

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Work of Christ Colossians 1:19-23

We're in Colossians chapter one, so if you turn there we're going to be looking at what the resurrection can do. The resurrection is like a jewel that you can turn in different ways and you can see different things, glimpses. And we are going to look at a particularly important, critical thing about the resurrection, that it produced reconciliation. We have moved from the beginning of Colossians with spiritual growth and Paul's prayer for spiritual growth, to the person of Christ, who He is, He is the creator, God. And as the creator God, He desired to reconcile us. And we are going to look at that this morning. I will read Colossians 1:19-23.

¹⁹ For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him; ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth, or things in heaven. ²¹ And although you were formally alienated hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, ²² yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach: ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven; and of which I Paul was made a minister."

So we'll be looking at reconciliation. Now as you think of reconciliation you see many people around us who are not very reconciled these days. What people can you think of mostly that are unreconciled? Who are the most unreconciled people on the face of the earth? It seems to me to be in the Middle East, the Jewish people and their neighbors around them and most notably the Palestinians.

It's been this way for quite some time. Even the modern era here from 1917 with the Balfour Declaration of Britain to bring the Jews, in concept at least, to have a homeland in the state of Palestine. We can see they've had one problem after the next with the people around them.

It didn't take very long, when they began to move into the land. In August of 1929 there were hundreds of Palestinians and Jews killed in conflict with one another and it has just continued on. There was a war in 1948, there was a war in 1956, there was a war in 1967, there was a war in 1973, there was basically a war in 1982 and between 1987 and 1991 there was what we see today, a civilian conflict, uprising and blood shed. And in between all of that there were peace negotiations, meetings and Nobel Peace Prizes and all of this stuff, it has ended up right where we are today, where you can hardly turn on the news without seeing it. In fact, this weekend there were five more people killed and 45 people wounded and it just goes on and on. So it doesn't seem like as the President and the Prime Minister of England try to put a road map for peace that there is much hope. I'd say that the odds are against them in this.

But as dim as we might think that situation is, it was far dimmer with the relationship between God and man. Because God is holy and man is evil and a holy God cannot covet a relationship with an evil man. Isaiah 59:2 says that God has hidden His face from us and has turned away from us because of our iniquities. Our iniquities have turned Him away because He cannot have a relationship with sin. And so He need to solve the sin problem. We are alienated we are unreconciled, we are at war with God because our plan, our agenda is diametrically opposed to His

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

desires and there can be no fellowship between dark and light, between evil and good. That's in 2 Corinthians 6. So we have a desperate situation. How is this desperate situation going to be solved? How can this be reconciled? Well we're going to talk about that this morning.

The reconciliation has been arranged for us

The Plan of Reconciliation. Reconciliation has been arranged for us by God. And that's the first two verses of Colossians 1:19-20, **¹⁹ For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in him; ²⁰ and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross;"**

So there is a plan that God has established to arrange reconciliation for us and that's what we find it in verses 19 and 20, this plan. This plan encompassed different people.

First was the Father's role in this plan. It was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him. That's Christ. The Father's role as planned is that He was the initiator of the plan. **The Father initiated the plan.** He came up with the plan and He was pleased by the plan. It was His good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Christ. So it was a good plan, and the more we can recognize this as a good plan and enjoy it, the more we will be able to respond to the plan, as we should.

So the Father initiated the plan, He sent His son, the next person in the plan, Christ. **Christ had a role in the plan** and Christ's role in the plan was that the Son implemented the plan. The Father established and initiated the plan but He established it through Christ, His only begotten Son. It was His good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself.

This word "fullness" in verse 19 is actually debated, but I think it means (from Colossians 2:9) all the fullness indeed dwells in Him in bodily form in Christ. The fullness of God is dwelling in Christ and that fullness allows Him to implement a plan of reconciliation, to reconcile man with God.

This plan was accomplished by making peace through the blood of the cross. That was the reason Christ died and rose again, to bring peace, to bring us together with God. To be forgiven of our sins so that we can be cleansed and have a peaceful relationship. Apart from having our sin problem taken care of and forgiven we are at enmity with Christ. That was Christ's role in the plan, to die for our sin so that we can have peace.

What's our role in the plan? Our role in the plan is simply this.... We have no role in this plan. Our role in this plan is completely passive. It was the Father who initiated it and the Son that implemented it but we are simply the recipients of it. Everybody that's doing something is not us. The Father and the Son established and implemented the plan, we are simply the passive recipients of the plan. Through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself. Now that's the plan of reconciliation.

Here's the Span of Reconciliation. The span of reconciliation is broad and deep.

First, let's look at **the depth of reconciliation. The compound preposition for "reconcile" (APOKATALLAXAI) intensifies the word and has the meaning of restoration back to a state that once existed.**

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The depth of reconciliation comes from the word for reconcile. It's an intensified word; it's a compound preposition. There's been a word put in front of the word reconcile to intensify it and meaning it's a major reconciliation. The restoration, may have a concept of restoration back to what God originally intended and that is complete peace and harmony to exist and without sin, strife and resistance. It's like major reconciliation, it is deep and it is broad.

This reconciliation has breadth to it. The breadth of this reconciliation can be seen in a phrase, "through Him to reconcile all things to Himself." So as we consider that reconciliation, in what sense does Christ reconcile all things to Himself? Well I think we have to consider who is doing the reconciliation before we can see all things are being reconciled. Because God in Christ, the Creator, the only one that has the power to bring about reconciliation of everything because He is the creator of everything.

The man of reconciliation. Jesus Christ accomplished the reconciliation of all things on the cross. Let's look at this. **First, Christ death made peace of all believers.** And that is something the passage is directly pointing to. That is something most will think of when they think of reconciliation because this is the most meaningful reconciliation there is. Christ death made peace for all believers. We are not at enmity with Christ anymore, we are now at peace and have a friendship relationship. Which is why we can sing the song Redeemer, Savior, Friend. We're called friends of God. So it's a wonderful place to be as a believer having peace, no longer at war. Romans 5:1 God has made peace for us. But there is more than that.

Christ then made peace for the creation; it's part of the "all things." Romans 8:19-22 references that creation is longing for the redemption, for restoration. Even the world itself is suffering from the stain of sin and all of creation is longing for the restoration that's coming. And we see that alluded to in the Old Testament in terms of the kingdom that is specifically spoken about in Romans 8.

So we can see restoration and reconciliation extending to all creation, even Christ's death making peace for even unbelievers. Now you can wonder, "in what sense do unbelievers have reconciliation?" Some people will try to go so far as to say everyone goes to heaven, that sort of thing, that is obviously not taught in Scripture. But what does it mean then by saying reconcile with all things.

I think it is in this sense. Remember back to the difficulty in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Jews. Well, how do we solve this? What would be your role model for peace? Well, I can think of a couple of ideas, here is one of them. One idea is if we move one group of people to Mongolia and the other group of people to Bolivia and we put them on opposite sides of the earth so they no longer have any contact with one another. Then we can say there's peace, they are no longer at war with each other. Well, unfortunately, they are not going to go for that because they both want to be in the same place, so that's unfortunate but this is in the sense that Christ death makes peace with unbelievers.

When we think of the judgment of God, the judgment of God coming to people is well described in one place (and other places) but I want to bring you one place: 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9. I will read it for you. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 describes what the judgment is for people that do not know Christ.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

They do not have their sins forgiven. ⁸ **dealing out retribution to those who do not know God, and to them that do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus: ⁹ and these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power."**

So that's the penalty of suffering for sin, we are separated from God and we are away from the presence of God. God's presence now is really encompassing all living people. They are benefiting from enjoying something of the presence of God and one day if they do not yield themselves to God then they will be separated, apart from His presence and that is eternal destruction. That is really a bad place to be, we don't want to be there. So that's how He makes peace, He separates himself completely and in the words of Romans 1:24-28, God gives them over to their sin. So they can then have what their heart desires, complete apart from the presence of God and it is a painful place without God's presence. So that's how He brings peace.

Remember that I said I had a couple of ideas for how to solve the situation of the Palestinians and Jews. Well one is to have them go to different places, well they are not going to do that, that's not going to work very well. My other idea is that one group of people completely adopts the goals, desires and aspirations that the other group has. They all share the same agenda and want the same thing. I think that would bring them together, although I think that's as unrealistic as the first one is, so you can pass my plan along to the powers that be if they want to suggest them, but I don't think it's going to happen.

Here's the same way that God does that for us when he **applies reconciliation for us** in verses 21 and 22. He brings that change to us. That He brings a change about in our desires and goals and aspirations so that we can be in fellowship with Him instead of have strife. So Colossians 1:21-22 speaks of this reconciliation applied to us. It's arranged for us, now it's applied to us.

²¹ **And also you are formally alienated, hostile in mind engaged in evil deeds, ²² yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach."**

So in this passage we see first **who we were**, we weren't very good. We were (every one of us) alienated. Alienated and separated. This word "alienated" is a settled word, it is something that is, not that comes and goes. It is established that we were alienated.

A good picture of alienation that sin brings, it isn't my illustration, it's God's illustration, comes from Leviticus 16. Remember the story of the scapegoat, that judgment would be applied on the scapegoat, that the goat was sent out into the wilderness, completely separated from everything else to show that sin brings us separation from God. Well in the same way we were separated from God because of our sin, we were alienated. And that was where we were.

It's important to reflect upon where we come from, and to know we were alienated; we were hostile in mind we were engaged in evil deeds, those were the three things we were, we were alienated; we were hostile in mind and we were engaged in evil deeds. There's a progression here. The progression is maybe not seen in every translation but its alienation results in a hostility of mind and that hostility of mind necessarily brings about evil deeds. Our mind was on our own agenda, our own desires, and our own plans for evil rather than on God, so it produced evil deeds the fruit of that was our actions.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Now we'll look at who we are. Verse 22, ²² **yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death.**" We have been reconciled, we are no longer alienated, we have been reconciled, our alienation our separation has been brought back together with God and we are now a friend of God in reconciliation. We are no longer hostile in mind we are of the same mind.

Romans 12:2 says we are being renewed in mind, we are being transformed in our mind so that our mind is becoming like the mind of Christ. We are thinking the way Christ thinks rather than thinking evil thoughts, hostile filled thoughts. Finally, we are engaged in good deeds because being of the same mind produces the fruit of good deeds, being in a hostile mind produces the fruit of evil deeds. So this reconciliation in Christ body through death brings about good deeds. It does so.

But that's not just what we are but there's what will we be in this, what will we be, we are going to be presented before Him, before God, holy, blameless and beyond reproach. There is a mixture here of words. The mixture here of words is there are religious words and there are judicial words, legal words. Things like present and blameless are legal words showing that our standing before God. We will be innocent because our sin will be removed from us by the blood of Christ. Taken away because He died for our sins. But there are religious words too, holy is a religious word, here's what we will be, we will be holy.

And I'll show you the relationship between these words: **holy** is an internal word regarding to ourselves, we will be set apart. That's what holy means, set apart from sin in our inward being. We will no longer have sin dwelling in us. What Christ delivers from us will be complete, we will be completely away from the presence of sin, we will be holy and that's internal to us.

Blameless is external. Blameless is that we cannot be blamed with sin. That internal holiness is external in that there is no blame that can be assigned to us. But it is even beyond that no blame, can be assigned to us.

We're even **beyond reproach**, that's external in regards to others. No one can even lob a charge against us. We are blameless and beyond reproach, no reproach can even be accused against us because He will deliver us one day when He returns. Perfectly pure, that's something we have to look forward to.

So some people think of Christ and what He's done, the resurrection and they only take it only so far in looking at what can God do for me, how does God help me in my plans, my agenda, help me have a happier life that sort of thing. Feel better about myself. But really God sending His Son to die on the cross has all to do with sin and being saved from sin. So hopefully your attitude is that you desire this holiness, being blameless and beyond reproach and that we don't have to be punished and suffer the penalty for sin.

He came to be a Savior from sin. There were many multitudes in the days of Christ walking the earth that were following Christ, who looked like the disciples following Christ. But they weren't there following Christ for the right reasons. They were following Christ because of the miracles, for the food, for the healings, for all kinds of other things that were on their agenda.

But the Lord had a plan to die on the cross and that plan to die for the sins of the world wasn't everybody's desire for Him. And so they disappeared and I hope that you won't disappear.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

That you will continue to follow the Lord, appreciating why He came to die for us and that's for the sin of the world and for you to be separated from sin and to be pure of heart. And to see that one-day sin will be completely removed from us will hopefully now become more and more removed from us and we will become more and more holy. Well that's what reconciliation is. Its applied for us we are no longer in strife with God we are at peace with God.

Moving on to verse 23, ²³ **if indeed you continue in the faith, firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven; and of which I Paul was made a minister."**

Now, as you read this verse I can understand that you might be tempted to think this is all conditional. Verse 23 could be thought of in this way, "if indeed you continue in the faith, firmly established," maybe you will maybe you won't, who knows, maybe you're in the kingdom of God, maybe you're out of the kingdom of God. That is not this verse at all, that is not what it means. This verse is teaching that the reconciliation of Christ is assured for us, this is a sure thing. It should cause us to feel competent and comfortable that your faith will continue. It's not a maybe thing: maybe we could or maybe not.

The word "if" is a first class Greek condition, meaning it is assumed to be true. It can be translated "since."

Let me try to explain this. First is the word "if." The word if is a first class Greek condition. You can forget the first class Greek condition part but don't forget this, that it means that there is an assumed that this is true of the people that are being spoken to. It can be translated "since."

There are different words for "if." You look at this one word and think this is odd because this is a translation from Greek and in Greek there's a word for "if" that means since or they assumed that this is a true statement. And there is also a word for "if" that we assume it is not true. And there is a word for "if" that means probably, maybe, that sort of thing. Well this is the first class, meaning it's assumed to be true.

We kind of use this word "if" but less so than Greek. I can say this, if you've come this morning you've heard great music. Well, of course, you've come because you are here. So "if" can be used in that sense even in English as an assumption that this is true.

But it's not only based on the word "if" that we can say reconciliation is assured for us but it's more that that. **"Continue" (EPIMENETE) is in an intensified form.** The word continue here is intensified, it is a word that means "continued and then some, to continue and continue onward." So the idea here is that because we have been reconciled, we then continue in faith. We continue onward and we will continue not just today, not just tomorrow, not just next week, not just next month, we will continue onward.

Here's why we can be considered continuing onward, it's because of the words **"firmly established."** If you continue in the faith, firmly established and steadfast. **"Firmly established" (TETHEMELIOMENOI) means "a laying of a foundation" and is a perfect, passive participle.** Now you can forget the perfect passive participle part but don't forget this: **This means our firm establishment has been completed for us by another.**

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

So the foundation has been laid. It is not lain and torn up and lain and torn up again and laid again. It has been laid! It's a completed statement, the foundation has been laid and that laying has been finished. That's the perfect part, the perfect part of the participle means that this is something that has occurred and has a lasting effect and will continue onward, that's what that means. So we have been firmly established, that's why we will continue in the faith.

And most significantly is the passive participle meaning we didn't do it, it happened to us, our firm establishment has been completed for us by another, that's God. God has established us in the faith, and because God established us in the faith, it's not something we did. We can be fully convinced that if we truly believe in sincerity of heart then this will happen, we will be firmly established, we will continue on in the faith, we will not move away from the hope of the gospel. Reconciliation will be assured for us. That's what this teaches.

So we can say this: **Our consistency in our faith proves that we have been reconciled to Christ.** It's something of a litmus test. Let's see, have we been reconciled to Christ? Are we continuing on in the faith? Because those who truly believe will continue on in the faith, because consistency is a great proof of sincerity, whether you truly believe, truly have in your heart accepted God.

Our lack of faithfulness gives evidence that we have not yet embraced the words of Colossians 1:19-23 (cf. 1 John 2:19). We can demonstrate whether there is a true conversion in our heart or whether there is not by looking at our faithfulness and being honest with ourselves.

How does the world go about reconciliation? **The world hopes for reconciliation through compromise.** Hoping that somebody gives up something and you give up something else and we kind of meet halfway. Well that's not God's idea of reconciliation at all. God is not looking to meet you halfway. He's looking to bring change in your life.

The Lord brings reconciliation through conversion. Not compromise, not meeting Him halfway, through conversion, conversion is change. Through converting, following Him, giving your life to Him because He has given His life to you. That is what He desires. Not a negotiation, not though works, but accepting His grace and in accepting His grace we'll produce an assurance of reconciliation as we continue on in our faith.

Let's pray:

Lord we thank You for Your goodness to us and developing a plan that saved us, rescued us from being alienated, hostile in mind and engaged in evil deeds. Thank You for restoring us and bringing us back to a peaceful place that You originally intended for us to have. Lord, we pray that we can appreciate Your work in the death and resurrection to conquer sin. That we can inculcate that in our lives more and more as we seek holiness and set apart sin from our lives. Lord, we thank You for the day that we will be blameless and above reproach, holy before You. We thank You that You would preserve a place for us. We long to be completely free of the sin that besets us. Lord, we give you thanks, in Jesus name. Amen.