

## THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

### INTRODUCTION

- A. Heresy at Colossae
  - 1. It was tied to Judaism and Gnosticism.
  - 2. They emphasized special freedom, super protection, strict behavior, super knowledge and a superior attitude.
  - 3. Like all heresies, Jesus is not enough.
- B. An outline of the Epistle to the Colossians
  - 1. Introduction (1:1-14)
  - 2. Doctrinal Instruction (1:15-2:5)
    - a. The supreme person of Christ (15-20)
    - b. The supreme work of Christ (21-29)
      - 1) Instruction on reconciliation (21-23)
      - 2) Paul's ministry of reconciliation (24-29)
- C. Review - The purpose of Jesus' supremacy is reconciliation (20), *and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*
  - 1. Jesus' supremacy is most evident in His work which reconciles man to God.
  - 2. This reconciliation includes all of creation, seen and unseen.
  - 3. For Christians, the wrath of God is turned to peace with God.

### COLOSSIANS 1:21-23, PAUL'S INSTRUCTION TO COLOSSIANS ON RECONCILIATION

- A. They were alienated from God (21), *And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,*
  - 1. Paul emphasized their condition before salvation which required reconciliation to God, R. Lightfoot, *It is the mind of man, not the mind of God, which must undergo a change.*
  - 2. He declared they were alienated from God.
    - a. *Alienated*
      - 1) It means *to be excluded.*
      - 2) Ephesians 4:18, *They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.*
    - b. Their alienation was by race because they were Gentiles.
      - 1) Ephesians 2:12, *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.*
      - 2) G. Osborne, *...estranged from God because of sin and from Israel because they were Gentiles. As a result, they had no hope and no future.*
    - c. Their alienation was in thought.
      - 1) *Hostile in mind* means *in opposition to, being an enemy.*
      - 2) M. Anders, *Before we trusted Christ, our entire way of thinking was contrary to God's.*
      - 3) J. McGee, *Some time ago I had the funeral of a certain movie star out here in California. The Hollywood crowd came to the funeral. One of the television newscasters commented on the funeral, and I appreciated what he had to say about it. He said, "Today Hollywood heard something that it had never heard before." But I also saw something there at that funeral that I had never seen before. I had never seen so much hatred in the eyes of men and women as I saw when I attempted to present Jesus Christ and to explain how wonderful He is and how He wants to save people. There is an alienation in the mind and heart of man.*
    - d. Their alienation was by action.
      - 1) It means *doing evil deeds*, Titus 1:16, *They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.*
      - 2) N. Geisler, *People are not inwardly hostile vs. God because of their outward acts of sins; they commit sins because they are inwardly hostile.*

- B. They were reconciled to God by the death of Christ (22), *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,*
1. *reconciled*
    - a. This word carries more meaning than we probably imagine. It pictures holy God bringing sinful man back into fellowship with Himself based on the full payment made by His eternal Son.
    - b. M. Anders, *Jesus' death allows God's enemy to become God's friend. Before the miracle of reconciliation, the Colossians, and all unbelievers, were at odds with God. We were alienated, that is we were separated, estranged. We were alone, an outsider, exiled, shut out, cut off, locked out.*
  2. The means of reconciliation was the death of Jesus Christ.
    - a. His death took place in *his body of flesh* which emphasizes Jesus' physical body.
    - b. It distinguishes between Jesus' spiritual body, the church, and His physical body.
    - c. Paul focused on Jesus' real body, His humanness, to make several points.
      - 1) Jesus is the second Adam who reconciles mankind to God, Hebrews 2:17, *Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*
      - 2) Paul was contradicting the false teaching of those who said Jesus did not have a real physical body since they taught that physical flesh is evil.
        - a) 1 John 4:2, *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,*
        - b) The Gnostic Marcion removed *of his flesh* from the text and interpreted *body* as *the Church*.
  3. The purpose of reconciliation is transformation which is the positive side of reconciliation.
    - a. Christians will stand in God's presence sinless in position.
      - 1) *to present*
        - a) It was used in legal language, meaning *to bring another before the court.*
        - b) Christians will be brought before God and be found blameless.
      - 2) T. Constable, *Paul was not speaking about the Christian's personal conduct but about his or her position in Christ.*
        - a) Sinless in condition is a process called sanctification.
        - b) Condition and position (justification) will be identical at glorification.
    - b. Paul describes the condition of those who have been reconciled to God.
      - 1) *holy* means *dedicated to God, set apart from sin.*
        - a) Ephesians 1:4, *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him...*
        - b) 1 Peter 1:15-16, *but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."*
      - 2) *blameless* means *without blemish or defect.*
        - a) 1 Peter 1:19, *but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*
        - b) Ephesians 5:27, *so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*
        - c) C. Spurgeon, *That (without blemish) was the requirement of the sacrificial animal in the Old Testament. You and I cannot present perfection to God, and God cannot accept anything short of perfection. That is the reason we cannot be saved by our works or by our character. We simply cannot meet the demands of a righteous God.*
      - 3) *above reproach* means *without occasion for criticism.*
        - a) 1 Corinthians 1:8, *who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
        - b) Titus 1:7, *For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain,*
        - c) By the merits of Christ, we are free from every charge made by Satan, Revelation 12:10, *...Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.*
- C. Their perseverance was tied to the truth of the Gospel (23), *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.*

1. Paul gave a condition concerning perseverance.
  - a. *if* begins a first class condition in Greek which is a condition assumed true.
  - b. It is better translated as *since* instead of *if*.
  - c. He assumed the Colossians would persevere because that is normal for genuine believers.
    - 1) *Philippians 1:6, And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*
    - 2) *John 10:27-28, My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*
    - 3) *1 Corinthians 1:7-8, so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
  - d. He still demanded that they live what they believe.
    - 1) *M. Anders, He is confident that because they have understood what it means to be reconciled they will remain faithful to the gospel that reconciled them. He writes this as an expression of confidence and as a warning to avoid the religious fads of the false teachers of Colosse.*
    - 2) *G. Osborne, Paul is confident of them but still demands that they take their Christian obligations seriously.*
2. Paul described a faith that reconciles.
  - a. It is *stable*.
    - 1) It has a firm foundation.
    - 2) *Ephesians 2:20, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,*
    - 3) Paul emphasized that the Gospel he proclaimed to them is that firm foundation.
  - b. It is *steadfast*
    - 1) It is firm in conviction, settled.
    - 2) *1 Corinthians 15:58, Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*
  - c. It is *not shifting*
    - 1) It is not shaken from its moorings.
    - 2) Paul was speaking of false teaching that would rip them from their solid foundation, the Gospel.
  - d. It is hope *of the Gospel*.
    - 1) *Colossians 1:5, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,*
    - 2) This hope was being proclaimed worldwide, T. Constable, *Paul was contrasting the wide appeal and proclamation of the gospel with the exclusive appeal and comparatively limited circulation of the false teachers' message.*
    - 3) Paul was a minister of the hope found only in the Gospel which reconciled the Colossians to God with no aid needed from false teachers.

**CONCLUSION: QUOTES ON RECONCILIATION**

- R. Lucas, *Can anything be remotely comparable to this transference from darkness to light? And as has been said, this change of position is always accompanied by a change of heart. The reconciled man is a new man in Christ. Now he loves and reverences the God he formerly distrusted. And he who loves the Lord comes to hate evil.*
- R. Wall, *Because of the difficulty of being Christian in a non-Christian world, our incarnation of Christ's victory requires a costly devotion. Yet, this devotion is both required and made reasonable by the certainty of our eventual triumph with Him.*
- G. Osborne, *Due to their total depravity, the people of this world could not traverse the enmity gap between themselves and God, so a loving, merciful God sent his Son to bridge the gap for us through his sacrificial death on the cross. By placing our sins under his blood, Christ made atonement, and the result was reconciliation...*