

How Can the Cross Reconcile Us?

Meditations On The Cross #2 – Pastor Gary Combs – March 17, 2024 – Colossians 1:19-22

INTRO: Good morning church! We're continuing our sermon series today entitled, "Meditations On the Cross." Today we want to contemplate the question: "How Can the Cross Reconcile Us?" How can it reconcile us to God?

Need: Have you ever experienced a break in a relationship? A broken relationship is often one of the most painful things we ever experience. And reconciliation? Well, that might be one of the most difficult things to accomplish.

ILL: I'm sure you've heard of the famous 19th century poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. But you may not have heard of the broken relationship she had with her father. "In her youth, Elizabeth Barrett had been watched over by her tyrannical father. When she and Robert Browning were married in 1846, their wedding was held in secret because of her father's disapproval. After the wedding the Brownings sailed for Italy, where they lived for the rest of their lives. But even though her parents had disowned her, Elizabeth never gave up on the relationship. Almost weekly she wrote them letters. Not once did they reply. After 10 years, she received a large box in the mail. Inside, Elizabeth found all of her letters; not one had been opened! Today those letters are among the most beautiful in classical English literature. Had her parents only read a few of them, their relationship with Elizabeth might have been restored. (*Daily Walk*, 3/30/92)

Trans: God has written you a letter. Indeed, He's written you a whole box of 66 letters; 39 OT and 27 NT. They were all written that you might believe in His Son, Christ Jesus, that you might be reconciled to the Father.

BODY: In the apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians, he explained that it was trusting in Christ's sacrificial death on the cross that reconciled them to God. We can trust in Christ's sacrificial death on the cross to reconcile us to God. How does trusting in Christ's sacrificial death on the cross reconcile us to God? The text gives **three reasons** that trusting in Christ's sacrificial death on the cross reconciles us to God.

TEXT: Colossians 1:19-22 (ESV) ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. ²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

CHRIST'S SACRIFICIAL DEATH ON THE CROSS RECONCILES...

1. Because He took our separation and offers His Sonship.

EXP: (19-20) First, only the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was qualified to reconcile us to the Father. Since our sin separated us from the Father, we need a perfect mediator, a go between, to reconcile us to Him.

"Him..Himself" (19-20) - "Him" pronouns refer to Jesus, "Himself" to God the Father.

"Fullness" (19) (πλήρωμα, *plērōma*) - filled, fulness. "The term may express simply 'totality.' Therefore it expresses that Jesus was completely God. Everything that God is, Jesus is" (Melick, *NAC* #32, p.224). "That in him there should be such dignity, authority, power, and moral excellence as to be fitted to the work of creating the world, redeeming his people, and supplying everything needful for their salvation" (Barnes).

"Pleased to dwell" (19) (εὐδοκέω, *eudokeō*) - to be well pleased with. Remember the Father's words at Christ's baptism: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17).

"Reconcile" (20) (ἀποκαταλλάσσω, *apokatallassō*) - to reconcile completely, to restore relations.

"All things ... on earth and in heaven" (20) (πᾶς, *pas*) - the reconciliation of Christ through the cross was powerful enough to reconcile all things everywhere.

"Making peace" (20) (εἰρηνοποιέω, *eirēnopoieō*) - to make peace, establish harmony. To reconcile.

"By the blood" (20) (αἷμα, *haima*) - blood. The blood of the lamb on the altar was necessary for our peace. Christ is the Lamb. The cross is the altar. Remember what John the Baptist declared of Jesus?

John 1:29 (ESV) The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

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ARG: Only the Son of God has made it possible for us to “receive adoption to sonship.”

Galatians 4:4-6 (NIV) ⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. ⁶ Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”

Only the God/man, Christ Jesus, is able to act as mediator between God and humanity.

1 Timothy 2:5 (ESV) For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus

ILL: Describe how Christ is our Passover Lamb. The Passover Lamb was described in Exodus 12 saying it must be “without blemish...male...you shall not break any of its bones...blood put on the doorposts and lintel... And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.” Christ was crucified at Passover. As Paul said, He is our Passover Lamb:

1 Corinthians 5:7 (ESV) ...For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Jesus was without blemish, without sin. His blood was shed. He took our separation crying out “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And after He had said, “It is finished, he bowed His head and gave up His spirit” (John 19:30). And since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews asked Pilate to break their legs that they might not be on the cross on High Sabbath. The soldiers broke the legs of the other two, but when they came to Jesus, he was already dead, so they didn’t break his legs. So that John wrote:

John 19:36 (ESV) For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.”

APP: Jesus took our separation that we might believe on Him and receive adoption to sonship. He is the only One whom we can trust to reconcile us to God and adopt us into God’s family as His children.

2. Because He took our death and offers His eternal life.

EXP: (21-22a) Look at the “You” pronouns. That’s us. We’re sinners and our sin leads to death, but Christ took our “death” (22) and offers His eternal life.

“You” (21-22) - Who is you? Well first it's the church of Colossae, but more so, it's all believers ... it's us.

“Alienated” (21) (ἀπαλλοτριόω, *apallotriōō*) - to alienate, estrange, shut out from fellowship and intimacy.

“Hostile in mind” (21) (ἐχθρός, *echthros*) - hostile, opposing; by their sin; opposing (God) in the mind.

“Body of flesh” (22) (σώματι τῆς σαρκός, *sōmati tēs sarkos*) - so it was Christ’s physical body, His very flesh. “The meaning is, of course, His natural body, as distinguished from His mystic Body, spoken of above (Col. 1:18 ‘He is the Head of the body, the church...’)” (Ellicott).

“By his death” (22) (θάνατος, *thanatos*) - death, death of the body. “Paul’s phrase ‘by his death’ emphasizes the reality and totality of the sacrifice. The death of Christ is as necessary to the gospel as the resurrection” (Melick, *NAC #32*, p.232).

ARG: All have sinned and sin’s wages is death. But Christ took our death that we might have His life.

Romans 3:23 (ESV) For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Romans 6:23 (ESV) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:10 (ESV) For the death he died he died to sin, once for all...

ILL: The judge who found his son guilty for speeding, but paid the ticket himself because his son couldn’t. We owe a sin debt we can’t repay. But God has through Christ.

APP: Jesus took our death and offers His eternal life. He died in our place. Have you trusted His death on the

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cross for your sin debt? For the wages of sin is death.

Trans: When you overdraw your checking, you have to put in enough to cover the deficit and the service charge, but that only gets you back to -0-. We still need someone to make a deposit in our account ...

3. Because He took our sin and offers His righteousness.

EXP: (22b) Christ's final purpose in shedding His blood on the cross was to take our sin and offer His righteousness that He might "present" us as such before the Father.

"In order to present" (22) (παρίστημι, *paristēmi* - Aorist tense - refers to a single, completed action in the past with continual result) - to present or recommend a person to another. Christ has already accomplished what was necessary "in order to present" us as holy before the Father when the Day comes. "God's act of reconciliation has already accomplished everything; perfection is thus not to be gained by one's striving. Rather, perfection is there to be received as God's gift" (Melick, NAC #32, p.233).

"Holy" (22) (ἅγιος, *hagios*) - sacred, holy, saint.

"Blameless" (22) (ἄμωμος, *amōmos*) - without blemish, morally: without blemish, faultless, unblameable.

"Above reproach" (22) (ἀνέγκλητος, *anegklētos*) - that cannot be called into to account, unprovable

"Before Him" (22) - "He (Jesus) appears in the presence of God for them, bears their names on his breastplate, presents their persons and their cases; and especially will be done at the last day, when he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and say, lo, I and the children thou hast given me: and who will be presented "holy" by him" - John Gill

ARG: **Christ took our sin that we might become His righteousness.**

2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV) For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

ILL: In my CG this past week, one of our members asked what kind of response we get when we try to talk to others about the cross of Christ. She said that she had several who would say that they were good people and didn't see why they would be called sinners and therefore didn't need the cross of Christ.

Yet, Jesus explained how sin is more than an action. It is also the attitude that precedes the action. In his Sermon on the Mount he declared: "You have heard it said, 'You shall not commit murder.' But I say whoever calls his brother 'Raca' will be liable to the hell of fire" (Matt. 5:21-22). "You have heard it said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:27-28). "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

APP: None of us are perfect. None without sin. We have all gone astray. But One is perfect. And He took our sin and offers His righteousness. As the prophet Isaiah said:

Isaiah 53:6 (ESV) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

CONCLUSION: Have you placed your trust in Christ's shed blood on the cross? Have you repented of your sins and decided to trust Christ for salvation? Have you understood that He is the only way and the only One who can reconcile you to the Father and give you...

1. His sonship, adopting you into God's family, in place of your separation from God?
2. His eternal life and future with God in heaven, in place of your death?
3. His righteousness, so that God is pleased with you, in place of your sin?

Let's pray.