

February 15, 2015

Christ--Our Perfect Savior

Colossians 1:19-23

Open your Bibles with me this morning to Colossians 1:15-23.

We will be looking at verses 19-23 this morning, but I wanted to start with verse 15 in order to get the full context of the passage.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Colossians 1:19-23 (NASB)

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 to 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 formerly alienated and 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.

Prayer

INTRODUCTION:

If you will remember from last week, according to Greek scholars, verses 15-20 in the original Greek are written and laid out in the form of Greek poetry. Just like in some Bibles today, when Old Testament scripture is quoted, the words are laid out differently so we can recognize them. Because they are written in a poetry format, scholars think that these verses were used as an early Christian hymn.

Paul has reached a transition point in his letter to the Colossians. He has gone from an introduction and his prayer for them to addressing the problems in the church that Epaphras has relayed to him.

These verses are perhaps contain the most rich and doctrinally packed passage about the Lord Jesus Christ in the entire Word of God.

This morning we will be looking at verses 19 - 23 concerning His fullness of the Godhead and His role as reconciler of all things, most importantly for us.

In order to more fully understand the meaning of these verses, I would like to start this morning by defining some of the terms that we will be talking about this morning. I have these definitions printed with the outline in your bulletins.

The first word is **preeminence**.

The word literally means having first place. Christ is "over and above" everything. His rank and superiority is above everything, not only because He is God, but also due to merit because He was willing to humble Himself and come to earth in the form of man to die on the cross for our sins. A lot of translations actually translate the word as "**first place**" such as the NASB instead of **preeminence** as in the KJV. The NIV translates the word as "**supremacy**".

The second word is **reconciliation**.

Reconciliation means having a relationship restored back to friendship or harmony. When man sinned in the Garden of Eden, that sin separated us from the perfect relationship that we had from God. There was NOTHING that man could do to restore that relationship, so Christ came to earth to **reconcile** us back to God by His death on the cross.

The third word is **propitiation**.

Propitiation means *to satisfy the demands for justice*. Propitiation teaches us that man is a sinner and that God hates sin because He is righteous. We will all be judged when Christ comes again. God is a righteous judge Who can only judge righteously. The wrath of God is on all those who do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior. When **YOU** accept Christ as **YOUR** Lord and Savior, He will take that wrath upon Himself, pay the price of **YOUR** judgment, and give **YOU** eternal life! It means that Jesus Christ satisfied God's demand for the righteous judgment of **YOUR** sin.

This morning we are going to look at verses 19-23 and see three ways in which Christ is our perfect savior according to Paul inspired by the Holy Spirit.

BODY:

I. Christ is God in Bodily Form

Colossians 1:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

What does the phrase "**all the fullness to dwell in Him**" mean?

The fullness of what?

Paul states it more fully in chapter 2, verse 9.

Colossians 2:9 (NASB)

⁹ For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

Paul is saying that Jesus was completely and fully God in bodily form.

Why would Paul be making such a point of this? That he would say it twice in the space of a few verses?

One of the reasons had to do with a popular heresy in the church of Colossae and the surrounding areas at that time. This heresy was an early form of Gnosticism.

Gnosticism tried to mix Greek philosophy with Christian theology. Gnostic philosophy taught that **matter was evil** and **spirit was good**. In order to avoid having their pure god create evil, they had created a system of lesser deities that overflowed from their god. These lesser gods were far enough removed from the pure god that they were able to create the universe (which was, in their eyes, composed of evil matter).

- One of the things that it taught was that Jesus Christ was not fully God;
- that Jesus Christ was just one of a series of beings that descended from God, but were less than God.
- The root cause of the heresy, is that the people who held to this belief refused to submit to scripture alone as the churches authority.
- They said that you had to have a secret knowledge of a supposedly higher knowledge that was above scripture in order to really understand the Bible.
- There was a lot of reliance on mystical experience.

Of course, all of this was wrong. But the basic place where these people first derailed was that they did not believe in and submit to the fact that scripture alone is the authoritative Word of God.

So, Paul makes a very strong point that Jesus **IS** the fullness of the Godhead in a human body and that He is God Himself as Epaphras had first taught them and they sang about. Paul was wanting to refute that heresy.

We also have versions of that heresy in many of our churches today. We have people who think that Jesus was a great **philosopher**, or a great **teacher**, or a good **moral example**, or even a **social revolutionary**, but **NOT** the Son of God! Islam teaches that Jesus was just another of a series of prophets.

Paul is making it clear that Jesus Christ is nothing less than God Himself.

I want you to notice that Paul started verse 19 with the word "**For**". This is a Greek word that could also be translated as "because" or "because of the preceding". It is a very important word. It ties things together.

In other words Paul is saying this. The things I have been telling you in the last few verses from the hymn that you sing of Lord Jesus Christ...

- the fact that Jesus Christ is the very image of God
- the fact that He is the firstborn over all creation
- the fact that He is the creator of the universe
- the fact that He is head of the church
- the fact that He is the firstborn from among the dead

all of these things are true **because** of what I am about to tell you!

All of these things are true, Paul says, because "**all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell in Him**".

All these things are true because Jesus Christ is God Himself Who came to earth in human flesh. The **fullness** that Paul is referring to is that He was **fully** God and **fully** man at the same time.

The lesson for us today is that we must see Jesus for Who He really is...

- the Lord of Glory
- the creator of the universe
- the Christ of the Cross

You need to be sure that you understand what happened when Jesus Christ came into the world as a baby boy born in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago. The passage that is key to this understanding is found in...

Philippians 2:5-7 (NASB)

⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

Notice the words "**being in the form of God**" and "**taking the form of a bondservant**". The meaning of the word "form" in the Greek language is vital to the proper understanding of the doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Paul is telling us that Jesus possessed an outward appearance that was in agreement with His inward nature. Christ voluntarily laid aside heavenly privileges in obedience to God the Father, but His deity was not changed or diminished in any way.

II. Christ is Our Reconciler

Colossians 1:20-22 (NASB)

²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to 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 formerly alienated and 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—

Notice that Paul goes to great lengths in this scripture to emphasize that reconciliation to God is through Christ Jesus alone.

Why does Paul go to such great lengths to emphasized this point?

It was because false teaching about the way to God had infiltrated itself into the Colossian church. This belief was that Jesus was just one of many mediators between God and man.

We know this to be false. Jesus Himself said,

John 14:6 (NASB)

⁶ "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

and Paul, writing to Timothy said,

1 Timothy 2:5 (NASB)

⁵ For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus,

It is by Him and by Him alone that a person can be reconciled to God.

Paul emphasizes that not only is man reconciled, but all of creation. Both on earth and in heaven. When man sinned, all of God's creation took a hit.

Romans 8:19-23 (NASB)

¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

What does it mean to be reconciled to God?

Man has become the enemy of God and peace needs to be restored. This is the focus of rest of verse 20.

When man sinned in the Garden of Eden, that sin separated us from the perfect relationship that we had from God. There was NOTHING that man could do to restore that relationship, so Christ came to earth to **reconcile** us back to God by His death on the cross.

It was only because Christ was fully God and fully man and perfectly sinless, that He could qualify to be our sacrifice for sin.

His death on the cross made us fully righteous to God. It was not because we deserved that righteousness. It was because Christ took on our sin once and for ever because of His great love for us so that we can stand blameless in front of God on Judgment Day.

This leads us to our final point this morning...

III. **Christ is Our Hope**

Colossians 1:23 (NASB)

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.

Christ has provided the way and hope for all of us to be reconciled back to God. But all of His efforts for **you** will be wasted, if you do not serve Him as **your** Lord and Savior. **You** must remain faithful to Him.

We are to seek first the Kingdom of God. God wants us to make Him "first place" in our lives. He should have priority over thing that we do. When we work, raise

our families, meet with other people, or do our hobbies, everything that we do in those events, we should put God first.

The most important thing to note is that God knows your heart. We may be able to fool man with outward appearances and actions, but God knows whether you truly love Him.

Accept His Word (the Bible) as your sole source of authority on how to live for God. Study His Word and know His will in your life.

CONCLUSION:

Only Jesus could live the perfect life we could not live. Jesus died the death we deserved to die. It was a perfect death that propitiated the Father's wrath forever. Jesus is our perfect redeemer in every sense of the word. Put your faith in Jesus Who was tempted in every way that we are tempted and even more, yet did not sin. He is your PERFECT savior.

Philippians 2:8-11 (NASB)

⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Because of Christ's death on the cross for our sins, God exalted his name above every name. We will ALL bow before Christ and confess that He is Lord regardless of whether we have lived our lives for Him or chosen to reject Him. As our closing song reads:

He is Lord, He is Lord.
He has risen from the dead and He is Lord.
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess,
That Jesus Christ is Lord.

Are you are allowing Christ to be Lord of your life? It is only by giving Him have **first place** in your life and serving Him that you can inherit His promises.

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, do it today. He died for you, because you loves you and wants you for His own.

If you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior and you are still living like the world and not living a life fully pleasing to God. I urge you to seek the will of God in your life and rededicate your life to him. You are either **“dead to sin”** or you are **“dead in sin”**. There is no in between.