

**Text:** Colossians 1:21-23

**Title:** Reconciled in Christ

**Truth:** You were estranged from God, but Christ has reconciled you if you have steadfast faith in Him.

**Date/Location:** August 16, 2015 at FBC

## Introduction

The focus in the immediately preceding verse, 1:20, is on the fact that God was pleased to provide a reconciliation of all things through the cross-work of Jesus Christ. This reconciliation is not something humans can produce; Christ alone provided it. Reconciliation was needed because of the hostility in relationship that man created by rebelling against God. Beyond that, man's sin affected the entire creation, not just himself, so that animals and the whole created order are devastated by it.

I can imagine a doubter asking, "Why does God have to do that? Why not just accept everyone and be a nice guy about things?" The reason is that this would make God complicit toward sin—even if only "a little bit"—and would sully His perfect character.

The focus in verses 21-23 shifts from the Lord's provision of reconciliation to "you." In particular, Paul is speaking of the Christians in Colosse and how they were enemies but are now brought close to God. In their case, the universal objective reconciliation was applied and actualized in them specifically.

### I. Your Condition Prior to Reconciliation, v. 21

- A. **Alienated.** Your relationship with God was non-existent, broken. You were estranged from God.
- B. **Enemy in your mind.** You were hostile toward God in your thought life.
  - 1. Some people would find this unbelievable or unbearable to think about, but it is a fact. Let's suppose you say, "No, no, no! I am not an enemy of God. It's just that I don't believe in Him. I don't know if He exists. I don't believe Jesus had to die for sins. My God is a loving God." What you are doing is trying to soft-pedal your enmity against God because you are saying you have a better conception of God than the one He gave you in the Bible. Do you disregard Christ? That means you disregard God. You should just admit that God is right on this one and make the necessary changes in your thinking.

2. The “mind” has not only the intellectual idea but also moral overtones. We must not reduce this to “it’s only in your head.” It is far worse than that—it is an active opposition in thinking. And the hostility is not limited to thought life only. It is also in action, as we see next.
3. The hostility is not just on God’s side or in the mind of God. It is a real part of every unbeliever’s thinking.

C. **By wicked works.** The evil thoughts were carried out in evil actions. The whole package in mind and deed are the explanation of why we are alienated from God from birth.

## II. The Provision of Reconciliation, v. 22a

- A. With a fleshly body. Christ had true humanity. This description of the body ensures that we do not confuse it with Christ’s “spiritual” body—the church (v. 18). It also ensures that the honest reader cannot claim the docetic heresy—that Christ only “seemed” to be a human. In fact, He really did come in the flesh (1 John 4:2-3).
- B. Through death. His death fixed the problem of the righteous standard that was unmet by humans. He provided for righteousness in His righteous life, and paid for all shortcomings of our unrighteousness by taking the penalty for that in Himself.

## III. The Future Outcome of Reconciliation, v. 22b

- A. Christ’s goal is to present you before God, instead of as estranged enemies, in a way that is appropriate to present someone before God. You don’t just waltz in “just as I am” before God in heaven. You come to God initially as a contrite sinner, seeking pardon through faith in Christ. And when you are finished with this life, Jesus Christ sees to it that you are presented in His righteousness imputed and that you have been well along the path of imparted righteousness as well.
- B. Here’s how God wants you to look at that point. His goal is that you be:
  1. Holy.
  2. Without blemish.
  3. Above reproach or free from accusation.
- C. God starts work on these things in *this* life, not waiting after the rapture or after your death to start changing you. Judicially each Christian is imputed righteousness and is considered so by God, but this verse is looking at the whole picture of God’s work in a person’s life, which

includes *transformation* in addition to legal *declaration*. We must actively participate in the transformation part of this program.

#### IV. The Continuing Evidence of Reconciliation, v. 23

- A. The idea is to remain, abide, stay, continue, and persevere in the faith. “The faith” is Christianity—and it is assumed that you will continue to believe the gospel and the hope it extends. You must continue to have personal belief in Christ. There are no unbelieving believers!
- B. “If” is a challenging word.
1. The structure of the sentence indicates that Paul assumes that the Christians will continue to believe in and live for Christ. He is not laying on a bunch of doubt about their continuance.
  2. The continuance is assured by God for true believers. Remember that God preserves those who belong to Him.
  3. Continuing in the faith is not optional.
  4. If you do not continue in the faith, then you by that very fact give evidence that you are not a real believer. In this sense, being finally presented before God blameless is dependent—on whether you have real faith or not. Truly reconciled-to-God people will show this evidence of continuing in the faith.
  5. “To continue in the faith is to remain steadfast in one’s commitment to Christ, without falling prey to the religious fads that periodically capture the attention of the church. One is not saved by his own efforts to please God; neither is he kept secure by human determination and perseverance. But the saved person *will* persevere because he has been made a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), and the new life implanted by Christ will be developed by the Spirit and brought to completion (Phil. 1:6). The person whose “faith” does not continue with appropriate evidences reveals that he never had true saving faith at all (James 2:14, 17; John 2:19).”<sup>1</sup>
- C. There are three descriptive terms that fill out the idea of perseverance.
1. **Well-grounded.** This refers to a foundation, like of a building. It is not just a loose or nominal connection. We all know or hear about “nominal Christians.” These are “name only Christians” and that is as deep as their Christianity gets—not even skin deep. It is not real. It is fake. If you are not living for Christ, not walking with Him, not loving

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<sup>1</sup> Homer Kent, *Studies in Colossians and Philemon*, p. 54.

His people, not obeying His word, not a real part of a local church, then how can you say you are a real Christian? The foundation has to be set right on the true gospel of Christ, upon Christ himself. If you are well-grounded in Christ, you have a secure basis for your inner life.

2. **Steadfast** means strong, fully braced, without sagging pieces or weak connections. Once a builder has laid a good foundation, he wants to build a strong structure that is not going to be pushed over easily. As long as your belief system is founded on God's word and is knowledgeable of that word—the architectural plan for your life—then you will withstand the winds that blow through your life.
3. **Not moved away** from the hope of the gospel, or shifting off of the foundation that has been laid.

#### D. The gospel

1. **Which you heard.** They heard the word from Epaphras or other ministers.
2. **Which has been proclaimed to every creature.** That gospel has been preached throughout the earth. This gospel is God's answer to the "everything" needing reconciliation. Everything has been defiled by sin; the work of Christ makes reconciliation for everything toward God. It will satisfy God in eternity future even though there are sinners who reject the gospel in Hell. That message has been disbursed throughout the world. This does not mean every person necessarily, but rather "throughout the whole earth"—the part of the universe "under heaven" where there are persons or things needing reconciliation.
3. Of that gospel Paul has been assigned a ministry. He is an agent of this gospel. So are we.

### Conclusion

What the Bible is saying in these verses comprises the facts of spiritual life. These things are just the way it is—we were enemies, God did something about it, He wants to change us to make us blameless before Him, and He requires us to stay steadfast in the Christian faith. So what are you going to do about that?

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