



Colossians 1:19–20

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.

Reflection

I'm not sure there is anything more enduringly painful in the human condition than

estrangement; that is, living on in broken relationship with someone you love. Perhaps nowhere is this more near the surface than in family court and custody battles over small children, or in the shock when a husband or wife that you've loved dearly and faithfully for many years begins to inexplicably withdraw, and up and leaves you after many years of marriage. The pain of broken relationships and estrangement, whether it be in family court, a sudden divorce, a daughter who won't speak to you anymore and a grandchild you've never met, or the untimely death of someone you love. Hurt at the deepest relational level. Can there be anything more enduringly painful in the human condition?

If you've lived through any of these situa-

tions and are experiencing the sometimes sharp, sometimes dull but always present pain of separation, then, in a way, you're feeling exactly like God feels as he looks down upon his creation. Only God feels this pain to a far, far greater degree.

You see, all of humankind has turned their backs on God; billions of us. And for all of human history God has been patiently working to effect reconciliation and restore relationship with the children he loves both at the national level, but also at the level of the individual. In many and varied ways he is calling out to each and every one of us, loving us as well as he can from a distance and feeling keenly the barrier that sin presents in our relationship with him. Sin has so hardened most of us that we barely even acknowledge God's

existence any more, all the while simply taking for granted all the good things he gives us every day.

Perhaps you've been quietly and persistently working to mend a broken or faltering relationship for some time now, only to be disappointed at every turn. It seems hopeless, but you graciously and selflessly persist. In many ways then, your story is God's story, and at a much greater level the story of the Bible.

Right at the beginning, humankind fell, sin entered the world and we turned our backs on God, choosing to place love of self above love of him, and loving and serving created things over our Creator. A huge gulf opened up between us and God. On one side our holy, perfect and good, eter-

nal Creator who due to the very nature of his perfectly good and righteous character cannot abide the presence of sin. And on the other side, a willfully sinful people, cast out from his presence and destined to die, and face punishment largely through eternal separation from God who is the source of all goodness in the universe. Reconciliation seemed impossible, and you can only imagine the hurt on the side of God.

But immediately God began to pursue us. He graciously called a people to himself, blessed them and made extraordinary promises to them if they'd just keep up their end of the relationship and be faithful to him. God's plan was that through this people, he might effect reconciliation with all the peoples of the earth and set

the whole world right again, freed from its bondage to sin and death and back in right relationship with him for all eternity. But this people, Israel, failed and failed again, proving utterly unable (and for the greater part entirely unwilling) to save themselves, until one day God revealed the mystery hidden throughout the ages but now revealed in Jesus that his reconciliation with the people from every nation on earth would come about not through the nation of Israel per se, but through a single Israelite, one in the long line of the kings of Israel, the promised Messiah now revealed as the Son of God himself. This one, Jesus Christ, through his death and resurrection on the cross would take upon himself the punishment for the sins of the world, and thereby bring peace and reconciliation between God and humankind

by his blood shed on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. And so in this way, as in every other way, in God's saving plan for all humanity and the setting right of our entire planet by cleansing it of sin, in this way too, Jesus Christ has the supremacy. His death and reconciliation sits as the climax and centrepiece of all human history bringing peace and reconciliation between God and man and ridding the world of sin's curse and taint forever. Thus, it's fitting that Colossians 1:15–20 ends with today's two verses. I'll read the whole passage one final time today but our focus will be on its climax in verse 19 & 20.

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on

earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through 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 first-born 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.

In everything Jesus Christ has supremacy but somehow in God's economy Jesus

Christ's most supreme act and the one for which he will eternally be shrouded in glory is the peace and reconciliation that he has effected between God and mankind on the cross. That's why the highest heights of teaching about Jesus Christ in the Bible end with verse 20,

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.

Through Jesus' death and resurrection our world has been cleansed of Satan, sin and death and the barrier between mankind and God removed forever. In Christ we are a new creation, eternally cleansed and pure in the sight of God; we represent

the beginning of the renewal of all things. And through Christ's victory over Satan, sin and death on the cross the renewal of our whole world has begun. New creation is here. Our earth is progressively being healed and one day soon when Jesus returns the new heavens and the new earth will be ushered in. Even the very earth itself beneath our feet eagerly longs for this day, as we read in Romans 8,

19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory

of the children of God.

Think & Pray

Peace and reconciliation between God and humankind. The heartbeat of the Bible. Who is it that you need to reconcile with? How can you be an agent of peace and reconciliation in this world? How can you carry on the work of Jesus Christ and bring peace and reconciliation between God and the people that he has put in your life who are estranged from him? Or on a more personal level, is there some unconfessed sin in your life that you are carrying around that feels like a barrier in your relationship with God? Pray over these questions this morning as you give thanks and praise to God for Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.