

Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians
Chapter Five
Living on the Rock Christ Jesus

“¹⁹ For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell; ²⁰ And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven. ²¹ And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled ²² In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: ²³ If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister” (Colossians 1:19-23).

In verse 19, the word translated “fulness” was understood and used by the Gnostics to denote various mediatorial images that were each believed to give a partial revelation of God. Therefore it was necessary to have “knowledge” of all these mediators in order to have a FULL knowledge of God.

When Paul told Timothy (I Tim. 2:5) that Christ was the only “mediator between God and men” he was denying the whole foundation of Gnostic beliefs. Some continue a form of Gnosticism in praying (invocation) to saints, angels, the dead and to Mary. There are two primary characteristics of Christ’s “fulness” of the Godhead.

1. In Jesus we find the totality of divine powers and attributes. Everything that God is, Jesus is.
2. The “fulness of the Godhead” dwells “in Christ.” That “fulness” is permanently at home in Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus is the permanent residence of the fullness of the Godhead. The idea conveys the permanency of the union of God and man in the Person of Jesus.

The fullness of the Godhead “in Christ” is a provision for mankind’s benefit (Colossians 1:20-23). Again the Gnostics taught that there could only be a partial completion of the work of salvation. Therefore a person could never be fully saved, because the angelic mediators could only provide a partial reconciliation. The emphasis of verses 20-23 is that the security of a believer’s salvation is based upon an already accomplished reality. Jesus has provided complete reconciliation to God.

Because Christ Jesus is fully God and fully man He becomes the only true possible “mediator between God and men.” This refers to the new Federal Headship of the New Creation in Jesus Christ. Jesus is fully able to reconcile man to God, not just partially as the Gnostics taught. He is able to do this because this New Mediator is both God and man. The TOTALITY of the work of Christ provides two basics ABSOLUTELY.

1. “PEACE;” it means to bind together that which was separated. This is a CONCLUDED REALITY for the believer
2. “RECONCILE;” it means the restoration to the original fellowship that Adam enjoyed before the fall, but now “in Christ.”

Since both “PEACE” and “RECONCILIATION” rest upon an eternally satisfactory and completed work BY GOD HIMSELF, it is a place of ETERNAL SECURITY for the believer who has absolutely trusted in that absolute work for his salvation.

Three observations about the fullness of reconciliation; II Corinthians 5:18-21

“¹⁸ And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. ²¹ For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (II Corinthians 5:18-21).

1. II Corinthians 5:19; God initiated the blood sacrifice and provided Himself as the sacrifice

“¹⁷ Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. ¹⁸ No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:17-18).

The sacrifice of Christ is both offered to God and provided by God. Therefore we can be confident that the sacrifice meets all God’s requirements to satisfy His expectations.

2. II Corinthians 5:21; the Father provided the Son as the SUBSTITUTE SIN BEARER. In the death of the crucifixion at Calvary Jesus bore ALL of God’s wrath and judgment upon ALL sin

Compare I John 2:2; I Peter 2:24 and 3:18.

3. II Corinthians 5:20; since all of God’s wrath against sin is removed, there is no barrier on God’s side to hinder man’s complete reconciliation. Therefore, the only barrier is on man’s side in his unwillingness to trust absolutely.

Because of the “fullness” of Jesus the believer has the fullness of reconciliation. The believer is FULLY, TOTALLY and ABSOLUTELY bound to God ETERNALLY (“peace”). The believer is FULLY, TOTALLY, and ABSOLUTELY restored to God ETERNALLY (“reconciled”).

Colossians 1:21; THE PAST AND PRESENT

1. PAST (when these people were lost)

The word “alienated” is from the Greek word *apallotrioo* (ap-al-lot-ree-o’-o). It means to be shut out from fellowship or intimacy. The unsaved man is ESTRANGED from God.

“Enemies” is from the Greek word *echthros* (ech-thros’). It means to be hateful or hostile; to be a bitter enemy. We see that the place of this hostility towards God is in the “minds” of all lost men. “Mind” is from the Greek word *dianoia* (dee-an’-oy-ah) refers to man’s imaginations. It refers to the mind as a faculty of understanding, feeling, desiring

“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (Romans 1:21).

“Wicked” is from the Greek word *poneros* (pon-ay-ros’) and refers to a broad category of evil practices or things. “Works” is from the Greek word *ergon* (er’-gon) and refers to the things in life one occupies his time with. These two words reveal the arena of the exhibition of this person’s alienation and hostility toward God.

2. PRESENT (once these people were “born again”)

The saved are now in a new state of existence with God. They are “reconciled.” The word “reconciled” is from the Greek word *apokatallasso* (ap-ok-at-al-las’-so). It means to completely restore someone to a former state of harmony. The “born again” believer is no longer an alien or foreigner, but “citizens of heaven.”

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20).

THE FOURFOLD POSITION OF THE BELIEVER BEFORE GOD “IN CHRIST”

There are four statements in Colossians 1:22 that expand upon this new existence in which the believer presently lives. By salvation (regeneration; i.e. re-creation) the believer has been completely changed in his/her position before God. Regeneration removes us from the fallen first creation in Adam and immerses the believer in the New Creation “in Christ.” This is known as the “baptism of or with the Spirit” (I Cor. 12:13). These four statements reveal what Christ has accomplished for the believer in this New Creation “in the body of His flesh through death.”

“Holy” is from the Greek word *hagios* (hag’-ee-os). The most fundamental idea of the word is separation unto God’s service, or something, or someone distinctively separated from everything else for God’s use (and nothing else). When God command the believer to “be holy,” he is commanding the believer to become practically what he already is positionally “in Christ.” Practically it refers to the believer’s new position as “priests” before God (I Peter 2:9-12).

“¹⁴ As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:
¹⁵ But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; ¹⁶ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (I Peter 1:14-16).

“Unblameable” is from the Greek word *amomos* (am’-o-mos). It means without any fault such as a sacrificial animal when inspected closely for disease and is found to be without any defect or blemish. “In Christ” every believer is perfectly faultless, blemishless and morally pure.

“Unreprovable” is from the Greek word *anegkletos* (an-eng’-klay-tos). It means irreproachable, and unaccusable. “In Christ” there is nothing about us or in our *sin account* for which we can be accused before God. We are what Christ is in the eyes of the Father.

“In His sight” brings us into the realm of these other three statements. The believer is “holy,” “unblameable” and “unreprovable” “in His sight.” This refers to the omniscient vision of God from which nothing can be hidden. This refers to the microscopic and macroscopic vision of God that sees everything at every level of its existence. Yet, “in Christ,” He finds the believer perfect in every sense.

DEFINING SAVING FAITH; Colossians 1:23

The word “if” is not a contingency for salvation. The warning is for heretics who would prove their own unbelief by following false beliefs similar to the beliefs of the Gnostics. False beliefs keep people from real saving faith.

The Gnostics believed that they needed to personally participate in their salvation by their own added works and the invocation of angelic beings as mediators. Salvation was something to be achieved, not received. For the Gnostic, salvation came through achieving various degrees of enlightenment (knowledge) revealed to them through visions from a host of intermediaries.

Retaining salvation is not in question (obviously from the context), but rather that if these individuals were to abandon the objective facts of the gospel message (as manifested by doctrines contradicting the gospel, accepting or following the false teachings of Gnosticism and by continuing in worldly practices), this would manifest that real faith had never taken place to begin with. The logic is that no one who truly understands a pure gospel of grace and believes it to be true would ever abandon it.

“Continue” is from the Greek word *epimeno* (ep-ee-men’-o). It means to stay with or live in the inscripturalized truths of God’s Word (the “faith”). Continuation is a proof that real saving faith has been placed in the work of Christ. “Continue” means to stay with something and not abandon it. “The faith” refers to the practice of the body of truth or system of beliefs that were delivered to the believer in the Word of God.

“⁵ One Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:5-6).

“Grounded and settled” refers to PRACTICE of “the faith” that is foundational to a life style based upon a solid conviction that what is presented by God’s Word is absolute truth. If that is the case, that conviction will be “settled.” In other words it will result in a permanent confidence and a practical reality of a living faith.

THE ADMONITION OF THE FAITH

“Be not moved away” from the foundational truths in the gospel of an absolutely complete, finished and satisfactory work of redemption “in Christ” (I Corinthians 15:58). Gnosticism is a fluid philosophy that is constantly adding new requirements to man’s journey to his own *divinity*. Gnosticism has evolved to the place where every man must find his own pathway to God(hood). This shifting sand of relativistic, ecumenical and false theology has undermined the “faith” of many people. These people are easily moved when they are not “grounded and settled” in the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ and in the understanding of the reality of their new existence “in Christ.”

CHRIST JESUS HAS LAID A FIRM FOUNDATION FOR ALL WHO WILL TRUST IN HIM TO SETTLE THEIR LIVES ON. HAVE YOU MOVED INTO YOUR HOUSE ON THE ROCK, OR ARE YOU JUST STANDING OUTSIDE LOOKING IN THE WINDOW?

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1. From Colossians 1:19 what did the word translated “fullness” mean to the early Gnostics? _____

2. How is Paul’s use of “fullness” in regard to Jesus Christ intended to correct this heresy? _____

3. What are the two characteristics of Christ’s fullness?
 - A. _____

 - B. _____

4. How does Colossians 1:20-23 correct the heretical teaching that the work of salvation is only partially completed and that no one can be fully saved? _____

5. What two words from Colossians 1:20 reveal the two absolute provisions of Christ’s work of salvation? Define them and discuss what they mean in relation to the believer.
 - A. _____

 - B. _____

6. Give the three observations about the fullness of reconciliation from II Corinthians 5:18-21.
 - A. (v 19) _____

 - B. (v 21) _____

 - C. (v 20) _____

7. What three statements from Colossians 1:21 reveal the believer’s PAST relationship to God?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
8. What four statements from Colossians 1:22 reveal how our Savior presents us to the Father?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____