

## Colossians 1:20-22

Did you know that in a PG-13 there are 2.5 dramatic sequences involving violence per hour? And, that there have been 17,695 such sequences in 945 movies since 1950? I don't know who came up with that or how you measure dramatic scenes per hour but that's what they say. Now, I grew up in an era that rarely saw graphic violence and as I heard the 2 days of news coverage I wondered to myself are we so afraid of our kids seeing blood that we diminish the reality of life?

I don't want to expose my kids to regular violence but at the same time I want my kids to understand that life can be violent. I've never tried hide blood from my kids and growing up in my house they have been exposed to a certain amount of blood and if you use today's understanding of blood, then violence too. Lexi learned how to skin and clean a squirrel last Monday evening. It was a little bloody and maybe the approach I used was a little violent but at the end of the evening we had 2 dead squirrels and 6 fish. Now for someone like me, that's what I call surf and turf.

I think we forget that Adam's sin was covered through the shedding of innocent blood. It wasn't his blood that was spilled to cover his nakedness it was an animal that God made clothes from. The Bible makes no attempt to cover up the graphic nature of Jesus' death. Jesus didn't either. At the last supper he took bread and broke it and said this bread is my body which is going to be broken for you. Then poured a cup of wine, gave it to his disciples, and said drink it all, this cup is my blood which is shed for you. Or to a crowd of 5,000 in John 6 who had just eaten, He said, "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you."

**Vs. -21 You were alienated (shut out) from God and enemies (hostile towards God) because of your evil behavior.** Without Christ we live in a state of hostility towards God. If you want to know why things are messed up in the world it's because we are living in rebellion and are hostile toward God. Just last Thursday I saw on the news that a school board in Southeastern Ohio voted 5-0 to remove a portrait of Jesus from the high school office to avoid a lawsuit from the ACLU. Why? Because the picture of Jesus as the good shepherd is offensive. And if you wonder if the school board made the right decision? Well, you should probably look about 30 miles away to Jackson where they had to pay \$95,000 in damages because they refused to remove the picture of Jesus at their school. And, they were forced to remove it anyway.

But why is it offensive to have a picture of Jesus in a school office but not a big sign for the Lions Den on 23? Because the world we live in is hostile toward God. And when I say the world I hope you understand that it's not the government or some secret society of a handful of people doing all of this. It's the response of regular people who are hostile toward God. The world is those who have not been saved. It's your neighbors, co-workers, and friends that are living in a state of hostility towards God.

So we are hostile towards God and therefore cut off from him in our unregenerated condition. But God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us. Now here is where I break from the contemporary church movement on love. Because we're all about love now. Love is crucial to my existence as a Christian but contrary to what you hear today love will not change the world. You know how I know it won't. Because it hasn't. Love is not a new concept that we just figured out in America. Love has been around for a long time and is the world better because of love? Maybe I should rephrase that. Has the world gotten better because we love? No, it hasn't. Just look back at the 60's. They had lots of love but did it make the world a better place?

God's love didn't save us. God's demonstration of His love saved us and that was the death of His Son. That's how God demonstrated His love. He didn't demonstrate redemptive love by feeding the 5,000 or by healing the sick. God demonstrated His redemptive love by sending His Son to die. So when we were enemies Christ died for us and in that God demonstrated His love.

And so it is in Jesus' death that we are reconciled. God has reconciled (restored) you by Christ's physical body through death. Reconciled means to be brought back. We are brought back to God through the death of Jesus on the cross, and we needed to be brought back because we'd rebelled against him. We're not as good as we like to think we are as a culture, we're sinners who rebelled against God and the only way we could be brought back was through Jesus.

**Vs. 20 and through Him (Christ) God reconciled all things to Himself, by making peace through His blood shed on the cross.** Here is where it starts to get really violent and bloody. God's plan for restoring those who rebelled against Him was not to get them to start going to church and living better lives. It was a plan that involved violence in its most extreme form. Saying crucifixion is violent is an understatement. We don't like violence, although we apparently like watching it movies; we like things to be done humanly and as decently as possible. That's why we're okay buying meat from the store but not killing it in the backyard. We want to hide the gruesome reality that for us to live requires the death of something else. So when we sanitize death or diminish the violent nature of death, it really makes us struggle with what price God paid for our salvation. Jesus' death was violent and if I were to say that blood spattered or sprayed from His wounds you might be a little offended by that. But everything God did with the OT sacrifices was designed to make people understand that without blood being shed, sin cannot be atoned for. Jesus atoned for our sin by shedding His own blood.

Our physical lives are sustained through the death of an animal and we don't always like it, but we get it. So too, our spiritual lives are sustained through the death of Jesus; for us to live involves death. Death in all its violent reality is what paid the price for our sin and granted us the privilege of eternal life. We're not saved

because we cleaned up our act and started living a better life. We're saved because Jesus shed his blood on the cross.

**Vs. – 22 You have been reconciled through the death of Christ's physical body.**

The KJV says the body of His flesh, which is just a more literal interpretation and I like it because it doesn't imply, but states clearly that Jesus died a physical death. He had to be dead otherwise there could be no resurrection.

I'm not heartless and cruel toward animals but at the same time I'm not afraid to kill one to eat it. I hunt to kill an animal and normally when I shot something by the time I retrieve it, it is dead. But butchering chickens is different and as I get older it seems to get harder. Because I catch the chickens, which are trapped in a cage, with my own hands and I secure their feet and hang them upside down. After they have calmed down I make one quick small cut along the side of their necks and sever the jugular and the chicken without much noise or commotion hangs there and bleeds out. And the hard part for me is watching the chicken as it hangs there and its life slowly passes away. The chicken doesn't really look at me, although my wife thinks they do, nor does it even comprehend what's going on. But do you realize as Jesus hung on the cross with His life slowly slipping away, He was consciously aware of what was happening and what was going on? He had the cognitive ability to say to John – take care of my mom. He had the awareness to say – Father, forgive them. And when He was slowly giving up His life He saw me, and He saw my condition, and He knew that His death would give me life. Jesus knew you and He knew your condition and in spite of who you were and what you did, He sacrificed His body so you could be reconciled back to God.

**Without blemish and free from accusation.** Christ reconciled you.

Reconciliation is the processing of settling an account or paying your obligations. So Christ willingly sacrificed His physical body so your account could be settled with God. And in doing so you are presented to God without blemish, that is the evil behavior that brought separation was removed from you and God sees you without any sin. Not only your offense, but the guilt of your offense and scars and damage that resulted from the offense. What that means is that when God sees you He doesn't see the disobedient rebellious person who used to live at war with Him. What He sees in you through Jesus is one of His own children who has finally returned home, and, as child who has returned home, there is no one to bring accusation against you. Now, the Devil tries, and he spends his time accusing you but there is not accusation against you which has any merit in the eyes of God.

My family knows things about me that none of you do. And sometimes when we get together as a family my mom or dad or one of my siblings will bring up some past event of complete stupidity on my part. Not to accuse but mainly to laugh about it. The past, for some people, might not be humorous; it might contain baggage and problems they would rather forget and when Christ reconciles us to God, not only is the account wiped out but we are free from any future accusation of past events.

The gospel message is hope and freedom and love and grace but those words, which we sometimes use loosely, and sometimes take for granted, were purchased through the death of Jesus Christ. The great freedom we enjoy today is directly the result of Jesus shed blood. Yes, it should have been your blood that was shed, it should have been you that died for what you had done, but God chose to sacrifice His son in your place.