

CHRIST VS. MAN'S IDEA OF SIN, THE LAW AND EVIL SPIRITS COLOSSIANS 02: 13–15

Introduction

This passage discusses three basic concepts or ideas about man and his world. It pits man's concepts against God's work in Christ. It shows how weak man's ideas are in comparison to what God has done for man in Christ.

- I. Point 1: Christ vs. man's idea of sin and death (v. 13).
- II. Point 2: Christ vs. man's idea of the law (v. 14).
- III. Point 3: Christ vs. man's idea of evil forces and evil spirits (v.15).

I. *Colossians 02:13 Christ vs. Man's View of Sin and Death*

Point one concerns Christ vs. man's concept of sin and death.

1. Man's concept of sin and death is far different from what the Bible teaches. When man thinks of sin, he does not see it as a violation of God's law nor as rebellion against God. Man sees sin as...

- a human error
- a personal slip
- a moral flaw
- a physical failure
- an unpreventable error
- psychological immaturity
- philosophical misunderstanding
- an evaluating mistake
- semantic mislabelling
- social irresponsibility
- educational shortcoming
- character defect

Just what a person calls sin depends upon where he is standing — upon his environment, training, heritage and beliefs. Few persons are willing to submit to God and confess that sin is basically a violation of God's law or will, rebellion and insurrection against Him and the way He has told man to live.

Man's view of death also varies according to a person's background and beliefs. Man's concepts and views of death differ as much from the Biblical concept as night differs from day. When men look at death, they think of it as...

- ceasing to exist
 - passing into oblivion
 - some semi-conscious, sleepy-eyed existence
 - reincarnation into another form of life on earth
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- moving on into another world and being given another chance to work one's way into heaven, that is, into being acceptable to God

Man's idea of death involves either the denial of a life hereafter or else the giving of another chance to work oneself into the favour of God.

Note the critical point: man's idea of conquering death *is man-centred*. *It focuses upon man's ability...*

- to deny a life hereafter and hope that his denial causes life hereafter not to exist
- to work his way into heaven — into God's acceptance when God gives him another chance

Man's concept of sin and death is based upon man — his ability, energy and power to make himself acceptable to God. The point is this: there were those in the Colossian church who were teaching that a person secured the approval of God by their own efforts and work: they had to be circumcised, to undergo the basic religious ritual in order to be acceptable to God. They had to trust God plus be circumcised. They believed in the Biblical concept of sin and death, and they believed in Christ. But they added the religious ritual of circumcision to Christ.

Thought 1. This proclaims a forceful point to us: it is not enough to be biblically sound if we fail to approach God exactly as He says. It is not enough to say that we do not take anything away from God's Word; we must not add to God's Word. Men sin and men die, and there is a hereafter; but God is love, and He has provided the way for men to become acceptable to Him and given the right to live in the hereafter. It is absolutely critical that we pursue the way He has provided and that we pursue it exactly as He says.

2. Christ stands opposed to man's idea of sin and death. Jesus Christ would have never come into the world if sin and eternal death were not realities. If there was not life hereafter — if sin and death were not keeping men out of life hereafter — Jesus Christ would have never come to earth. God would have never sent His Son into the world to die for man's sins and to conquer death if sin and death were not realities. Let no person ever fool himself: God would have never let Christ hang upon the cross unless men were sinners and doomed to eternal death. Note two points.
 - a. This verse says: "You, were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature (flesh)." Man is said to be already dead because of sin and because he is uncircumcised; that is, sin has not been cut out of his flesh (sinful nature) by God. (See note, Col 2:12.) The emphasis is upon death — the fact that man is *already dead*. True, man is what he calls living, yet he is in the process of death. He is aging, deteriorating, decaying and dying at every given moment. There is not a moment man is not in the grip of death: even from the moment of conception man begins the process of dying; and while he is growing and maturing, he is still in the process

of death. He is living in what may be called a *world of death, a realm of death, a dimension of death*. Every hour that passes sees man age, deteriorate and die one more hour. (See notes, Heb 9:27. See notes, Rom 5:12-21.)

John 5:24 *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.*

Eph 2:1 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,*

1 Pet 1:23 *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

Isa 53:6 *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Luke 15:6 *And goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.'*

Luke 15:9 *And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.'*

Luke 19:10 *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."*

1 Pet 2:24-25 *"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Rom 8:6 *The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace*

James 1:15 *Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

Rev 21:8 *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*

- b. God makes the believer alive with Christ. The word alive (sunezoopoiesen) means to make alive, to bring to life. The believer is brought to life *from the dead*. How? By being "with Christ."

What does this mean, to be "with Christ"? Simply this: when we trust Christ — really trust Him — God takes our trust and identifies us with Him. God places us *together*

with Christ. This means a most wonderful thing: it means that we were with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Therefore, when Christ died for our sins, we died with Him. God identifies us with Him, therefore, we never have to die for our sins. The penalty for our sins has already been paid; Christ paid for them. Christ bore the guilt, judgment, condemnation and punishment for our sins. Consequently, we are *forgiven all our sins*.

Thought 1. This is the true concept of sin and death, the only conceivable way we can ever be forgiven and delivered from death. Honest thought tells us this, for there is nothing else that can deliver man from sin and death...

- no person
- no science
- no force
- no energy
- no ability
- no physical thing
- no material substance

No matter how long or how much we search, nothing will ever be discovered that can give eternal life to man. We may discover ways to extend life and make it more comfortable, for long, long ago men did live to be hundreds and hundreds of years old. The Bible tells us this. But men will never conquer death completely and perfectly. Life eternal — the approval and acceptance of God — comes only through the life-giving power of Jesus Christ.

John 3:3 *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

John 5:21 *For just as the Father raises the dead [spiritually dead] and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.*

John 6:63 *The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.*

Rom 8:11 *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

Eph 2:1 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.*

Eph 2:4-5 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.*

Eph 4:22-23 *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds;*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

II. *Colossians 02:14 Christ vs. Man's Concept of the Law*

Point two concerns Christ vs. man's concept of the law.

1. Man's concept of the law is twofold.

=> Some men see the law as a list of rules that God has led great religious men to write down in either the Bible or other religious books.

=> Other men see the laws of God as unwritten laws that are rooted in the nature of man and the world. Man just instinctively senses what is right and wrong and he is to live as his instinct tells him (see Rom 2:14-15).

Man just senses the handwriting of laws against him — laws that condemn him when he goes contrary to what they say or what he senses. Note the word *written* (cheirographon). It actually means a legal note or debt, what Barclay calls a charge list or a list of charges against man (*The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians*, p. 170). The point is this: man senses the list of charges against him. And he should sense the wrong he has done, for it is his violation of God's law that condemns him to eternal death. Only as he senses and acknowledges his transgressions will he ever turn to God to save him.

Thought 1. Think how many people are defeated, discouraged and whipped by the guilt of their transgressions. How many are bowed down ever so low and depressed, feeling unworthy and unacceptable before God. How many are crushed because they feel they have just failed God so much. No matter how much they have tried to keep the law — to do good — they have failed. Therefore, God would never accept them, or so they feel.

2. Christ stands opposed to man's idea of the law. It is true, man shall face God *in his own righteousness* and be judged by the law. If that is the way he chooses to face God, he will be allowed to stand before God in his own righteousness. Man can claim a *righteousness by law*. In fact, there are only two ways to face God, and law or self-righteousness is one of the ways. But note: no person can ever be acceptable to a *perfect*, sinless God unless the person is perfect and sinless. And no honest and thinking person is going to claim to be perfect and sinless. Therefore, no person will ever be acceptable to God by law or self-righteousness. However, this is the glorious message of this verse. God has provided a way for the law and the list of charges against us to be removed. That way is Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ has taken the law or list of charges against us and nailed them to His cross. This means two things.

a. Christ "took it [the law] away" for man. How? Christ kept and fulfilled the law perfectly. He lived a sinless life as a Man upon earth. By so doing He became the

standard or the higher law for man. Man is now to look to Jesus Christ and follow Him as the standard of life. The law is set aside out of the way. Christ has now fulfilled the law and become the standard for men. (See *Law*, Mt. 5:17.)

- b. Christ “nailed the law to the cross.” That is, Christ bore the judgment and punishment passed down by the law upon man. Christ took the judgment of the law upon man and paid the penalty Himself. How was He able to do this? By keeping the law perfectly. In obeying the law perfectly Christ became the Pattern and Ideal for all men. As the Ideal Man, He embraced and covered all men. It is His righteousness that is the *ideal righteousness*, therefore, His righteousness covers all men. It is His death that is the *ideal death* or the ideal bearing of judgment; therefore, His death covers all men. It is His life that is the *ideal life*, therefore, His life covers all men. (See note, Mt. 5-17-18)

When a person trusts Jesus Christ as his Saviour, God removes the list of charges against the person. How? By Christ — by the cross of Christ. When Christ died upon the cross, He actually bore the guilt and condemnation of the charges for the person. Therefore, the person stands guiltless and sinless before God — all because Christ took the list of the charges and nailed them to the cross with Him when He died.

Mat 5:17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.”

Rom 8:3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man.

Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”

Gal 4:4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,

Gal 4:5 To redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

III. Colossians 02:15 Christ vs. Man's Concept of Evil Forces and Evil Spirits

Point three concerns man's concept of Christ vs. evil spirits.

Man's idea of the universe is that all kinds of forces exist within the universe.

=> Some persons view the forces as natural energies and powers within the universe such as gravity.

=> Other persons view the forces as living beings such as angels, among which some are good and some are bad.

Men have always recognized forces, energies, powers or principalities within the universe. Men either see natural forces or supernatural spirits behind the stars and planets and life within the universe — either natural forces or supernatural spirits that control the lives and destinies of both man and his world. Just think of the millions down through the centuries who have looked to the signs or spirits of the planets or stars in astrology and the signs of the zodiac.

The point to see is this: the Bible declares without hesitation or equivocation that there are other forces within the universe. In fact, the Bible teaches that there is at least one other world in another dimension of being — another dimension other than the physical dimension. That world is the spiritual dimension of being. And there are living beings in that dimension, both good and bad, just as there are good and bad beings or men in this world.

The glorious declaration of this verse (v. 15) is that Christ has disarmed the powers and authorities, no matter who they are or what their force or energy is. The word disarmed (apekdusamenos) means to disarm and strip the evil forces of all their power.

Barclay describes the scene well:

[The evil forces] were hostile, malicious, malignant to men. Jesus conquered them for ever. He stripped them: the word that is used is the word for stripping the weapons and the armour from a defeated foe. Once and for all Jesus broke their power. He put them to open shame and led them captive in His triumphant train. The picture is the picture of the triumph of a Roman general. When a Roman general had won a really notable triumph, he was allowed to march his victorious armies through the streets of Rome, and behind him there followed the wretched company of the kings and the leaders and the peoples he had vanquished and conquered. They were openly branded as his victims and his spoils. Paul thinks of Jesus as a triumphant conqueror, enjoying a kind of cosmic triumph; and in His triumphal procession are the powers of evil, beaten for ever, for every one to see (The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, p. 172).

Wuest gives an additional picture of the scene:

Our Lord, after His death on the Cross, needed to present Himself at the heavenly Mercy Seat...as the great High Priest, thus completing the atonement....In order to do this, our Lord had to pass through the kingdoms stripping them off and away from Himself...displayed them boldly...leading them in triumph in it (Ephesians and Colossians, Vol. 1, p. 209).

The point of this verse is to declare that Christ has defeated Satan and his evil spirits — all the forces and energies, powers and authorities of the universe. Christ has triumphed over Satan and his evil forces, broken their power and destroyed their works. Christ has triumphed over evil by four acts.

1. He conquered evil spirits and forces by never giving in to the devil's temptations (Mt. 4:1-11) and by never sinning (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet .1:19; 2:22). Christ lived a perfect life; he was perfectly righteous. Therefore, He became the Perfect Man, the Ideal Man (see note, Mt. 8:20), the Ideal Righteousness...
 - whom all men are to trust
 - whom all men are to follow
 - whom all men are to use as the pattern for their lives

Satan was defeated in that an Ideal Righteousness was now provided for man. Man could now become acceptable to God by putting on the righteousness of Christ *through faith* (2 Cor 5:21; Eph 4:23-24. See *Justification*, Rom 4:22; note, Rom 5:1.)

2. He conquered evil spirits and forces by dying *for man*, bearing all of man's guilt and punishment for sin. In behalf of man, Christ took all of man's sins upon Himself and bore the judgment of God against sin. He is the *Ideal Man*, so His death becomes the *Ideal Death*. Just as His *Ideal Righteousness* stands for and covers every man, so His *Ideal Death* stands for and covers every man. Thus, the penalty and punishment for sins has now been paid. Man no longer has to die and be separated from God (see *Death*, Heb 9:27). The way to live forever in the presence of God is now open. Satan's power is broken and destroyed.

Heb 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

John 12:31-33 *“Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. (See Jn. 14:30, esp. v. 28-31, 16:11)*

Col 1:13-14 *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

3. He conquered evil spirits and forces by being raised from the dead. Again, as the *Ideal Man*, Christ's resurrection becomes the *Ideal Resurrection*. His resurrection stands for and covers every man. Note two facts.
 - a. It was the *perfect spirit of holiness* (perfect righteousness) that raised Christ from the dead. Death could not hold perfection, for death is the result of sin. Christ, being perfect, was bound to arise.
 - b. When Christ arose, He triumphed over Satan, openly showing that death is the work of Satan. Death is not to be the natural experience of man. Death was never the purpose of God; life is the purpose of God. The resurrection of Christ openly shows this.

Col 2:12, 15 *Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

4. He conquered evil spirits and forces by His Incarnation, that is, by coming into the world and being revealed as the Son of God. Think about it: the fact that the Son of God came into the world destroys the works of the devil. As soon as the Son of God appeared on the scene, His coming meant that the works of the devil were to be destroyed.

1 John 3:8 *He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

John 3:16-17 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (see Jn. 3:18-21) ■*