

Man's Natural Condition

Col 1:19-21 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. 21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds,

This first phrase is a little bit tricky. Where it says “for it was the Father’s good pleasure for all fullness to dwell in Him,” the word Father isn’t in there. It literally says, “It was pleasing that all the fullness dwell in Him.” Some translations put “the fullness of the deity” there in italics, but that’s not really there in that verse. It IS in Colossians 2:9- “For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form,” but here in 1:19 it isn’t actually saying that. Some assume that this is what Paul means here as well and so insert it into this verse.

I don’t think that this is necessarily exactly what Paul is talking about here. I guess the way I see this verse—and I can’t speak with much authority on it— is that it is sort of Paul’s way of saying something similar to what T. Austin Sparks said once: “God has shut up everything of Himself within His Son, and it is not possible now to know or have anything of God outside of the Lord Jesus, His Son. God has made this a settled thing; it is final, it is conclusive.”

In other words, you’re never going to experience anything of what he’s just described – a redemption and a reconciliation and a deliverance... of being conveyed out of the kingdom darkness into the kingdom of His Son, and growing in spiritual wisdom and understanding and walking in a manner pleasing to the Lord— you’re never going to experience any of the substance, the fullness of these things except by knowing and experiencing Christ.

Paul has exalted Christ in relation to all things. God has locked up every spiritual reality is in Jesus Christ, and IS Jesus Christ. What I’m trying to say is that Jesus isn’t only the place of it, He’s the substance of it. Often when Christians read the phrase “in Christ” which appears over two hundred times in the New Testament, they think of “in Christianity” or “as members of the church.” Or sometimes they even understand that they’ve been translated and their soul actually

lives in Christ, but they don't understand that Christ is not only the *place* that these things are real, He is also the *substance* of them.

This is one of the first things that I began to see in the Light – no spiritual word has substance or definition other than Christ Himself. Christ is... pick a word! Christ is truth. Truth isn't a bunch of things about Christ, truth IS Christ who is God's wisdom, understanding, mind, light revealed in you! The actual defining of the truth isn't the words that describe Jesus Christ... Jesus Christ gives definition to those words.

You may say "I've looked up righteousness, justice, peace, etc., and now that I've looked up all these words, and I know that they're all talking about Jesus Christ, I now know what Jesus Christ is like!" No you don't! In fact, you've done something horrible! You've created a likeness in your own mind of what you think Jesus is like based on your own conceptions and written definitions of words. That's exactly the opposite of how it should work in your heart.

Seeing Christ, knowing Christ as the Spirit reveals Him, should be in your heart the defining of all these words. Seeing Christ should be coming to a living view given to you by the Spirit (which is called faith) and this is going to be the defining of love, and the knowing of righteousness in your heart.

In so many teachings and bible schools you're encouraged to do just the opposite. I mean, you're encouraged to seek a knowledge of Christ by studying words, rather than seek a knowledge of the words by knowing Christ. Do you see the difference?

Whether or not this is what was on Paul's heart when he wrote this verse or not, I still think it's true and worth spending a minute on. God has locked up all of spiritual life, salvation, truth, light in His Son. There are types and shadows of these realities available in the natural creation—there is natural light, natural relationships, natural truths—everything that Christ is in substance, there is a shadow of it in the natural creation. And anyone with a natural body can access these natural shadows. But if you want to experience the thing to which all of those natural shadows point; if you want to actually have your soul receive and know and walk in and stay in the things that all those natural shadows point to, then you have to find them where they are (in Christ) and as they are (as Christ), which is an experience of Christ. You're never going to find anything that is truly spiritual in nature and substance outside of Christ.

Someone may say "I'm not a Christian, but I still know that God loves me." But Paul says, the love of God is IN Christ Jesus. There is an invitation into God's love for all unbelievers... He may be

drawing you by His Spirit, and in some sense, manifesting kindness to you by drawing you into Christ. But if you're really going to experience that love and know that love, you have to come to where that love is a reality. Love is an experience. It's a relationship. You have to go to the place where God is actually able to pour out His Spirit, as it says in Romans 5, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts BY the Spirit that He's given us." That's only in Christ!

What if I refuse that Spirit? Well then you're refusing the love of God shed abroad in your heart. It's in Christ. It's part of the life and Spirit of Christ that God puts in you. You have to receive it. You have to allow that implanted word to come and establish His throne in your heart. And even just receiving it is not enough, because you can *have* salvation and not *know* salvation that you have. You can *have* life but still abide and walk in death. You can have the light of life; you can have Christ and still spend your life walking around in the vanity of your own natural mind. In that case, you have received something you don't know. To know it you have to see the life, the person in whom it's real and know Him.

When Paul says, "All the fullness dwells in Him," I think you could go back and look at everything he's talked about so far—the fullness of His expression, or the image, or the redemption, the salvation—everything he's described so far in Colossians. Paul is saying you're not going to find it anywhere else. God was pleased – it was pleasing, right—for God to make all those things available in the Son and nowhere else.

Ok, the next verse, "And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross, through Him I say whether things on earth or things in heaven." It says through Him to reconcile *all* things to Himself, and some people grab hold of that scripture and use it to talk about what's called Universal Reconciliation, which is the belief that all people, believer or unbeliever, have been reconciled to Christ. There are a few verses you can twist towards that end if you want to, but you have to contradict about 300 other verses to do it.

It is true that all things *in Christ* are reconciled to God. But it is *not* true that all things are in Christ... at least not in the sense of receiving and being one with His life and having been joined to Him in a living, saving way. All things *in Christ* are reconciled, but not all things have received the reconciliation that is in Christ.

What is reconciliation? Or what is peace? We talked about peace several weeks ago because Paul starts out with the greeting of "grace and peace" to the church. And so we took a week and we talked about peace. Once I lay a bit of a foundation for some of these words, we don't have to spend as much time on them when we bump into them again. Peace and reconciliation have to do

with the death of what is contrary to God. It's important that we say it like that and understand it like that. **Peace isn't God making friends with His enemies. Peace isn't a treaty between two different seeds, two different kinds. Throughout all of the Old Testament, Israel wasn't allowed to make that kind of peace. The only way they were allowed to make peace in the land was by killing everything or casting out everything that was in the land prior to that. That is a picture of the kind of peace that God is making through Christ in your soul. Peace is not friendship among two different kinds; peace is the elimination of a contrary kind.**

When you look at this verse or when you look at this reality of peace, it's always in the context of death. Here it says, "Having made peace through the blood of His cross." And a little later it says, "Yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death." **How did He grant you peace? He killed you. He crucified you with His Son. He didn't make peace with Adam; He made peace in Himself with your soul by crucifying Adam. Do you see the difference?**

He didn't make peace by extending an olive branch to the Adamic man because He killed Jesus. No, He put the Adamic man IN Jesus and crucified him, removing from His sight, judging and separating from Himself that man that had fallen short, and offering your soul a way out of that man into a new man—Christ. The difference is so incredibly important and huge.

So much of the time we don't understand that the exodus is out of one man and into another. The exodus is for the soul. The soul is saved, but what we've called and known to be "our life" – the nature of our first birth—that is evil. That does not come into Christ. That may linger in the unrenewed mind and need to be put out of our hearts through light, the revealing of Christ, but none of the first passes over into the second. The cross draws a line; it separates two totally different things. It takes Israel out of Egypt into a covenant and they never see Egypt again. And from then on it's a process of getting Egypt out of their hearts; a process which they rebelled against, as do we most of the time.

Nevertheless, the reconciliation with Egypt involved leaving it behind. In a sense, God reconciled Himself to the land of Egypt and He didn't have to blow the entire thing up to do it. He just had to cut it off from the people in and amongst whom He dwelt. He just had to separate Himself from it, putting it on the other side of the Red Sea and saying "I have nothing to do with that land of sin and death." He pulled out of that land something for Himself in which He was going to dwell, in which He was going to glorify Himself, and He left behind Pharaoh and his kingdom and the sons of darkness and death. That's exactly what God does to establish peace in us.

If you look in other places, like in Ephesians 2:14 it says, “For He Himself is our peace.” How? He made both one—the Jew and the Gentile, all man that comes to Christ, He made them one, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, creating in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”

What did God do to make peace? He forgave your sins? No, that’s not right. There is forgiveness in Christ, but the way that you get into Christ is through death. The way that the peace is established, the way that you’re reconciled isn’t by just pardoning what you’ve done wrong, it’s by crucifying what you ARE, bringing you into His life, and in Christ there is indeed forgiveness of sins. In Him we have the redemption and the forgiveness of sins.

In Him those things are realities. They’re not realities outside of Him. If you pay attention, you’ll notice that in so many different places only after He had brought the people out of Egypt and established a covenant with them did He show them that there was forgiveness of sins available in that covenant. They could then, once they were in the covenant, experience God as their covering, have Christ as their life, and have the High Priest as their relationship; *then* all of their sins they could bring to the altar and have them divided and dragged outside of the camp, and separated them from themselves.

But when you see God dealing with them in Egypt to bring them out of that land and into a relationship, He says nothing about forgiveness of sin. If forgiveness of sins is how we got into the relationship, you’d think God would have mentioned something about it in whole Exodus 12, 13, 14 exodus from Egypt. But what He mentions is the death of a lamb and all the people going into that death, painting that death over their door, entering into it and receiving judgment, receiving the death of the destroyer and then coming out in a new life; coming out in a new light inside of a cloud, a cloud that separates two people, and then a sea that separates two peoples and two lands, two kings. Now that they’re in the new, now that they’ve been taken out of the one and transferred into another... “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have forgiveness of sin.”

I say this because if you don’t understand it, then you’ll never really come to understand peace and reconciliation with God. God makes peace by taking you out of something that He’ll never have peace with. What fellowship is there between light and darkness? What fellowship is there between flesh and spirit? There is none. So He takes you out of the flesh, as Romans talks about — “Formerly when you were in the flesh...” He takes you out of the flesh and deposits you in the Son of His love and puts His Spirit in you. That’s how He establishes the peace. But then to

actually cause you to experience peace He puts to death in your heart every single thought and imagination and high thing and stronghold that has arisen up against the true knowledge of Him.

That's why there's a cross that is a finished work – being baptized into His death and raised with Him in newness of life. There's also a carrying of your cross daily. There is a walking daily and an experiencing of that cross daily. What is that? It's the daily experience of that finished work. It's the revealing of that finished work in you in such a way that all that God has crucified and made dead to Himself becomes dead in your heart....it becomes as dead to you as it is to Him.

That's been on my heart recently. I have been seeing how dangerous it is to talk about reconciliation or salvation or redemption or justification as external transactions; as things that God did 'out there' somewhere and now I have a new status... or now I'm in this new condition called justified, reconciled, or at peace with God.

There is truth to that, and I believe I've seen clearly that there is truth to the one time finished work reality, but it isn't enough to stand back and "claim" yourself to be in a status or state of existence that you have no experience of. In other words, reconciliation is not supposed to be just some *thing* that you think that you have with God. It's supposed to be a reality, an experience that fills up your soul in the same way that David's kingdom filled up the land of Israel. It's supposed to go throughout the land cutting off every uncircumcised remnant and tearing down every idol and pulling down the high places. It's supposed to spread through the land of your heart in such a way that the reconciliation is felt, is known. It comes to be a sensible, tangible reality in your soul and not just some thing, status, condition, etc. you say you have.

I feel like the church is a bit guilty of talking about these things as mere external transactions or imputations. "God has imputed to me the righteousness of Christ." That's true, but what do you know of that righteousness? It's a *kingdom* of righteousness. When I say it's a kingdom, I mean it has a king, and He is killing things! The king is supposed to be putting to death all uncircumcised flesh. That's what the king does in this kingdom!

If you're in the kingdom and you're of the wrong seed, you need to look out because the King is going to kill you and put to death everything that is contrary to His nature. The popular view of Christianity today has very little to do with this. We like to talk about being in the kingdom of God or going to the kingdom of God one day or having reconciliation with God. But we fail to stop and face the fact that yes, the Lord has reconciled me to His Son, and yet He did it by moving into the hostile land and environment of my soul. The Seed of God lives in a place that needs to be

conquered. His kingdom needs to be expanded. David needs to be revealed so 'the brethren go out to Him' in their understanding of His headship.

I feel like there are a lot of wrong understandings of these things in our hearts and the end result is that we actually think that because of Jesus, because Jesus died, God actually *accepts* our sin. Or God accepts our contrariness, or God winks at it and lets it slide. That's just not true. The peace that we experience with God is supposed to slay the enmity in us. It's supposed to spread. It's supposed to fill us and make true in us, and cause us to know and experience, the truth as it is in Christ.

I don't think that most Christians are actually looking for an excuse to stay in sin, but neither are we looking or desiring or expecting to grow up in the fullness of the image of Christ. We think we do bad things and maybe we wish we didn't, and meanwhile we're just thankful we're in this status called "righteousness." But friends, there is a King who wants to conquer the entire land. There should be an inward transformation, an inward conformity to the nature and life of the Person who is our life. That government should expand.

Reconciliation is an established fact even for a newborn believer, but it is also the desire of the Lord to fill the entire land and to make the entire land congruent with the nature and mind and purpose of the king. Paul says. "I'm in labor until Christ is formed in you." And he says, "He desires to present all men perfect, full grown in the presence of God."

There are a lot of verses that talk about the reality that the thing we've received, though it is perfect in itself, needs to conquer a hostile land. It needs to grow and fill up the soul. If it doesn't, it's really sad. We can live our lives much like the Israelites did with our hearts fixed on our own expectations and desires for God and not at all turned to know His expectation and His purpose for us.

Verse 21: "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you."

There are a lot of things we could say about this verse, but the first thing that comes to mind is that this is a great description of our natural condition. In some ways this is the very first thing that I saw clearly when I started to experience some light working in my heart. I think to some extent, it's like that with everyone.

When you begin to see Christ for the first time—and I mean really see Him, not just believe that He is true; not just accept that He died on the cross... when your truly heart opens and light shines, this is one of the first things you see in His light. You see that apart from Him, your natural condition is alienated or cut off and without relationship, totally contrary and hostile in mind (Romans 8:6—“The mind of the flesh is death. The mind of the Spirit is life and peace.”) And you see how impossible it is for the natural mind to even subject itself to God's law. It simply cannot; it is contrary to it and of a whole different nature. The natural mind is running as fast as it can in the opposite direction. It lives for self. It cannot live for God. It cannot serve two masters. It is a bad tree producing bad fruit. These are the things that you see in the light.

And when Paul says “engaged in evil deeds,” those are just the manifestations of the wrong nature, the manifestations of this wrong mind. That is man’s natural condition... there’s nothing good in him—not one thing. “There is no one who does good, not even one” Paul says, and there are many scriptures like that. These were the first verses that became real in my heart when I started to see.

Someone was telling me this week that they’re reading T. Austin Spark’s School of Christ. Sparks is so good at communicating—the “otherness” of Christ. He says things like, ‘When you have gone to your very best, you have not even begun the nature of Christ. You cannot approach it. It is 100% “other-than.” His thoughts aren’t just different; it’s a whole contrary mind. His nature isn’t just better, it’s something perfectly foreign to the human soul. The *otherness* of Christ... He’s not just better than you, He’s different in every way. He’s foreign.

Jesus is not just better at loving; He has a kind of love that you don’t even understand. The love that the natural man understands is a drawing of things towards self. You love things so you grab them and pull them as close to you as you can. Love is about self in the natural man. But God’s love isn’t just stronger, it’s totally different. It’s of a different nature. It’s works *away* from self. God’s mind isn’t just smarter or wiser; His thoughts are higher than the heavens are above the earth. Everything about Him is different and contrary. I think you can’t really see Christ in your heart without being struck dead with His otherness. You see Him and you see yourself as alienated, hostile in mind, and engaged in evil deeds.

Which ones are the evil deeds? *All of them!* Even the good ones! If they came out from an evil seed, they’re evil deeds. Even the ones that look friendly and are good for society! They’re dead works and evil deeds unless they come out from Christ, from the only One who is good.

How are you going to do truly good deeds if the One who is good is not the source and the life? In Romans 14 Paul says, “That which does not come out from faith [from His light, from a living view of Christ] is sin.” Man has no idea how true this is. Once you begin to really see this it doesn’t matter how much you think you’ve learned as a Christian, how many times you’ve read the bible, or how many great Christian authors you’ve read or people you’ve listened to, all of a sudden the only thing you know is this incredible contrast between two foreign seeds, two totally different seeds. If you really are seeing, you know in your first flashes of light that you’ve never gone this way before.

Remember that verse in Joshua when they were entering into the land and he said, “You’ve never gone this way before,”? Everything was on the other side of the Jordan, everything was totally foreign.

I remember when I first saw the Lord there were a bunch of Christian leaders I respected, books I had read and loved, people that I’d totally admired. There were people that I thought were the real deal—people who prayed and fasted all the time, people that taught about intimacy with God, etc. And then... in one bright flash of light I went from totally admiring these people to feeling sorry for them and desiring them to see in this same light. I don’t mean to say I was any better. I was just as bad, or worse! It’s that I just saw so clearly that what they were saying, and what I’d said along with them, was out from the wrong seed, the wrong man. It was totally contrary to life and nature that I was now seeing.

It was so incredibly shocking. It was like in one moment I woke up in another place and I saw that I’d never been there before. And I saw that all of my Christianity—full of fasting, praying, serving the poor, going to jails, starting homeless ministries— was on the wrong side of God's judgment. I saw the division. I saw with clarity the hostility of my mind against Him and I saw the alienation of that seed from Him. I saw that everything that comes out from that seed is an evil deed.

I knew it in such a clear, undeniable way. There was no way to argue with what I was seeing. Now, I didn’t feel condemned by it—I just saw it.... I saw that and I knew it was true. **What did I see? I saw that I had never walked in this light before.** I may have seen a glimpse of it when I was born again, but I hadn’t seen it since. And I’d done nothing in it; true light had motivated nothing that I’d done. Everything that I was doing in Christianity was an expression of *me* trying to live for Christ instead of Christ living in me. Everything! And I was a pretty dedicated guy! I wasn’t doing it for “works” religion—I thought I was doing it to please God and know God and love God. My heart, tears, and time were invested in it and yet it was all the wrong seed.

Everything that I've said in any one of my teachings that you've listened to or read in my books... everything started to grow out from seeing this foundation. When I saw this, I knew that I didn't even know what it meant to be a Christian. I knew that I knew Christianity but I didn't know Christ. I knew that I had never seen anything rightly. I'd never read the bible before—even though I had chunks of it memorized. I knew that I'd never done a single thing that had any merit or value before the Lord. I knew it! And I'm not being hard on myself... I'm telling you that this is what you see in the light.

And everything that I've done since then that will stand in the presence of God has stood upon this foundation: the division between these two seeds; the recognition, the knowing, the certainty that I am, by nature, something contrary.

Then light began to shine and I turned towards it and I wanted to see more, even though I knew it would expose everything that was dead and dark in me (which was everything that was in me!). I was a perfectly dark environment. And I'm not talking about *before* I was a Christian—I'm talking about *after* I was a Christian, during eight years of extremely zealous Christianity where I was doing nothing but trying to serve the Lord. I saw the entire thing to be absolute contrariness to the Lord and I knew that if that light got any brighter, I would see everything of myself to be just that way. And it did get brighter... and I had the option to either flee from that judgment or stand in that judgment. I could try to run from the day of the Lord and hide in some rocks, OR I could stand there in the day of the Lord and say, "Show me the truth"... and let the truth judge me.

Here's the judgment: "Light comes into the world but men love darkness." You can turn to that light and follow Him and know the light of life and then you'll see that only good works are the works that are wrought in God. That's what He says in John 3:19-21. You can run from that light—and that's what most people do because their deeds are evil. Which deeds? All of them! Which ones are the dead ones? All of them-- all of them that come out from the dead seed.

You can run and hide OR you can turn to the light. And if you turn to the light, it's not going to be pretty. You're not going to see anything in that light that's going to be able to remain. You just won't. You're going to see a totally different seed, a different light and you're going to understand that the only thing that is good for your soul, the only thing that you could possibly do that's good or find that's good is the elimination of one man in your heart, and the increase of Another. Suddenly nothing has to do with what you do with your flesh for God, it has to do with living by the faith of the Son of God. It has to do with Not I but Christ who lives in me. It has to do with working and striving according to His working in you. It has to do with Him as the author and finisher of everything that God accepts in you. "For God is the one in you both to will and to work

for His good pleasure.” All those verses start to come alive and you know in that light with such an insane certainty and you can’t doubt it. It’s right in front of your face. There is nothing to hold up in front of the Lord and say “What about this, Lord?”

People always say to me “Don’t you think there was something good in your years of doing homeless ministry?” No! Not in me... not in one thing that I ever did. I suppose it's possible that the Lord used the times that I read from the bible to homeless people—I don’t know... But it wasn’t because I was seeing or knowing anything real. It wasn't because His light was constraining my soul.

And everything that’s happened that I’ve tried to share in the last ten years has been established on that foundation and I’ve never moved on from it. I’ve just seen it to get bigger. I’ve seen more and more of the death of the one seed and the increase of the other, but if I ever lose sight of that division, of the cross that cuts between these two kinds and these two natures and seeds, then all I can offer is death; all I can offer is the wrong seed. I have to keep my heart turned to the light and in the light I see what is dead, what is wrong, what is adamic, etc... And I see what is right.

If I can stay there and abide in that light then I have fellowship with the Father, I have fellowship with others who are in the light, and to a degree I can speak out from that light and describe things that I see in His marvelous light. I can call people into His light. I can allow that light to be the movement and motivation of my soul. And to the measure that I’m experiencing that light, I can say, “Not I but Christ.”

But friends, if I write this down as something that God has shown me and I memorize it and it becomes a dead memory inside instead of the living perspective and view in my heart, well then I can do nothing. Then everything I do will be out from the wrong man.

What’s the judgment? John 3:19 “This is the judgment, that light has come but men love darkness.” The judgment in itself is the cross, but the light shows you that cross. The light opens your eyes to see that division. The light has come and it shows you a judgment. It’s a judgment between two seeds, two contrary things. You must turn towards the light and face the day of the Lord – which is a day that’s against all things that have risen up; against all the cedars of Lebanon and tall towers... against everything that’s risen up that needs to be brought low. It’s a day that brings low all high things. It’s a day that cuts off the enemies of the Lord in YOU. It’s a day that exposes the Lord’s perspective. It’s a day that leaves no man standing. The Lord alone will be exalted that day.