

“The Work of Reconciliation”

June 4, 2017

Colossians 1:19-23

I. Introduction

In Paul’s day Christianity was new. There weren’t thousands or even hundreds of years of traditions and teachings. Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension, Pentecost had occurred less than 30 years before Paul wrote this Letter to the Colossians. The New Testament wasn’t compiled or even completely written yet, so when so-called learned men came along teaching that the Christians in Colossae didn’t have the right information about Jesus and eternity, it was easy for them “to draw disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). Paul wrote the Letter to the Colossians to combat these false teachers, but before he could attack their false teachings, Paul had to remind the Christians what they already knew.

The Gospel, Christianity, is based on the identity of Jesus Christ, so Paul wrote about the supremacy or pre-eminence of Christ. As we saw last week, Jesus is God—in every way, shape and form. And because Jesus is God, He was able to do what no mere man could ever do: reconcile lost sinners to a holy God. When the first man and woman sinned, they declared war on God; but God did not declare war on them. Instead, God sought out Adam and Eve in the Garden; He provided a covering for their sin. In the same way God seeks after all sinners, in Matthew 11:28, He said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” 2 Peter 3:9 says that the Lord “is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

So, after Paul reminded the Colossians of who Jesus is, he went on to remind them of who they were and are as he wrote of their reconciliation. To “reconcile” means “to bring into agreement or harmony” or “to restore.” When people change from being at enmity with each other to being at peace or harmony, they are said to be reconciled. When the Bible speaks of reconciliation, it refers to the

restoration of a right relationship between God and man. Paul reviewed for his readers their own spiritual experience regarding reconciliation. He began with their past alienation.

II. The Work of Reconciliation

A. Their past alienation. Before they came to make Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior, the Colossians, like all people, were separated—alienated—from God. **Romans 3:23** says, “**For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**” and as sinners, they were enemies of God. Although they had not received a divine law like God had given to the Israelites, these Gentiles knew the truth about God through creation and conscience—**Romans 1:20** says, “**For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.**” Both in attitude and action, they, as sinners, were at war with God. **Romans 8:7** says, “**The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.**” Turn to **John 3:19-20**. The problem wasn't ignorance; the problem is a willful love of sin. This is why the unbeliever must repent; he must change his mind before he can be saved or reconciled. The Colossians had heard and had repented so Paul moved to their present reconciliation.

B. Their present reconciliation. Paul went on to remind them that they did not reconcile themselves to God; it was God who took the initiative in His love and grace. The Father sent the Son to die on a cross so that sinners might be reconciled to God—turn to **Romans 5: 6-8**. Back in Colossians, Paul emphasized “**Christ's physical body**” because the false teachers denied the Incarnation and taught that Jesus didn't have a real human body—but as **1 Peter 2:24** says, “**He himself bore our sins *in his body* on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.**” Contrary to the false teachers, the New Testament makes it clear that Jesus did have a human body—Jesus was fully God and fully man.

The purpose of reconciliation with God is personal holiness. God reconciles a person to Himself so that that person may share God's life and holiness. Jude wrote in [Jude 24](#) that we will one day stand "before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy." Paul wrote in Colossians that, after they are reconciled with God, Christians are presented to God "holy, without blemish and free from accusation." **1. Reconciled Christians are "holy,"** i.e. set apart from sin and devoted to God. Quoting from the Old Testament, Peter wrote in [1 Peter 1:16](#), "For it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" **2. Reconciled Christians are "without blemish."** When God looks at His children, He sees no blemish on them; [Ephesians 1:4](#) says, God chose us "to be holy and blameless in His sight." **3.** Finally, once **Christians** are reconciled to God, they are "**free from accusation,**" i.e. no charges can be brought against them, all sins are forgiven. As the psalmist wrote in [Psalm 103:12](#), "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." After one is reconciled with God, there is no need to seek a perfect standing before Him; no works are necessary to "earn" heaven—upon repentance, every Christian has a perfect standing in Christ. [Galatians 4:7](#) says, "So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir." We don't work our way up—we are already there; the process of spiritual growth, i.e. growing as Christians, involves becoming in practice what we are in reality before God. Finally, Paul wrote of...

C. Their future glorification. Paul concluded this section by urging the Colossians to hold fast to the gospel that had been proclaimed to them and, for that matter, throughout the world. They are reconciled with God and the hope—the assurances they had believed would see fruition in their future glorification. All of God's children will one day be with Christ in heaven—as Paul wrote in [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#), "We will be with the Lord forever."

But until then, they were to "continue in their faith, established and firm." Paul was saying, "If you are truly saved, and built on the firm or solid foundation, Jesus Christ, then you will continue in the

faith and nothing will move you. You have heard the Gospel and trusted Jesus Christ, and He has saved you.” In other words, by walking in faith in the hard times as well as the easy times, they would be a testimony to others and prove that they are saved. Turn to [Luke 8:4-8, 11-15](#). By falling away, they would give evidence that they were never truly saved. Jesus said in [Matthew 7:16](#), “**By their fruit you will recognize them.**”

III. Conclusion

Paul’s words to the Colossians are also for us: We must never forget who we are before God. We are justified—before we knew God, we were sinners, guilty and condemned, but through faith God declared us righteous—[Romans 8:33](#) says, “**Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.**” We are redeemed—we have been purchased by the blood of the Lamb—[Galatians 3:13](#) says, “**Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.**” We are forgiven—as sinners we stood before God as debtors, but the debt was paid and forgotten--[Ephesians 1:7](#) says, “**In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.**” We have been reconciled—as sinners we stood before God as enemies but now we are His children; even His ambassadors—turn to [2 Corinthians 5:18-20](#). Finally, we have been adopted, we are children of God, but we aren’t second class children—[Romans 8:17](#) says, “**Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.**” With assurance, without any doubt, we can say with Job in [Job 19:25-27](#), “**I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes.**” And with John in [Revelation 22:20](#) we say, “**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**”

