

和好的福音，神人同喜乐——歌罗西书 1:19-23

The Gospel of Reconciliation; the Joy of God and Man -- Colossians 1:19-23

Introduction, context, outline

- Scripture reading: Colossians 1:19-23, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21
- Context: The Colossian church is full of false teachings, Paul will directly refute these wrong teachings in chapter 2. The best way to detect a fake bill is to know the true bill really well. Therefore, in our text today, Paul clearly proclaimed the core message of the true gospel.
- Not that the Colossian believers didn't know the gospel, the gospel had been "bearing fruit and increasing" among them (1:6). However, Paul still proclaims the gospel to the believers continuously. Believers need the gospel, we need often to remind ourselves of the gospel.
- Consider salvation from different angles: deliverance (from danger); redemption (bought by God); justification (no condemnation for sin).....
Today's text will consider it from this angle: reconciliation (from enemy to friend). The gospel of reconciliation is the great news in which both God and man find their joy!
- Outline:
 - A. God's supreme joy -- Jesus, the Beloved Son (vv19-20)
 - 1. The Person of God's joy -- Jesus, who is fully God (v19)
 - 2. The work of God's joy -- Jesus accomplished universal reconciliation (v20)
 - a. The object of reconciliation -- all creation (v20b)
 - b. The basis of reconciliation -- the blood of His cross (v20a)
 - B. Man's supreme joy -- to be reconciled to God (vv21-23)
 - 1. The need for reconciliation -- sinners are God's enemies (v21)
 - 2. The basis of reconciliation -- Jesus's bodily death for sinners (v22a)
 - 3. The goal of reconciliation -- to come before God perfectly sanctified (v22b)
 - 4. The expression of reconciliation -- holding fast to the truth unshaken (v23a)
 - 5. The ministry of reconciliation -- proclaiming the gospel as ministers (v23b)

God's supreme joy -- Jesus, the Beloved Son (vv 19-20)

- "For": gives the reason for vv 15-18. The reason why Jesus is preeminent is because of His Person (v19) and work (v20). Our understanding of Lord Jesus is ultimately summarized in these two aspects: Who He is, and what He has done.
- "it was the Father's good pleasure": the only main verb in vv 19-20, expressing God's joy. All of these are because of God's joy! God is a joyful God. Seen from an eternal perspective, all things are His joy in His eternal will!

Psalm 115:3"But our God is in the heavens;

He does whatever He pleases."

1. *The Person of Joy -- Jesus, who is fully God (v19)*

- "it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him": God is well pleased to let Jesus have the fullness of divine nature.

Matthew 3:17".....'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased'"

The Father takes pleasure in His beloved son. The three Persons of the triune God take full pleasure with one another and share their joy with believers!

John 15:11“.....so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. ”

- “all the fullness”: 2:9 states explicitly this is “all the fullness of Deity.” It’s full divine nature.

Background: the Gnostic heresy rooted in Greek culture. They say, all physical matters are corrupt and evil, only spirit is good. God is perfectly good, so he must be pure spirit and cannot have any association with matters, and therefore He cannot have created the evil world. Where then does the world come from? They say the supreme God can generate lesser gods, a process they call emanation. The lesser gods are still gods, but not morally perfect as the supreme God, then the lesser gods further emanate, getting worse each step, and finally comes Demiurge, whose morality is so bad that it can create the physical world. How about Jesus then? Well, he may be a lesser god but definitely not the supreme God, since he has a physical body! Therefore, it is not sufficient to have Jesus, they need to crawl up to the supreme God according to their own ways, and then receive a full life.

Refute: “All the fullness” is in Jesus! Jesus is fully God, and those in Jesus lack nothing!

2. Joyful things -- Jesus reconciled all things (v20)

- “to reconcile”: gives further details of the content of “the Father’s good pleasure.” Jesus is the Person of God’s joy; and the work of God’s joy is to reconcile all things through Jesus.
 - a. *The object of reconciliation -- all creation (v20b)*
- “All things ... whether things on earth or things in heaven”: the object of reconciliation is not only the sinners. The “all things” in vv15-18 are all of creation — animals, plants, inanimate objects, planets, etc., will all be reconciled to God through the Cross! (This confronts the heresy head-on. They say the evil material world will be annihilated in the end.)

The reconciliation of all things is a personification, since all things don’t have spirits and can’t experience the spiritual reconciliation with God as sinners do. How then are they reconciled to God? The answer is in Romans 8.

Romans 8:19-22“**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. ”

Key point: The universal corruption of sin! Nothing is in the same state of beauty and glory the way God originally made them and called them “good”! COVID, natural disasters, don’t they all serve as a reminder that the current state of the universe is really messed up, isn’t it?

Hope: The time when all things are reconciled with God is, in Romans 8:19, the time of “the revealing of sons of God”, and in Acts 3:21, the “restoration of all things”. All things will be restored! Heaven isn’t just a large group of people floating in the sky praising God. The river of life, the tree of life, the pearl gate, and jasper wall, these things in the Book of Revelation are not mere fantasy, but they are part of the new creation free from the slavery to corruption, and they are part of the all things to be fully reconciled to God “into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:21)!

b. *The basis of reconciliation -- the blood of His cross (v20a)*

- “having made peace through the blood of His cross”: It is the result of man’s sin that all things today are the way they are. There is only one way in order to restore the initial glory of all things when God created them, which is to solve the root issue, completely eradicate man’s sin. The only way of eradicating man’s sin and to pay in full the price of sin, is through Jesus Christ’s blood on the cross.

In the immediately preceding text, Jesus is the preeminent beloved Son (vv 15-18) and fully God (v19); but here, he is like a most despicable criminal, naked and bloody on the cross. What a sharp contrast! Such a contrast demonstrates one fact -- sin is serious!

Key point: Only the holy and sinless God Himself, taking on a real human body, can pay the price for our sins in His body which we should pay but could never pay in full. Then only can God's wrath be satisfied and the consequences of sin be removed. Any other sacrifice lower than this standard, will not suffice to deal with sin, to satisfy God's wrath, or to reconcile all things tainted by sin back to God.

Man's supreme joy -- to be reconciled to God (vv21-23)

1. *The need for reconciliation -- sinners are God's enemies (v21)*

- “having made peace” in v20 indicates there was previously no peace, only hostility and war. War with whom?

Exodus 15:3“The Lord is a warrior; The Lord is His name.” (“Lord of hosts”)

Romans 8:7: “.....the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God.....”

This state of being God's enemy is described vividly in v21:

- “alienated”: passive voice; to be alienated by God is to say God Himself shuts you out.

Isaiah 59:2“But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,

And your sins have hidden *His* ^[a]face from you so that He does not hear.”

In *this life*, this alienation is *spiritual* (Ephesians 2:12), the sinners can still enjoy general grace from God (Matthew 5:45) , In *the future*, this alienation is *complete and eternal*! This is what Jesus refers to as “outer darkness” (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30) , the place where sinners are forever separated from God and all His blessings, where there is only utter darkness and sinners will never get to see daylight again!

- “Hostile in mind”: active hostility. Not only passively alienated by God, moreover, sinners actively war against God, constantly thinking thoughts against God in their mind. This is a true reality of all unbelievers, because they are:
- “engaged in evil deeds”: literally “in evil deeds.” This summarizes the unbeliever's entire life. Their entire life is lived in evil deeds.

Genesis 6:5“Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Romans 1:18 called unbelievers “man who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”

2. *The basis of reconciliation -- Jesus's bodily death for sinners (v22a)*

- “yet..now”: after the hopeless condition just described in v21, how important and exhilarating is this turning point!
- “reconciled”: echoing v20. The original Greek verb is “to reconcile” plus an emphatic propositional prefix which points back to the original state, as “reconciled all the way back to the original relationship”、 “fully reconciled”!

Ponder: This original state is not the beginning of each individual life (cf Psalm 51:5, the sinners are born enemies of God), but all the way back to the beginning of human history, when Adam and Eve

were in a perfect relationship to God in Eden before the Fall! After they sinned, their immediate response was to hide from God. The relationship was broken, and they were overwhelmed with shame and guilt. The perfect relationship is broken! Paul said, the believers are reconciled to God to the original perfect relationship in Christ! As in the garden of Eden, we can now lift up holy hands, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord! What joy!

- “His fleshly body through death”: echoing “through the blood of His cross” in v20, emphasizes the basis of reconciliation again, the core event of the gospel truth is that Lord Jesus bore the punishment of our sin in His fleshly body that is exactly like ours.

“fleshly body” emphasizes full humanity. Only through a real human body can His sacrifice be effective to atone for our sins.

Hebrew 10:4-5 “4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 5 Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, “Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, But a body You have prepared for Me;”

3. *The goal of reconciliation -- to come before God perfectly sanctified (v22b)*

- Three adjectives: “holy” -- moral purity; “blameless” -- ritual term used of sacrifices in the old testament, signifying the purity that is pleasing to God; “beyond reproach” -- legal term, no sin to be accused of, purity before God’s law. Together, they express an absolutely perfect and flawless state from various angles.
- “In order to”: This kind of sanctification isn’t the positional sanctification believers already possess, but the infinitive here expresses the goal, the final purpose of reconciliation, which is perfected sanctification. This is the blessed eternal hope of believers! We will become completely holy, blameless and beyond reproach in reality!

4. *The expression of reconciliation -- holding fast to the truth unshaken (v23a)*

- “if indeed”: not the condition for reconciliation, but expression of reconciliation. if indeed you have this expression, it indicates that you have been reconciled with God.
- “firmly established”: architectural metaphor, originally denoting the foundation of a building. This echoes the parable of building a house by our Lord Jesus. In Matthew 7:24-27, the foundation is to obey the word of Jesus. True faith will inevitably result in an obedient life, and that’s what it means to be firmly established. This is the expression of reconciliation with God.
- “not moved away”: Once the foundation is firmly established (perfect tense), it will never be moved (present tense). “Not moved away” is not “never to sin again,” but never to continue in sin unrepentantly as before, and to continually pursue a life of progressive sanctification.

5. *The ministry of reconciliation -- proclaiming the gospel as ministers (v23b)*

- “have heard.....proclaimed.....minister”: the gospel of reconciliation works through ministers of the gospel. God not only reconciled with us through the gospel, but also gave us the ministry of reconciliation!

2 Cor. 5:18 Now all *these* things are from God, who *reconciled* us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of *reconciliation*, **19** namely, that God was in Christ *reconciling* the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of *reconciliation*. **20** Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be *reconciled* to God. **21** He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.