

I invite you to open your bibles this morning to today's scripture text which can be found in Colossians, the 1st chapter, verses 15-20 which can be found on page ____ in your pew bibles. We begin a new series today "the peacemakers". Today's scripture inspires believers to see God's priority and passion for peace, and to firmly establish the gospel of Christ as the foundation of real peace.

The Word of God

Col 1:15-20

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 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.

NIV

If there is one fact that is certain, mankind lives in a constant state of conflict. This conflict is evident in our personal lives, in our relationships with our family, our community, other countries, and the global community as well. We are continually demonstrating this state of conflict through our intentions, our speech, our actions, our decisions, our broken relationships with other people and other countries. This human condition of conflict is even present in our relationship with God, our Father in Heaven.

Conflict is a condition that keeps us from achieving peace within ourselves and with our neighbors, and with God. Another fact of certainty is that through this conflict we make ourselves hungry for peace, in fact, we are starving for peace. In order for us to achieve peace, we must shine a new light on conflict. A new understanding of conflict needs to be realized. An understanding that conflict is not a state that we must remain in forever. It is a condition that we can grow out of, and through it, an opportunity is presented. An opportunity to be peacemakers. An opportunity of reconciliation that brings about peace in our lives, peace in our relationships with our neighbors, and our relationship with God.

A metaphorical account of the crucifixion tells that while Jesus was hanging on the cross, he looked down and saw evil and sinful humanity. Mankind that had fouled his creation, people that had killed, raped and spoiled all that was good. Then with a mighty tug, he tore one hand away from the cross and grabbed hold of man. Then the Lord looked up toward heaven and there he saw the face of an offended God. A glorious God that was good and forever righteous. A God who in His glory, loved holiness and peace. Then with another mighty tug, Jesus freed his other hand and with it he reached up and took hold of God, the Father.

Then, in a stroke of awesome love, at the cross, he brought God down to man, and lifted man up to God and reconciled God and man back together once again! Today's scripture, Colossians 1:20 declares: "...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."

It almost seems impossible to find peace in our present condition. But this is far from the truth. We can find peace in our Lord Jesus Christ. Peace with God comes only through the blood of Jesus Christ. There must be peace with God, for this is the doctrine of reconciliation.

Why must there be reconciliation? Reconciliation takes in mind that there are two parties who are at odds, in conflict, and there is something that keeps them apart and makes them enemies. The Bible teaches us that God is Holy, and just, and righteous, and he cannot tolerate, or have fellowship with sin. It also teaches that man by nature, that's all of us as we are naturally born, are sinners. We fell in Adam, into rebellion in a state of sin and death. And that we are not only fallen in Adam, because we sinned in Adam. Scripture teaches us that -- Adam was the representative of the whole human race, and when he fell we fell, and when he sinned we sinned. (Romans 5:12) We are sinners, and sin makes us enemies of God.

Someone might say, well I'm a not a Christian, I've never been saved, I'm a good person, I do things right, I'm respectful of others, but I'm not an enemy of God! Friends, if you are a sinner by nature, if you are a sinner by the fallen Adam, you are an enemy of God, that's what the Bible says. It doesn't matter how you think or what you feel about that matter.

There's only two types of people on this earth; sinners saved by the grace of God, those are the ones who have been reconciled to God, and sinners still lost in their sins. If you are a lost person, if you are in unbelief, if you don't know Christ, you are an enemy of God. Now you may be gentle, or a moral person, kind to others, or all of that, you may not want to harm any Christians or anybody for that matter, but in God's sight, you're His enemy.

So, God and sinners must be reconciled. This reconciliation must be on some common ground that meets the need of both in conflict. Well what is God's need? It's not that God needs me or you, no, God needs to glorify Himself. That's what God needs, for God is so High, so perfect, so lifted up, so unique, so glorious, He must have the glory. Do you know why? Because He is God. It's not because he is conceited, if you see any person that must have the glory, they are conceited, there's no humility. But God is God. He is the creator of this universe. He is the all-knowing, the all-powerful, He is within Himself infinite. God must be glorified. To God be the glory, great things he has done.

And then man, what is his need? He needs salvation. I'm a sinner, I need salvation, I need forgiveness, I need mercy, I need grace, I need unconditional love. I can't earn anything from God, and I don't deserve anything but wrath. I need forgiveness and pardon. I need spiritual life, to be quickened. By nature, I was born dead in trespasses and sin. The Bible teaches us that in Ephesians 2:1. **And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;** I can't quicken myself.

Now here's the issue -- because of sin, how can God save me? How can God have mercy upon me, be gracious to me and forgive me, give me life and still glorify himself in His justice and his truth? How can God be both a just God and a savior?

That issue of sin that keeps us apart must be dealt with. I can't deal with it, and you can't either. Cane tried to deal with it by his works. The Lord told him if he would do well he would be accepted. What was it to do well? It was to bring the blood of the Lamb like Able. But he said if not, sin lies at the door, and you've got it to deal with. Its like a roaring lion outside your door ready to pounce and your going to lose that battle. We cannot deal with sin by way of satisfaction, to God's justice. We cannot deal with it to get rid of it, you see, its so much a part of human nature, that we can't conquer it. That sin must be dealt with. This is what Colossians chapter 1 is dealing with. So let's take a deeper look into our scripture and see how we go about getting God's peace.

Look at verse 12, he is talking to believers here; **giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.** God the Father, makes His elect, his people qualified to be partakers (that's a fellowship word) of the inheritance. In other word's they are equal partners in an inheritance. You don't work for an inheritance, you don't earn an inheritance. This is an inheritance of the saints, or a sanctified person, a sinner saved by the grace of God in the kingdom of light. That means truth and light, that's what Christ is to his people. **13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.** Now what happens here? How am I saved? Not by what I do, not by what I decide, not even by what I believe. But by being brought into, by being translated, delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

God delivers us from the power of darkness, salvation is of the Lord, it's not of your free will or decision. Do Gods people make a decision to follow Christ? Yes.

But only after God in His power, by the Holy Spirit, has given them life, and delivers them from darkness and translates them in to the kingdom of His dear Son.

You see, salvation is not conditioned on you or me. Its not conditioned upon our decision. Are God's people drug into the kingdom of His Son against their will? No, God changes their will. They are unwilling by nature, they will not come to him. **No man come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:44)** Mankind by nature will not seek the Lord. He will seek religion, he will seek a god of his imagination, but he won't seek the true and living God according to scripture. He has to be delivered by God's power and grace, through the Holy Spirit who comes forth through the power of Christ. He has to be delivered from the power of darkness, unbelief, self-righteousness, pride, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

What happens is God makes him willing in the day of God's power. He gives him a new heart, that's what he says in the new covenant. (Jer 31:Heb 8) He gives him a new heart, he gives him a new spirit, he causes them to walk in his word. Then he says in verse 14 talking about His dear Son, **KJV 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.**

Redemption, reconciliation to God comes by redemption through the blood of Christ. The blood is the full payment of the debt of Gods people, God's elect, of their sin imputed, charged, accounted, reckoned to Christ. This is peace, through the blood. Peace because He took my debt. He said put it on my account, I'll repay it. I can't pay for sin, you can't pay for it. The price is too high. But one who is willing and able to pay for our debt, did for His sheep.

He didn't do it for everybody, he did it for His sheep. Who are his sheep? Those who have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son. This includes the forgiveness of our sins. You see the forgiveness of our sin doesn't come by what we decide or what we believe, it doesn't come by our tears of repentance, it comes by the blood of Christ.

Once somebody says I have decided to follow Jesus. If you really have, then it's because you have been made willing to do so in the power of conviction by the Holy Spirit. This forgiveness of sin does not dishonor God's justice. It does not deny His righteousness or His truth. He is still honorable, He is still glorified. How? Because it's based upon the payment of the redemption price. Justice is satisfied, the Law of God is honored, sinners are forgiven, and we have true peace, on one ground, on one basis, through the blood of Jesus Christ. That's the same as the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel. That's his righteousness imputed to His people. Just as the sins of Gods people are imputed to Christ, His righteousness is imputed to His people. That's what it means to be washed in the blood. What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Our hope and peace is built upon nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness.

Take a look at verse 15, (Col 1:15) **He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.** That is a statement that literally means he is God. The firstborn over all creation is speaking of His resurrection, because righteousness has been established upon which the new creation, the new church, have been created.

He says in verse 16 (Col 1:16) speaking of Christ, **16 For by him all things were created** remember John said that in chapter 1 in the beginning was the word,

the word was with God, and the word was God all things were created by Him: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

That's all governments, even ungodly governments were created by him for his glory and for his purposes. He is **not** the author of the evil, he is **not** the author of sin, but he works all things after the counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of His grace. Can all of that be explained so that we can understand it? Absolutely not, there is no use for going around here denying God's sovereignty in order to elevate man's responsibility. Are we responsible and accountable? Yes we are, but God's in control.

Paul says in verse 17, (Col 1:17) 17 Christ is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Christ is the first and the last, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, everything is about him. The only reason this world exists today is for His glory and his preeminence.

Let's look at verse 18, (Col 1:18) 18 And he is the head of the body, the church that's his people, and it's not denominations. Some people might believe there are saved people in every denomination, and unfortunately that's not true. Don't take me wrong, I'm not being judgmental here, we are just talking about what the word of God says. There are some denominations who call themselves Christian, but they deny the truth of the Word. They are not Christian, they are Satan's tares, the workers of iniquity, Satan's evil doers.

They are the false church, in the book of Revelation we read about Babylon, that's the false church. There are multitudes that flow into Babylon, and they believe a false gospel.

Paul wrote in Galatians chapter 1,8 Gal 1:8 **But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!**

Anytime a preacher, or a denomination, or a church body tries to mix man's works or man's will or makes man's salvation conditional upon man and call it the gospel, that's a false gospel. It's all in Christ. Christ is the head of the body, that's his true church. The church refers to God's elect. Ruined by the fall, sinners. But redeemed by the blood, and those who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, born again, quickened, under the preaching of the truth, the gospel, wherein the righteousness of God is revealed. Where Christ is preached, and they are brought out of the world into the family of God. That's the church, and he says, look at verse 18; **he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, (his resurrection) so that in everything he might have the supremacy.** Christ has the supremacy. The preeminence.

Then verse 19 says, **For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,** in Christ. The fullness of the Godhead dwells in him, in other words the fullness of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the glory of the Godhead dwells in the person of Christ. God in human flesh. In Col 2:10 tells us **10 and you have been given fullness (made complete) in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.** Our completeness as a sinner saved by grace, our complete salvation, is in Christ. Our complete righteousness, our complete forgiveness and pardon, our complete security, it's in Christ. Our complete peace is in Christ. It's based in His blood and righteousness.

Look at verse 20 in Colossians, *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.* There it is, peace, through the blood. The blood of the cross, is His death. His death is satisfaction, to God's justice, for the sins of his people. His death is righteousness established which secures and literally demands their full salvation. Christ did not die for any who perish.

The knowledge that our salvation has been secured by our Lord with his sacrifice on the cross is our source of peace.

It's not like a certain preacher said in the 50's over in Chicago, he made a statement that Hell is a monument to God's failure, to save multitudes. Not so, hell is a monument to God's justice to give sinners what they deserve, and what they have earned. Heaven is a place of grace, through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ. So you might say, if that's the case then it doesn't matter if I seek the Lord, or if I believe. Not so, don't you see, those things that Christ has accomplished on the cross by the shedding of his blood, by establishing righteousness, which God has imputed, charged to his people, Christ has reconciled all these things unto himself.

God is going to bring his people the church, His elect, to be reconciled unto him on the same ground, the blood of Christ. They are going to be brought by the power Christ, through the Holy Spirit, into the new birth, to seek the Lord, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Born again through the blood of Christ, peace with God is established between us and God. The true peace that defines us as Christians. The peace that will be produced in our lives, our motives, thoughts and our deeds. That will motivate us to be peacemakers.

How do we know if we are one of God's elect? How do we know if we are one of God's redeemed ones? How do we know if we have really been born again? When we find that we are reconciled to God, by the blood of Jesus Christ. Not by anything else.

If you add anything else to the blood, to the righteousness imputed of Christ, its corrupted. That's what he means when he says in verse 20 **whether things on earth or things in heaven.**

Remember when I said that we were enemies of God? Read verse 21, **Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.** In other words, those who are sinners saved by grace, those to whom God has been reconciled by the blood, and those who have been brought to be reconciled to him by the blood of Jesus Christ. You can say by faith, because they believe in Him, they plead his blood, they plead in his righteousness. They were before this reconciliation, that is God bringing them to himself, enemies of God. They were alienated. They weren't near to God, they weren't in fellowship with God, in their minds, enemies, and it was by wicked works.

Who do you think he is talking about there. This is one of the biggest mistakes that people make in interpreting the Bible. What are those wicked works? You might think that's the immoral part of society, the openly immoral, and openly rebellious. This is talking about all sinners by nature. Even the most religious ones. Even the sincerest ones that are in unbelief. Even the most moral ones that are in unbelief. Think about Saul of Tarsis, he was a religious Jew, a sincere person, a moral person, but he hated the Lord Jesus Christ. He didn't believe in Jesus Christ. His works were wicked works.

The only thing that we can bring to God as a sinner that will be acceptable to him, that will be good in his sight, is the blood, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we bring anything else of ourselves, even things which God has enabled us to do, it will not stand the test.

Paul says in verse 22, Col 1:22 **But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.** How in the world, can a sinner, honestly claim to be holy, without blemish and free from accusation in God's sight? There is only one way, and that's as we stand before God, in Christ, washed in his blood, and clothed in his righteousness. As God has been reconciled to us and we have been reconciled to God through the blood of the cross.

Peace has been made, because Christ is our peace. Somebody said well this man needs to go make his peace with God. Well how is he going to do that? What can he possibly do? Is he going to go join a church? Get baptized? Take the Lords supper? Give a tithe? Go to confession? Those things will not make peace between God and sinners. There is only one thing that's going to make peace, and that's the blood of the cross. What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

As long as we are alive in this flesh, there will be conflict. What we choose to do with that conflict will define us as who we are. We belong to the Lord. We have Him living in our hearts. When we realize that without him we will have no peace, we can rest in Him for our strength to bring peace into our lives. We must cling to the cross and remember Christs example to us. To follow Jesus and remain with Him, continuing to be his ambassadors of Love, his ambassadors of Peace.

As his elect, as his church, to witness to the world His Love, and strive to resolve our conflicts with peace. Peace has been made, and we can keep that peace, how? Paul in verse 23, Col 1:23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Gracious Lord, Heavenly Father

Thank you for sending us Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

For giving us our reconciliation through his blood to bring us peace with you.

Forgive for when we struggle to resolve our conflicts in this world,

Forgive us for when we are weak and fail to bring peace,

We realize that with out you in our lives we will fail,

We realize that with Christ in our Lives his peace will reign supreme.

Give us your strength to help us to Love our neighbor, and to forgive

Just as you have Loved us so much, that you have paid the price,

and have reconciled our conflict, and brought us true peace.

Let your peace flow through our thoughts, and our actions

So that you will have all the glory.

AMEN.