

Colossians 1:21:23

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[0:00] And this week we will look at Paul's further explanation of the doctrine of reconciliation.! But we should remember first, recall that Paul did not establish the church at Colossae.

! He was not the one who preached the gospel first to them and set up the church there. It was likely established by Epaphras, who was with Paul in Rome at the writing of this letter, and had probably traveled there to inform Paul of some heresy that was encircling and within the church at Colossae.

We do not know the exact nature of this heresy, but Paul's letter gives us some clues to it as it is heavily doctrinal, as most of his writing tends to be.

But what he's doing here is he's trying to establish proper doctrine amongst the church in Colossae. Paul's letter to the Colossians is very timely for our day, as there exists today much error encircling and within the church in America.

One particularly troubling error concerns the means and nature of salvation. You have heard me say before, and I try not to be this person.

[1:16] I want to be a glass half full kind of a person. I'm definitely glass half empty or maybe 10% full kind of a person.

But I think with some accuracy that this comment is true that most people who think they're followers of Jesus Christ, who sit this morning in Sunday services, are not.

They have not been regenerate. They've had a false gospel preached to them, and they have believed that false gospel, and that are being led astray as such.

Listen to what the Scriptures have to say concerning this. You can mark Colossians. I invite you, though, to turn to the book of Matthew 13 with me. I'm normally not much for long intros, but this morning we'll have one.

Matthew 13. I'll begin reading in verse 24. For Jesus put another parable before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

[2:30] But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds or tares among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also.

And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds? He said to them, An enemy has done this.

So the servant said to him, Then do you want us to go and gather them? But he said, No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.

And at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, And gather the wheat into my barn. And this parable was meant to teach the disciples that this will be the nature of the church.

There will be false converts amongst us. What he's trying to encourage them with is that this will one day be sorted out. Final judgment will sort out who is truly in Christ and who is not in Christ.

[3:38] This is meant to be a comfort to them. However, this wheat and tare analogy, The wheat would have been much more plentiful in this field.

It ought not be accepted on our part, A, well, that's the way it's going to be sort of mentality. Because in other places we're warned against this type of thing. Turn a couple pages back to Matthew chapter 7.

In the conclusion of what we call the Sermon on the Mount, Beginning in verse 21, Jesus says, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, But the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

He's saying, not just the one who gives me lip service, But the one who is obedient to the will of the Father. Verse 22, On that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, do we not prophesy in Your name, And cast out demons in Your name, And do many mighty works in Your name?

Fantastic things to be witnessed. Jesus says in verse 23, And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

[4:47] This is a warning against this type of apostasy. Sitting in amongst churches, Calling yourself a disciple of Jesus Christ, And yet not being so.

Listen to what Dr. Jim Binney wrote in Issues of the Heart Concerning the State of the Church. He writes, and I quote, Dr. Rod Bell, President of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship of America, Estimates that 50% of church people are without Christ.

His estimate concurs with that of Bob Jones Sr. In the 1940s, he also fixed the estimate at 50%. Dr. B.R. Lakin estimated that 75% are lost.

W.A. Criswell would be surprised to see Even 25% of his church members in heaven. Dr. Bob Gray, Longtime pastor of the prestigious Trinity Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida, Once said that probably 75% of those he baptized were not saved.

Billy Graham puts the figure at 85%, While A.W. Tozer and Southern Baptist consultant Jim Eliff raise it to 90%. These are shocking figures, to be sure, but not surprising.

[6:05] Many such lost people find their way into the roles of the church through evangelism methods that are less than thorough. In a country boasting of coast-to-coast Christianity with thousands of church buildings and millions of members, it is hard to realize the depth of the problem.

The reason that so many who think they are saved may actually be lost is traceable to a misunderstanding about the means of salvation. Many religious people are misled into believing they are genuine Christians because of some external criteria.

This may be the form of their prayer at the time of salvation. It can also include a dependence upon feelings going forward at a public meeting or meeting someone's expectations in any regard about the means of salvation.

The Bible warns against dependency upon the wrong things for salvation. End quote. This is a serious issue before us.

And so, Paul sets right their understanding and ours concerning the means and nature of salvation by teaching on the doctrine of reconciliation.

[7:11] So back in Colossians 1, if you're not already there. It's our text for today, beginning in verse 21. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

This is God's word to us. It was written for his glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

Now, there are five very important words used in the New Testament to speak of salvation. The Scriptures tell us that we are justified.

We stand before God guilty and condemned or declared righteous. We are redeemed. We stand before God as a slave, but we are granted freedom. We are forgiven.

[8:25] We stand before God as a debtor, but the debt is paid and forgotten. We are adopted. We stand before God as a stranger, but are made a son. But perhaps the most rich of all these explanations is that of reconciliation.

We are reconciled if we are in Christ. We once stood before God as his enemies, but we are made his friends.

The Greek word for reconcile means literally to change in relationship. Our status with God Almighty has been changed if we are found in Christ.

It is of great importance that we rightly understand the means and nature of our salvation. The eternal state of our souls and of those who we minister to depend upon it.

This is an eternal, weighty matter before us. And as such, I believe that the proper application of this text, which I normally give to you at the end of the sermon, should be given to you now.

[9:31] I want you to think with these filters on through what we're going to study together. So the application is to firstly, be sure of your reconciliation.

Know for a fact this morning that you are eternally secure. That you have placed believing faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. That God has in fact changed your heart.

Called you a friend. Made you his son. That you have been saved from the wrath to come.

Secondly, contend for the faith.

The last half of Jude verse 3 says, Contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

In the name of the truth, so many are being led astray.

They're hearing this is what it looks like to follow Jesus Christ. And they're being taken down a wide path. We must warn them to flee from the wrath to come.

[10:37] We must preach a pure gospel. That people may believe and be saved. Even those who already think that they are. And so with those filters on, with those applications, we'll study our text together in the following outline.

And I'll give this to you again as we work through. But firstly, the need for reconciliation. Second, the means of reconciliation. Third, the goal of reconciliation.

And fourth, the evidence of reconciliation. It is of great importance we rightly understand the means and nature of salvation. And firstly, we need to look at the need for reconciliation.

Verse 21 says, We once were separated from God because of who we once were if we're found in Christ.

There are many people and issues in our time that seek to divide humanity for a variety of criteria. Gender, race, nationality, political party. Some of these are helpful for certain conversations, to be sure.

[11:51] I'm not discrediting them altogether. But the Bible makes the most helpful distinction to aid us in understanding the world, its nature, and the part that we play in it. That distinction is whether or not we are a people in fellowship with God or not in fellowship with God.

Where is our status? One of two most important. We're saved or we're lost. There are many other descriptors for these two categories.

Here with the doctrine of reconciliation, you're either God's enemy or you're reconciled to Him as His friend. Your relationship has been made right once again.

And Paul gives some understanding of what this without God, this cut off from fellowship with Him relation looks like.

He uses the terms alienated, hostile in mind, doing evil deeds. To be alienated means to be cut off, to be separated or estranged from.

[12:53] The Colossians and all of humanity are estranged from God apart from Christ. The metanarrative of humanity.

We all share this problem apart from the solution of Jesus Christ. Paul writes elsewhere, like Ephesians 2.12 of this, Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ.

Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise. Having no hope and without God in the world. The creation separated eternally from its Creator.

We're also hostile in mind, which means to be hateful toward God in thought and attitude. It's not just that we are not particularly concerned with who God is and His ways, but that if we're not found in Christ, we are actually hateful toward God in our thoughts and our attitudes.

The Colossians and all humanity, apart from Christ, hate God and His holy standards, and express so by doing evil deeds. That is the outcome of hearts that are evil and bent towards God.

[14:05] Living in contradiction to God and His holy standards. John 3.19-20 says, People loved the darkness rather than the light, because their works were evil.

For everyone who does wicked things hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. So there's these important two distinctions.

Without Christ, we are cut off, separated from, estranged from God. We have no point and purpose in our life because we cannot properly worship the Creator. We cannot do the thing we were created to do.

This is the bad news of this condition. People are either in fellowship with God or they are not. It's bad news, beloved.

To not be reconciled to God is bad news because God hates sinners. And yes, you heard me right.

[15:06] God hates sinners. His wrath burns white hot against those who are His enemy. I do not want to be on God's bad side on the day of judgment.

God hates sinners. Psalm 5, 5 and 6. Listen carefully. This is the holy writ. The boastful shall not stand before your eyes. You hate all evildoers.

You destroy those who speak lies. The Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. In the book of Psalms alone, 14 times in the first 50 Psalms, it is stated that God hates sinners.

God is also love. And He is perfectly love. One time, a young lady asked Charles Spurgeon how to reconcile the doctrines of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man.

And his response was, why would we need to reconcile two doctrines that are friends? The same could be said here as well. There's no real need for reconciliation between the two.

[16:22] God is also love. And as such, He has made a way for our reconciliation in Christ. He has made a way to extend His love to humanity.

But you must know, if you're not found in Christ, God's graciousness in a particular way is not extended to you. In a general way, it is because you're still alive. You haven't already faced His wrath.

But in a particular way, His love has not yet been received because it must be received in Christ. If you're apart from Christ, God hates you.

You have to hear it. People want to make our sin exterior to us, right? The adage, the cliché term. God doesn't hate sinners. He hates their sin.

But if we are apart from Christ, the sin that we do is who we are. It's an outflow of who we are. We are evil. We are His enemies, right? We with our actions say to Him, I hate you and I hate your ways.

[17:25] And God in turn says, likewise. And one day I will punish and destroy you for eternity. This is the judgment of God for sin. We need to take sin seriously.

This false gospel creates God's love and never talks about wrath and the consequence of sin is what caused so many people to be led astray.

The beginning of knowledge? Fear of the Lord. That we may know that He will not tolerate those who will not worship Him. It is of great importance that we rightly understand the means and nature of our salvation.

We have a need for reconciliation. We have a means of reconciliation. God's love graciously extended to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The fear of God enters into your heart. Look to the cross and see the love of God for you. Many people today believe that you must simply believe believe in something.

[18:41] That right motivation and sincerity are the proper measure of that belief. And that belief itself in some way is salvific. You talk to many people today and they're spiritual people and they believe that they're good people.

And the measure of that goodness is found in the sincerity of those affection. But the road to hell is paved with good intentions. The Bible is constantly and consistently stressing the proper object of belief.

Belief itself is not enough. You can believe that a rock will save me from my sin. But it has no benefit to me. There's no power in the rock.

We must have the proper object of belief. Jesus Christ and His sacrificial work on the cross. The first part of verse 22 says, He, being Christ, has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death. If we have believed in Him, He is reconciled in His body of flesh by His death. Us to God and God to us. The sacrificial system, the Old Testament sacrificial system was all meant to prefigure the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

[20:01] The way in which animals were being slaughtered. The temple worship was constant. It was ongoing. There was always a flow of blood coming from the temple because of the sins of Israel.

It was meant to show us the perfect sacrifice. Prefigure point to the one in whom we believe. Do you think that God doesn't hate sinners?

You need to listen to Isaiah 53, 5-7. Consider the way in which God turned His back on Christ, His Son, perfect in every way without sin, laid on Him the sins of His people and poured His wrath out on Him.

Hated Him to death. Isaiah 53, 5-7. But He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with His wounds we are healed. All like sheep have gone astray, every one of us. We all need reconciliation. We have turned everyone to His own way and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

[21:16] He was oppressed and He was afflicted yet He opened not His mouth like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that before it shears a silence so He opened not His mouth.

Beloved, we have to understand that Jesus Christ is the means of reconciliation. He is the only means of reconciliation. His perfect life imputed to us that we may be found righteous in Him and His bearing of our sin on the cross that we would be forgiven of those sins.

Apart from that, the wrath that was poured out on Jesus Christ will one day be poured out on you. If Christ is not born your sin because you have not placed believing faith in Him, then it will be one day poured out on you for eternity.

Christ drank up the wrath of God for the people of the church for all eternity. And then He said it is finished. And He sat down at the right hand of the Father.

The author of Hebrews in chapter 13, 11, and 12 reiterates this point. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp.

[22:34] These animals that were slaughtered for the sins of Israel burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through His own blood.

We've been reconciled in His body of flesh by His death. Because of that work, we have been reconciled.

Because of His activity and His accomplishment on the cross, we can be, I hope, have been reconciled. That we might join with the writers of the New Testament.

Romans 5, 11, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation. Through Jesus.

What does that mean? John 14, 6, Jesus said to Him, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

[23:33] Ephesians 2, 8, for by grace you have been saved through faith. Faith in the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

Rightly setting our belief on the proper object. This is the way that we are reconciled through Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2, 8, goes on to say, and this is not your own doing.

It is the gift of God. Charles Spurgeon said, reconciliation of man to his Maker is never achieved by man, but is the work of God from first to last.

And to God must be all the glory. We've got to get this right. It's of great importance we rightly understand the means and nature of our salvation.

We have a need for reconciliation. Jesus Christ is the means of that reconciliation. And there's a goal in mind. There's a goal of reconciliation.

[24:34] The last part of verse 22. In order that to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him.

The right state that we must be in to enter into the presence of God. Set apart from sin. Taken away from it. Sanctified from sin.

To present you holy and blameless and above reproach. All of these have both present and future implications. They are realities for this life and in the hereafter.

Paul says that if we are reconciled to God, we are holy, separated from sin and set apart to God. As a result of faith in Jesus Christ, God sees Christians as united with Christ in His holiness.

This is that imputed righteousness. Jesus' perfect life given to us by faith. Ephesians 1.4 states that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

[25:43] In 2 Corinthians 5.21 it says, For our sake He, being God, made Him, being Christ, to be sin who knew no sin, gave our sin to Jesus so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

So that in Christ we are given Christ's righteousness. This is what Martin Luther called the great exchange. Our sin given to Christ. His righteousness given to us.

We are also to be presented blameless this is without blemish. Reconciliation gives us a blameless character and above reproach which goes beyond this idea of being blameless.

No one can bring a charge against us. Those who are found in Christ. Those who have been reconciled to God. No one can even bring a charge against us. Romans 8.32-34 He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also so with Him graciously give us all things.

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies who is to condemn. Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who is indeed interceding for us.

[27:00] Because we have a great intercessor, the person Jesus Christ, and because we are found in Him, we have been reconciled to God. And because God has reconciled us to Himself, He has declared us righteous in Christ.

And no one can leverage a legitimate accusation against us that has eternal weight. It is an accomplished, finished work that we would be presented in this way before God.

So we have a need. We have the means. There's a goal. There also ought to be evidence of our reconciliation. Evidence.

of that reconciliation. And beloved, you need to hear this. The church today needs to hear this.

Paul's words in verse 23. If indeed you continue.

If indeed you continue. This has been accomplished on your behalf. You were once alienated and hostile mind and doing evil deeds, but now Jesus Christ by the work of His blood has reconciled you to God to present you blameless, holy, above reproach, before Him if indeed you continue in this faith.

[28:16] If you have professed faith in Jesus Christ, His person and His work, and then you continue in this faith. Stable and steadfast.

Not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven and of which I, Paul, became a minister. If you continue in the faith, then here is presented the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.

Those who are truly in Christ, who are saints, will persevere to the end. The doctrine states that all those who are in Christ will persist in holiness until the end, their death or Christ's return.

They will persist in holiness. Progress in holiness. Not found perfect on our own. Certainly found righteous in Christ before God.

Not living perfect lives, but persisting, moving on in holiness. Continually hating more of the world and loving more of the things of God.

[29:20] Turning from sin and turning to Christ. You've heard me say many times before our trajectory should be heavenward. We should be working in that direction. Zoom out from our lives and that's the way the graph should run.

Zoom in on any given moment? Maybe not. But in a general sense, we ought to be pressing towards holiness. Some prefer to call this doctrine the perseverance and preservation of the saints

in order to express both the proper activity, that is, a pursuit of holiness of the Christian, as well as the timeline for that.

That God will take us all the way to the end. That we are eternally secure. We've been sanctified and we are being sanctified to express both of those things. This must be true of the Christian. To know that you're reconciled to God. There must be some evidence of such a claim. Simply, those who claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ follow Him.

They must follow Him. The very definition of the Word. To say, I follow Jesus Christ and then to not follow Him is idiotic. If we are disciples of Jesus Christ, we do what He says.

[30:37] We're obedient to the call of the Gospel. We take up the promises. We obey the commands. We press in to the truth. John 3.36 Jesus says, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.

True. Right? Fantastic. Oh, those words are precious. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. But He helps us understand this Greek word belief, which is not simply mental cognition, but rather the type of belief that changes you.

Right? And it reorients the way in which you live. And He helps us with that in verse 36. He goes on to say, whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on Him.

There are too many people who claim to know the Gospel of Jesus Christ and believe it and live in contradiction to it. Luke 6.43-45 Jesus says, for no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its fruit.

Now certainly, occasionally, an apple tree bears an apple that's not delicious. But still it bears apples. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.

[32:06] The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil. evil. How do we know this then?

How can we possibly know, how can we have some indicator, some measure of whether or not we have been reconciled? Whether or not we are found in Christ?

We've been given a book that you can read, and you can see how it is that the Christian is supposed to live. And you can not just read the book, but let the book read you, and show how you fail at these things.

Even though I'm not perfect, I have a great confidence that I am of God, because when I read the things that I don't do well, I am convicted by those things, and I want to do those things.

I don't want to continue in the old Nathan ways, the old self. I want to be the new self. I want to live by the power of God within me to do the things I am supposed to do.

[33:08] I love His Word. I treasure it. I want to be sinless. I so desire that, to cast off the burden of my sin and all of the consequence that comes with it.

I want to be perfect, so I press at it, and I go after it, and this is the evidence that Christ is at work within me. Pick up the book and read it, and let it read you.

Ask that God would work in your heart by the power of His Word. This is the tool that the Spirit of God uses in our lives, not your feelings.

Never your feelings. He uses the Word of God. It is precious to us for this, that we might measure our lives by it. 1 John, if you are doubting whether or not you have placed believing faith in Christ, go read the book of 1 John.

It is just constantly saying to you, hold yourself up to this. Look at your life in comparison to this. Be sure you are found in the faith. Beloved, eternal consequence is at play here.

[34:14] Don't think you're good enough. Know that you're found in Christ. That you'll never be good enough, but that you're found in Christ. And as such, your affections have been turned.

You're moving in a different direction. You have repented, turned from sin, and you've been turned to God. I have been accused of heresy teaching such a thing.

1 John 5.1 given as the counterpoint. Now I recognize the danger in telling you that there has to be some measure, some outwardly visible thing that's going to help you know you're found in Christ.

I get that. I get the fear it may even cause you, but that's a good thing if you're not found in Christ. I hope the majority of you this morning are saying, I'm good. I fail, but I'm good.

I know that I have this eternal security in Him. 1 John 5.1 says, Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him.

[35:17] There's the text, the counterpoint to this thing. Everyone who believes, who has professed faith in Jesus Christ has been born of God. But verses 2-5 go on.

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

And His commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.

Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? You see what John does for us there? He says, if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you've been born of God.

But then he tells us how it is that we're meant to give expression of that. That we're supposed to actually show evidence forth of that. And then he encapsulates with verse 5, who is it that overcomes the world?

[36:21] Except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. We have to hold our lives up to the great truth of the Scripture. We must see evidence that we're good trees or we're not.

And then repentance and faith. Right? You can be confident this morning that you're found in Christ. Repent of your sin and turn to Him. It's of great importance that we rightly understand the means and nature of our salvation because we need to be reconciled to God and Jesus Christ is the only means by which this is possible.

We need to be presented before God clothed in Christ's righteousness. We need to ask ourselves if we are truly saved and we need to lead others in doing the same.

Beloved, there is a ripe harvest to be had in the church. Those who are church-ed, many, many people, your friends and your co-workers.

I know very few people who won't say, yeah, I go to church. Yeah, I'm a Christian. They need to be asked smart, probing questions. You need to spend time with them and you need to show them what pursuing Christ looks like.

[37:40] You need to experience it for yourself and you need to display it and proclaim it in your living. The supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things to all peoples. Will you labor with me in that proclamation?

I hope that you will with our living and with our words in all things to all peoples. I'm going to close by reading to you again another prayer.

You can tell I poked around in this book this morning. This is a prayer from, again, from the Valley of Vision. It's a collection of Puritan prayers entitled Reconciliation.

Reconciliation. Lord God Almighty, Thou art beforehand with men, for Thou hast reconciled Thyself to the world through the cross and dost beseech men to accept reconciliation.

It is my responsibility to grasp Thy overtures of grace, for if Thou, the offended part, act first with the word of appeasement, I need not call and question Thy willingness to save, but must deplore my own foolish maliciousness.

[38:59] If I do not come to Thee as one who seeks Thy favor, I live in contempt, anger, malice, self-sufficiency, and Thou dost call it enmity.

Thou hast taught me the necessity of a mediator, a Messiah, to embrace in love with all my heart, as King to rule me, as prophet to guide me, and as priest to take away my sin and death, and this by faith in Thy beloved Son who teaches me not to guide myself, not to obey myself, not to try to rule and conquer sin, but to cleave to the One who will do all for me.

Thou hast made known to me that to save me is Christ's work, but to cleave to Him by faith is my work, and with this faith in the necessity of my daily repentance as a mourning for the sin which Christ by grace has removed.

Continue, O God, to teach me that faith apprehends Christ's righteousness not only for the satisfaction of justice, but as unspotted evidence of Thy love to me.

Help me to make use of His work of salvation as the ground of peace and of Thy favor to and acceptance of me, the sinner, so that I may live always near the cross.

[40:20] Let's pray together.