

Colossians 3 – Reconciled by Christ
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We are in a sermon series through Paul's letter to the Colossians. The theme of Colossians is Christ Above All. In this letter, Paul shows how Christ is supreme – all sufficient – not just part of a philosophy or religion – He is Lord of Creation and Lord of all.

Today's sermon is entitled Reconciled by Christ. It's based Colossians 1:19-23

*For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.
 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

Let's start with verses 19-20:

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

Notice that God took the initiative to reconcile us to Himself. And He does that reconciliation through Christ and Christ alone. All the fullness of God dwells in Christ and you don't need anything or anyone else to be reconciled to God. Jesus is enough!

False teachers in Colossae had people believing the same lie many people believe today – that there are many ways to God. Paul show us that there are not many paths to God. There is one and His name is Jesus!

There is no other way to be saved, forgiven and reconciled to God.

Jesus is not one of many truths – He is THE TRUTH.

Jesus is not one of many ways to God – He is THE WAY.

1 Timothy 2:5 says:

There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

The word mediator means reconciler! The important word in this Colossians passage is reconcile. Reconcile means to heal a broken relationship. To make friendly again. To bring back into harmony.

For instance, we use the word reconciliation for a married couple who gets back together after a time of separation. Reconciliation can happen only after there is repentance and forgiveness and they make peace with each other.

Likewise, we are reconciled with God only when there is repentance and forgiveness. And forgiveness only comes through the blood of Jesus. Sin had stolen our peace with God but the blood of the cross restored it.

Now, some people twist Colossians 1:19-20 to teach a heresy called ultimate reconciliation or universalism.

There are non-Christian universalists who believe that Jesus is only one of many ways to salvation. Then there are Christian universalists who believe that Jesus is the only way to be saved – but that everyone will end up saved in the end. They take verses like Philippians 2:9-11 which says that ultimately every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to mean that everyone will be saved – even Satan and demons.

But this actually means that true believers are those who acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ in this lifetime. In the end – at the final judgment – everyone will acknowledge that Jesus is indeed Lord. But that doesn't mean everyone will be saved.

The Bible teaches that there are saved people and lost people. There are people going to heaven and people going to hell. Those who are in Christ on earth will be with Christ in heaven. Those who are not reconciled to Christ will spend eternity apart from Him. That's called Hell! In Matthew 25:41 Jesus said that in the final judgment – God will say to wicked unbelievers –

Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

That's why it's so important to be reconciled to God through Christ.

Reconciliation results in peace with God. Without reconciliation, there will be no peace. Romans 5:1 says:

Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Because of the blood of the cross – we are reconciled TO God and have peace WITH God.

I've heard many times – when someone is dying – people say, "I hope they made peace with God." But that peace with God only comes through reconciliation and reconciliation only comes through the blood of the cross!

Before reconciliation happens – we are enemies of God! Verse 21 says:

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled...

Paul reminds of us who we were before we were reconciled to God. We should not glory in our past sins – but we should also not forget them. We don't need to be sin-conscious – but we need to remember where we came from. To be preoccupied with sin is not healthy – but to forget where we came from results in lack of gratitude and worship for what Christ did for us.

God reminds us of who we were so we realize what Jesus did for us in order to save us.

If you see your sin as a little sin – you will see Jesus as a little Savior!

If you see your sin as great sin – you will see Jesus as a great Savior!

In Luke 7:36-47 One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so He went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind Him at his feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is — that she is a sinner." Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said.

"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said. Then Jesus turned to the woman and pointed out how Simon received Him into his house, but the woman extravagantly loved Him and gave to Him.

Then Jesus said:

"Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven — for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

This is why Paul reminds us how much we've been forgiven in Colossians.

Before we were saved – we were lost.

Before we experienced reconciliation – we experienced alienation.

Before we were made righteous – we were wicked.

Before we were friends of God – we were enemies of God.

We need to get past this modern-day nonsense that says God loves us because we're so loveable or God saves us because we're so worthy. Nonsense! God loves us because He is love. God saves us because Christ is worthy.

You might think that you were not hostile to God before you were saved. You might believe that you were disinterested and indifferent towards God. But the Bible teaches that indifference toward God is hostility toward God. There is no neutrality when it comes to God – you are either for Him or against Him! In Matthew 12:30, Jesus said:

He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

I like how the Message Bible says it:

This is war, and there is no neutral ground. If you're not on my side, you're the enemy; if you're not helping, you're making things worse.

Many people try to live their lives like they were Switzerland. For centuries, Switzerland has adhered to a policy of neutrality in global conflicts. In fact, Switzerland has the oldest policy of military neutrality in the world; it has not participated in a foreign war since its neutrality was established by the Treaty of Paris in 1815. That treaty declares Switzerland's perpetual neutrality.

Many people think they can live their lives with perpetual neutrality regarding spiritual things. They say, "Is there a God? Maybe – maybe not. I'm neutral. Is Jesus Lord? Maybe – maybe not. I'm neutral."

They might think that – but Jesus says they are living a delusion. Not making a decision is a decision! And Jesus made it clear that if you are not for Him, you are against Him. You are His enemy. Romans 5:8-11 says:

God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him!

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

This is good news today!

While we were still sinners – Christ died for us!

While we were enemies of God – we were reconciled to God.

If we were saved by His death – how much more will we be saved by His resurrection power and life!

And if we were justified by His blood – we are saved from God's wrath!

This is something to rejoice about!

You don't have to fear the wrath of God! If you are in Christ – you were in Him when He was on the cross. That means the wrath of God has already been poured out on you and God is not mad at you anymore! You have gone from being enemies to being friends!

It is interesting to note that Colossians 1:21 says that being enemies with God originates in the mind. It was not merely by wicked works, or by an evil life; it was wrong thinking in the mind.

Wrong thinking leads to wrong behavior. You can't change the way you live without having a change of heart, a change of mind and a change of beliefs! If we don't have a change of mind - the rest of verse 21 goes on to say it will lead to wicked works. However, Christ has reconciled us. Verse 22 explains how –

...in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—

Here we see it is by the work of the cross that Christ reconciles us. The phrase “in the body of his flesh” is important because the Gnostics in Colossae denied God could become flesh. Paul hits it head on by using the words body and flesh. This left no doubt!

This phrase “present you” refers to two things. First – it means we can go into God's presence now! In Old Testament times only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies behind the veil. But Jesus changed that! Hebrews 10:19-23 says:

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

Because we are reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus, we can enter God's presence boldly! We don't slink in or try to buy our way in – we enter in by the blood! Thank God for the new and living way!

The second thing the phrase “present you” refers to is being brought into a court to stand before a judge for sentencing. This speaks of the final judgment when we will stand before God. Because of Christ and his death on the cross – we will be holy, blameless and above reproach.

Holy means to be set apart for God's use.

Blameless means without guilt or condemnation.

Above reproach means no valid accusation can be made against you.

Because of Christ – we do not fear standing before God one day!

God is a God of justice, but the blood of Jesus totally satisfied His just demands. However, verse 23 shows a condition.

...if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

The Greek word for “If” means there is a condition. Paul is saying that you will only be presented if you are truly saved. And the only ones who are saved are those who continue in the faith. And those who continue are those who are grounded, steadfast and not easily moved from the truth of the gospel.

Grounded means you are stable because you have a firm foundation.

Steadfast means you hold a fixed position.

You are not blown about by every wind of doctrine.

This is what Jesus addressed in the parable of the sower. In Matthew 13:18-23, Jesus said:

"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

Notice that only 25% of people who hear the word receive it and hold onto it. Many people start out – but not everyone continues. That’s how you know who is really a follower of Christ. John 8:31 says:

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you continue in My word, you are really My disciples."

Continue means to stay in the same place. To endure, to remain, to not depart. To stand against opposition, to hold out.

Matthew 24:12-13 says:

Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Hebrews 3:12-14 says:

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

Again – we know who truly believes – they are the ones who continue believing in Jesus no matter what happens. In fact, 1 John 2:19 says:

They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.

True believers continue in faith. Hebrews 10:35-39 says:

So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that He has promised. "For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. And my righteous ones will live by faith. But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away." But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. We are the faithful ones, whose souls will be saved.

You see, if you're living your life without God, you're at war with God. You're saying, "I'm going to run my own life, thank You very much." If that is your attitude, you're at war with God, and you need a peace treaty. The only way to have peace with God is for you to unconditionally surrender! Give up the idea that you know more about what's best for you than God does. Here's the thing, if you are at war with God, you are guaranteed to lose.

But our Prince of Peace came to make peace between God and man. When you trust Him, He removes everything that comes between you and God. He says, "I'm going to erase everything you've ever done wrong. You're completely forgiven."

Have you found peace with God? If you haven't, you can do it right now.

You don't do it by promising to be good. Because you won't.
 You don't do it by being perfect. Because you can't.
 You don't do it by never sinning. Because you will.
 You receive peace by faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross!

And if you have been reconciled by Christ – hold on to it.
 Continue in faith and never give up!
 Don't let any person, any circumstance or any devil in hell draw you away from the salvation you have through Jesus Christ!
 He has saved you, He is saving you, and He will save you!