alienated and were enemies of God — through Christ (vv. 21-22).
- III. God had one great purpose in reconciliation: to present the believer perfect (v. 22).
- IV. God has made reconciliation conditional (v. 23).

I. *Colossians 01:20 Reconciliation through Jesus Christ*

God has reconciled all things to Himself — all creation, both in earth and in heaven. (See *Reconciliation and Peace*, Eph. 2:11-18.) This is one of the great verses of Scripture, but it is a shocker, an eye-opener. It seems to be teaching universal salvation, that is, that everything in heaven and earth has been saved through the blood of Christ. This, of course, could not be what Paul meant, for it is not what the rest of Scripture teaches. Note three significant facts.

- I. There is a great need for peace between God and man. Man is not at peace with God. His soul is restless and disturbed, lonely and empty, without direction and purpose: his soul is as separated from God as it can be. Man's relationship with God can be described in three ways.

- a. Man is not at *peace with God*. Note the word “*with*.” Peace *with* God refers to man's relationship with God. Man does not know God personally; he is not near God nor close to God. He often questions the very existence of God, and even if he believes that God exists, he knows little if anything about talking and sharing with God.

Instead of sensing *peace with God*, he senses separation from God, as though God is out in space someplace, far away from the earth.

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

- b. Man does not experience the *peace of God*. Note the word “*of*”: the peace “*of*” God refers to possessing the peace of God within one's heart and life. As man walks throughout the day taking care of his affairs, his heart is not settled; he lacks peace;
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he knows little if anything of the peace of God. He lacks complete assurance as he faces the circumstances, problems, difficulties, trials and temptations of life.

Phil 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

- c. Man does not experience the *God of peace* dwelling within his heart and flooding his soul. As he walks through life, he does not know what it is to have the presence of God with him; he does not know what it means to have the God of peace helping him face the affairs and trials of daily life.

Phil 4:8-9 *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

The point is this: man has a need, a great need for peace with God. God has met that need by reconciling all men to Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ.

2. There is the means of reconciliation: the blood of the cross. How does the *blood of the cross* reconcile us to God? There are two pictures that show us.
- a. There is the picture of unjust punishment and death. The cross was the place where criminals were executed. This means that Jesus Christ died as an unjust criminal, yet He was not a criminal. He did not deserve to die, for He had broken no law. He was not upon the cross because He deserved to die; He was not there because of His own sins. Therefore, He was bound to be dying for someone else. He was the Just dying for the unjust.

This is very significant. If the Just died for the sins of the unjust, then the unjust is no longer guilty of sin. He is freed from the charge of being a sinner: he is no longer considered unjust; he is considered just. How? By faith. When a person truly believes that the Just Christ died for his unjust sins, God counts it so. God takes the person's faith and *accepts it as his identification with Christ*. Being freed from the charge of sin, the person becomes acceptable to God. The person is reconciled and brought near God by Christ dying for his unjust sins.

1 Pet 3:18 *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

- b. There is the picture of blood or of sacrifice. When the blood of Christ is mentioned, the idea of sacrifice is meant. The blood of Christ is tied to the blood of animal sacrifices in the Old Testament. Down through the centuries God had told man that sin was serious, very serious – a matter worthy of death. It was sin that separated man from God. Therefore, man either had to die for his sins or else someone else who was innocent and without transgression had to be sacrificed for him. That Someone,

of course, had to be God Himself, for no one else is innocent and perfect. But it was not yet time for God to come to earth in the person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; the fullness of time had not yet come. Man had not yet learned the awfulness of sin and the great price that God would be paying in sacrificing His Son for man.

Animal sacrifice was one of the ways God was going to teach these truths to man. A man was to believe that the animal was sacrificed for him. If he truly believed, then God accepted the animal sacrifice as bearing his sins. This, of course, meant the man was freed from the charge of sin. He was thereby reconciled and made acceptable to God by the blood that was shed.

The point is this: the shed blood of Christ is the supreme sacrifice. The perfect blood of God's own Son has now been sacrificed for man's sins. Therefore, the sacrifices of animals find their fulfilment in Christ. If a man believes that the blood of Christ (His life) was sacrificed for his sins, then God accepts his faith as the fact. God credits the believer's faith as the death of Christ. The believer is identified with the death of Christ, as having already died. Therefore, he never again has to die. He is reconciled and brought near God by the blood or sacrifice of Christ.

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

- c. There is the picture of the cross or of being cursed. The death of Christ on the cross is always the picture of a curse:

Gal 3:13 "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

The curse, of course, is death. Everyone who ever hung on the cross was doomed to die as a criminal. However, the picture goes much deeper than physical death. Spiritual and eternal death are also meant. Man is doomed to spiritual and eternal death and there is no escape other than Christ. When Christ hung on the cross, He bore the curse of condemnation, punishment and death for man. The man who truly believes that Christ bore his curse and condemnation becomes acceptable to God. Very simply, God loves His Son so much that He will accept any person who honours His Son through genuine trust and belief. If a person believes that his sins are forgiven through the cross of Christ, then God will forgive his sins. God loves His Son that much. He will make His Son's death effective for whatever a man believes. Therefore, if a person believes that the blood of Christ reconciles him to God, God will reconcile him. God will honour His Son by doing it; God will allow the person of true faith to draw near Him.

Rom 5:8-9 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

3. There is the result of the death of Christ. All things are reconciled to God, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. As stated earlier, this does not mean

universal salvation. Scripture does not teach that every person shall be reconciled to God. Common sense and looking around with a dose of honesty tell us this. The next verse and point make it clear that only true believers are reconciled to God. The height of injustice would be for the unjust to be accepted by God. If the unjust continues to deny and curse God and to act selfishly toward his neighbour, God would not be God if He accepted the unjust. What this verse means is this:

- a. God has reconciled all things in earth: both man and his world have been reconciled to God. The door of reconciliation with God is now open, and man is to enter and live with God forever. God has done all He can: He has made it possible for man to draw near Him through reconciliation. It is up to man to draw near. God has done His part; man must now do his part. Man must now turn to God through faith in the blood of Christ.

Note another point as well. The reconciliation of “all things” includes all of creation, the world itself. The earth was created for man, to be his place of residence; therefore, creation shall be redeemed even as man shall be redeemed. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth even as there shall be a new man that lives eternally.

***Rom 8:21-23** That the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

***2 Pet 3:10-13** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

- b. God has reconciled all things in heaven: by heaven is probably meant all the worlds of all dimensions. All worlds, all dimensions of being, have been reconciled to God by Christ. No matter what dimensions there are — even if there is only one other dimension, the spiritual dimension — every being in it has been reconciled to God through the death of Christ. The death of Christ is so great and wonderful, it embraces all worlds, no matter what or where they are.

Note: the idea of the verse is looking ahead — looking ahead to the life that will exist in the new heavens and earth. The life of the future will be a life of reconciliation with God, a life that will see everything in the new heavens and earth reconciled to God. This does not mean that murderers, adulterers, idolaters and the host of other unbelievers will be there. It means that everyone who is there will be reconciled to God.

2 Cor 5:18-19 *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

Eph 2:16 *And in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

Col 1:20 *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

Heb 2:17 *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.*

II. **Colossians 01:21–22** *Reconciliation of Enemies of God*

God has reconciled those who were alienated and were enemies of God. This verse shows that Paul was not thinking about universal salvation. He is addressing believers, those who truly believe that the blood of Jesus Christ has reconciled them to God. He wants them to remember how wonderful reconciliation is. God had done a marvellous thing for them.

1. Believers had been *alienated* (apellotriomenous) from God. The word means estranged, alienated and separated because of dislike; it means to be unattached because of indifferent and unfriendly feelings. Man is alienated from God...

- because he dislikes who God is. Man is unwilling to submit to the sovereignty of God and to the Lordship of Christ.
- because he dislikes what God says, and he refuses to give up all he is and has and to obey God fully.
- because he feels God will overlook his sin. Man just feels that God would never condemn him, not in the final analysis.
- Because he thinks God is far away, mostly removed from the world and the affairs of daily life. Man thinks God is unconcerned and that He has little interest in day to day living.

2. Believers had been *enemies* (exthrous) of God. The word means hostile, hateful, and rebellious. Just think for a moment: think about how men act toward God. They...

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| • ignore Him | • deny Him, His very existence | • curse Him |
| • blaspheme Him | • disobey Him | • mock Him |
| • falsely profess Him | • half-heartedly serve Him | • neglect Him |

Note where rebellion takes place: in the mind and in the thoughts. A man thinks about doing something and he knows it is against God's will and Word. But the thought is

planted in his mind, and he harbours the thought. It is the thought, the mind that leads to wicked works. And any behaviour or act that is not in accordance with God's will is rebellion. When the human heart is aroused to disobey God, it acts against God. And acting against the King of kings is insurrection. It is going contrary to the *explicit orders* of the King of kings. The terrible tragedy is that every person has rebelled and too often does rebel against God. Every human being has stood or is standing upon the earth as an enemy of God, an enemy who is in open defiance against God. Every human being has refused to obey the commandments of the King, and every human being who is open and honest knows it. The great task of man...

- is not to disprove the charge that he is an enemy of God
- is not to prove that he is good enough to be acceptable to God
- is not to deny and disprove God (denial and disproof can never eliminate truth and fact)

The fact of man's alienation — that he is an enemy of God — is clearly seen. The great task of man is to seek how to be reconciled to God.

3. Believers have been reconciled to God by the body of Jesus Christ *through death*. Note the unique wording of this statement (v. 22^a). The body of Jesus Christ is being stressed. He came to earth in the body of a human being. He actually partook of flesh and blood. He had to — it was necessary.
 - a. Jesus Christ had to have a real body so that He could secure perfection for the human body. He had to live a perfect and righteous life; He had to live a sinless life as a Man. By living a perfect and sinless life, He became the Ideal and Perfect Pattern of righteousness for all men. He stood before the human race as the Ideal and perfect Man, and as the Ideal and Perfect Man, His perfection and righteousness could stand for all men. All men who really trust Him are covered by His perfection and righteousness. Thereby they become acceptable to God.
 - b. Jesus Christ had to have a real body so that He could bear the sins and condemnation of men and die for man. As the Ideal and Perfect Man, whatever Jesus Christ did, it could stand and cover man. Therefore, if Jesus Christ was willing to bear the condemnation of sin for men, He could. This is the great love of God, for Jesus Christ was willing to die for man. When a man really believes that Christ died for him, God takes the man's faith and counts it as his death. Therefore, the man never has to die. When he passes from this life into the next, he will never taste or experience death. Quicker than the blink of an eye God will transfer the believer into His presence. Why? Because the death of Jesus Christ covers him. Jesus Christ has already paid the penalty and suffered the condemnation of the believer's sin. The believer is freed from sin; he is reconciled to God by the death of the body of Christ.

John 10:11 *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."*

Rom 5:6 *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.*

Rom 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Gal 1:4 *Who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*

Eph 5:2 *And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Rev 1:5 *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.*

III. Colossians 01:22 The Purpose of Reconciliation

God had one great purpose in reconciliation — to present the believer perfect before Him. A great day of coronation is coming, a day when every believer will be presented to God face to face. What a moment! Being ushered into the presence of God and presented to Him. The excitement, awe, reverence and ecstasy of the moment will be beyond imagination. This is the reason for the death of Christ. Three things are essential for us to be allowed to stand before God.

1. We must be *holy* (hagios): separated, set apart and consecrated to God.
=> We must live lives that are set apart to Christ, to the belief that He died for our reconciliation and that His death covers us.
=> We must live lives that are separated from worldliness and selfishness and from the flesh (sinful nature) and its sinful acts.
=> We must live lives that are set apart and consecrated to God and His service, lives that live for His cause.
2. We must also be *without blemish* (amomous): without spot, faultless, blameless, without any defect whatsoever.
3. We must also be *free from accusation* (anegkle-tous): beyond reproach, blameless, unchargeable. Imagine standing before God holy, blameless, and beyond reproach. Imagine how pleased God would be! How He would joy and rejoice in us — that we had honoured Christ, His only Son, by trusting Him so much! As we are presented to God, what would He say? What would His first words be to us? We would be speechless, no doubt. But what a day of coronation, of glory, of greatness — standing face to face with our Father. The God of all glory, the Sovereign Majesty of the whole universe.

This is God's one great purpose in reconciliation: to present us perfect before Him.

1 Th 3:12-13 *May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.*

1 Th 5:23 *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Pet 3:14 *So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.*

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

2 Cor 11:2 *I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.*

Eph 4:13 *Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

Eph 5:27 *And to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

Col 1:28 *We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.*

IV. Colossians 01:23 Reconciliation is Conditional

God has made reconciliation conditional. There are two conditions.

1. A person must *continue* to believe in Jesus Christ and to grow in his belief. He must become more and more grounded and settled in his belief in Christ.

=> The word *continue* (epimenete) means to continue and then some (A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 483); to persist ever moving on; to stay with moving forward more and more.

=> The word *established* (tethemeliomenoi) means to be grounded in Christ like the firm, solid foundation of a building. This is the word that pictures the foundation of a building, the solid foundation that gives the greatest stability possible to a building. The believer must be so established and grounded in Christ that he can withstand the severest storms of life.

=> The word *firm* (hedraioi) means steadfast. The believer must actually stand firm and continue on in being steadfast if he wishes to be presented perfect before God.

2. A person must not be moved away from the hope of the gospel. What is it that would move a person away from the gospel?

- worldliness
- friends
- lust
- persecution
- greed
- job
- comfort
- false teaching
- pride
- power
- fame
- family

What is the hope of the gospel? The glory of God: that we might be reconciled to God and presented perfect before Him — that we might be given the wonderful privilege of living forever with Him, worshipping and serving Him throughout the universe — all to the glory of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thought 1. It is not enough to profess Christ. A person must live for Christ. A person who professes Christ and does not live for Christ is living a lie. A person has to continue in the faith and grow to such a degree that he will never be moved away. If he moves away from Christ and stays moved away, he will never be presented to God as perfect. He will have denied the faith. Continuing on with Christ is an absolute essential. It is the one condition for reconciliation with God.

1 Cor 15:58 *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.*

Gal 5:1 *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

Eph 4:14 *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.*

Phil 1:27 *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.*

1 Pet 5:8-9 *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

2 Pet 3:17 *Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.*

Josh 23:8 *But you are to hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have until now. ■*