

## “IF YOU CONTINUE”

### COLOSSIANS 1:21-23

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#### INTRODUCTION

The Christ in whom was “All Fullness” (v. 19) made peace through the blood of his cross and reconciled “all things.” Included were the Colossian Christians. Note some incredible facts about reconciliation:

- “The One who was offended makes the offering.”
- “He who was rejected provides reconciliation.”
- “As men were busy hating Him, He ‘so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son’ (Jn. 3:16; BV, p. 19)

**YOU MUST CONTINUE IN THE FAITH—Grounded, Settled, Not Moved Away from the Hope of the Gospel.**

- I. THE NEED OF RECONCILIATION—alienation [Although then, v. 21]
  - A. Alienation—“belonging to another”; elsewhere only in Eph. 2:12 and **4:18**.
  - B. Hostility in mind-- Rom.
    - 5:10 is an especially apt parallel to this passage: “For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled** to God through the death of His Son, much more having been **reconciled**....”
  - C. Evil deeds: It cannot be otherwise, for **wickedness originates in the heart and mind** and inner alienation and hostility must display itself with “evil” works.
- II. THE MEANS OF RECONCILIATION—the atonement [Yet now He has reconciled you; 22a]
  - A. In His fleshly body: the sphere of the reconciliation.
  - B. Through Death: the instrument of reconciliation.
    - This passage makes clear the “necessary bond between his incarnation and his atoning death”; **Here we see the necessity of both Bethlehem and Calvary.**
    - Paul shows that such a body could not have brought about reconciliation except “through death”; the “wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

Those who were once far away from God have been brought close to him; those who used to be at war with him are at peace with him” (B. 78). Such has been accomplished through the historical death of Christ. What Christ did in the past for them has now come into connection with what has happened in them, in their own experience. Notice the relation of the **blood** of Christ in v. 20 with the **body** of Christ here in v. 22; the body and blood of Christ commemorated in Communion both find their place here as expressive of His offering of Himself in death as a sacrifice for sin.

- III. THE PURPOSE OF RECONCILIATION—presentation (22b)
  - A. Before Him:
    - In an eschatological sense believers are to be presented before God in the judgment as a finished product of God’s grace; both **the apostles as Christian workers** anticipate presenting believers as the fruit of their labors, and God Himself or Christ presents believers to the Father or to the Son
  - B. Condition of Presentation
    1. Holy—set apart for God’s sacred use and away from secular or profane use
    2. Blameless—no blemishes; the believer is to be presented “blameless”; this likely has more of a legal/forensic sense.
    3. No reproach: Here it conveys a legal concept; there is no legal or judicial accusation that may successfully be brought against a person.
      - Paul speaks of the believer appearing “blameless” in the Day of Christ, the Day of Judgment.

IV. THE PROOF OF RECONCILIATION—continuation in faith/the faith [23]

- As usual human responsibility is linked with divine sovereignty. Such human perseverance proves faith's genuine character, and is therefore indispensable to salvation.
- One cannot persevere in his own strength (Jn. 15:5); he needs the grace of God from beginning to end (Phil. 2:12-13).
- Bruce states, **"If the gospel teaches the final perseverance of the saints, it teaches at the same time that the saints are those who finally persevere—in Christ.**
- But, as noted below, Paul in his form of expression here, is not doubtful of their genuine salvation or of the certainty of their continuance in it. Believers must continue and Paul is certain that they will.
- We have in this verse, then, a real warning" that, along with all similar NT warnings, shows that believers have responsibility alongside divine sovereignty. God does save and preserve by grace through the Spirit and the Word so as to vindicate His people at the judgment, but not apart from man's fulfillment of his responsibility to persevere so that he may actually experience such vindication.

A. Grounded—firm foundation, like a solid building (cf. Eph. 2:20). Jesus is the foundation

B. Settled—The previous term shows the cause of which this term is the effect.

C. Not Moved away from the **hope** of the gospel

- Continuing condition in the lives of believers, a continuation that must last throughout life.
- Far too many professing Christians "shift" positions; here Paul tells them that they must not "be moved about, moved away, be removed, or shift" in their spiritual position and responsibility.
- "Hope" refers to confident expectation, not to wishful thinking. Such hope is grounded in the full assurance found in Christ and in His finished work.
- The gospel is what actually *speaks of* such hope and then *engenders* such hope in the believer.

V. THE PREACHING OF RECONCILIATION—proclamation

A. That you have heard: Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

B. That was proclaimed authoritatively in all creation under heaven

- Authoritative proclamation by those who have been appointed to represent the authority behind the proclamation—in this case God Himself.
- "Creation" cannot be limited to "man" but must have the same broadness as it does in v. 15—though of course only people are listening to and responding to it, yet it is "in" all of the creation that the preaching occurs.
- **The simplest solution is that Paul exaggerates in order to make his point.** Compare Acts 2:5 which states that there were Jews in Jerusalem "from every nation under heaven"—not literally **every** nation. Reconciliation was to cover the entire world; the gospel was preached in all this world—in all creation. In I Thes. 1:8 Paul said that the word has gone forth "in every place."

C. Of which I, Paul, was made a minister—servant.

- This gospel is said to have come to them from an individual—in their case Epaphras, who also is called "a faithful minister—same word Paul uses here for himself. Paul does not mention himself here in order to brag on himself, but rather to show that the gospel they have received is the same one with which Paul has been commissioned. Paul's personal ministry is "closely bound up with God's saving plan for the world"
- Paul makes this truth emphatic with the use of both the first person pronoun "I" and his personal name "Paul" in apposition with "I."

CONCLUSION

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Application: Believe it; receive it, live it, enjoy it, spread it.