

3/10/19 - Col. 1:21-23 - "Reconciliation"

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we thank you for a time to study your word. Father, we pray that you can help us at this time to see your scripture, to see the words on the page that you say is your living word, your breathing word, something that is alive and active, something that's sharper than a double-edged sword.

Father, we thank you for a time where we can give back to you, but also receive from you. And we ask you at this time to help us to receive your word this morning. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

So the book of Colossians. Last week we studied a section of Colossians regarding Christ's supremacy in all things, in creation, in things seen and unseen.

The section last week is known as a Pauline hymn that people actually sang back in this time period, as tradition speaks about.

And it talks about the person who Christ is. A great song to sing, mind you, about his supremacy, his sovereignty over all things, seen and unseen.

[1 : 1 9] And so my hope and my prayer for last week that it hopefully served as a time of perspective shift for us as a church body.

If you missed the message, please go on the website and catch up with it. Because I'm looking for a perspective shift to bring into a new reality in this church, a refreshed state of mind that takes our mind off of the little things in life and brings about the grand picture of God's sovereignty over all things.

Things that make sense, things that don't make sense. The things that we see and the things that we don't see. He is absolutely supreme. And this is good news. And this will bring naturally a perspective shift in the life of us as individual believers and as a church.

Last week we spoke, we ended with verse 19 and 20. And I want to lead into the text today. We're going to be in Colossians chapter 1, verses 21 through 23.

But I want to lead into it in verse 19 and 20. So please join me in verse 19. Verse 19 says, For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

[2 : 4 5] 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 have heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

The first point we're going to be discussing and highlighting in this text today is that God's purpose, examining God's purpose in reconciliation, his church, his body of believers that he establishes, and he sets aside, that he organizes and transforms.

Verse 21 says, There's a hard reality we must understand as a church body in this century today, that the condition of mankind's state, apart from God, is absolutely miserable.

The state of mankind, apart, separated from God, the condition of that is absolutely miserable.

[4 : 18] That we can try to replace things, we can have material, we can have all the riches of the world, but if we don't have God, there will always be something missing.

Alienated is a word used that is vital to understand this condition of man. There's no better word to put here.

To understand alienated is to know it's somebody who is to be or is becoming considered foreign, or who is foreign, separate from citizenship, completely cut off.

Within such a word expresses, in the word alienation, expresses a heart which is stone-cold to the reality of God. I can't even fathom life with God.

A soul in darkness, in isolation, and a mind, as this verse speaks, hostile in mind, and doing evil deeds.

[5 : 27] And this is not something that humanity takes kindly to. I think this is very harsh language for possibly those who don't know God, because we know the saying, we've heard it said, that only God can judge me.

You know, I can be responsible for my actions. Only God can judge me. But that should scare and worry a lot of people.

That if God alone, if their judgment is being placed on God, and specifically, if we are alienated, hostile in mind before Christ, apart from Christ, His word is judging.

His word is the measuring stick in this debate. And this is harsh language, which is basically why most will dismiss this language.

But according to Scripture, this is terribly true. I want to take you through some verses where Scripture highlights this alienation of us apart from God. Scripture suggests that man is inherently sinful, utterly sinful.

[6 : 42] Isaiah 53, 6 says, All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 64, 6 says, We have all become like one who is unclean, and all righteous deeds are like polluted garments, known some in translations as filthy rags.

We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind take us away. We all know Romans 3, 23, For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

And Romans 6, 23, For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. And then Ephesians 2, 12 actually has very parallel and similar language as Colossians chapter 1 in this context.

Ephesians 2, 12 says, Remember that you were at one 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.

[7 : 55] I'm no artist by any stretch of the imagination, but if there were to be a color that would represent our lives apart from Christ, it would be black.

There's no better color to describe. emptiness, void, and of no hope. But Paul gives a timeline here, and it is very important here in this text.

And I want you all, if you have your Bibles open, look down at the pages right now and discover this this morning. Consider the tense of this verse.

Look with me, and put verse 21 on the screen, please. Consider the tense of this verse. There's no great power and reassurance that there is in one single word in this text.

And I want you all to repeat it. And you who once. One word makes so much difference in this text.

[9 : 13] It doesn't say, you who were twice, three times, fourth time, alienated. That there is a once that we were alienated from God.

So if we left this verse without considering the context, we are left to just truth without grace. But let's see Paul continuing to adjust the believer's vision in this Colossian church of this day.

As he continues in verse 22. Which leads us to the second point of God's power in reconciliation, which is a new status.

It says, verse 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.

If anybody has left the TV on all throughout the night, accidentally, or maybe intentionally, as some people do, and you got just like, you know, local news or something on when you go to sleep and you wake up to like, somebody selling these like, hardcore pans that don't stick.

[10 : 32] You know, the TV salesmen that are like, it's like the deal never gets any better. It keeps getting better. It's always, but wait, there's more! And it just never ends.

And actually, it's impressive of some of these pans that they're selling. They make pans look really good on these commercials. Even sweepers. I'm a victim of these commercials, mind you.

If my wife was here and not with our sick children, she would attest, I have called the numbers. We have received packages because they have hook, line, and sinkered me into those pans.

And I don't know, I think one time it was a little oven. This is a time of confession too. But Paul is essentially saying, but you who were once alienated, hostile in mind, he's like saying, but wait!

There's more! Don't stop there! That there's a cure, there's reconciliation in this text, it's hope for us. That there is truth, that we were once alienated, that all of our righteous deeds are like filthy rags, that all have fallen short of the glory of God, that the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of grace is eternal life through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

[11 : 53] But wait, there's more! We don't stop there. Within just a couple words in this passage, where Paul identifies the virus being alienated from God, he presents the cure, and soon we'll be getting into the recovery.

Now look down at your text in verse 22, put it up on the screen, to the tense of this verse. Now once we were alienated from God, look at the tense here.

He has, church? Cow? What was it? Now. Immediate.

Presently. Present tense. We were once, but we are now, church. The purpose of reconciliation through Christ is twofold.

It not only paints like the darkest picture of fallen man, but paints the most righteous and lavished upon status, a new status, of that fallen man as well.

[13 : 10] more than any religion out in this world today and throughout history. That there is no comparison to the reconciliation of Christ, of changing a sinful man and bringing that man into light and lavishing upon a righteousness, not of man's doing, but of Christ's doing.

when someone is reconciled to Christ, this person is presented as holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

This is a miracle and complete act of God. and we see in verse 22, in his body of flesh by his death.

I want to talk about presentation for a second in relation to marriage. you know, going through, when you're going through like a wedding and planning a wedding and things like that, most importantly is this ring and that's usually a struggle for some people.

You know, once that ring goes on, it's about to get real. You know, things are definitely getting real. You start to get that excitement, also the nervousness. And in, especially in my wife's life, she would go through the planning in her mind of, oh, where am I going to have it?

[14 : 44] You know, all these plans. Going through the guest list of figuring out which crazy aunt or uncle we're not going to invite to the wedding. The struggles of the wedding planning.

All the time, the laboring, the toiling, leading up to that wedding, the nervousness, the emotions, the stress and strain all for this one time of presenting the presentation of the bride on this one wedding day.

The union of these two people, all for that union for the presentation. And look in this verse because according to this verse, Christ did everything for us for this presentation.

as this verse says, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you as holy, as blameless, as above reproach.

approach that he did all the toiling and laboring behind the scenes. All the planning, every ounce of effort was his doing in his body, of his flesh, by his death in order to present.

[16 : 17] Romans 8, 17 actually speaks of being heirs with Christ. Not heirs, but heirs with Christ. It says, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may be also glorified with him.

The Christian who has been reconciled is no longer identified of hostile descent, but they are given a complete new citizenship, a new social status in the kingdom of heaven.

That as we spoke about a couple weeks ago in verse 13 of chapter 1, that he has transferred us, not our good deeds, not our good efforts, not any efforts of our doing, but he has transferred us and taken us and placed us from a domain of darkness into his light, into his kingdom.

And I truly believe one of the most challenges, most challenges of the Christians of next generations to follow is possibly the reality of understanding how sick we truly are apart from Christ.

It's always been, it's not just a generation for today, but I believe specifically just how politically speaking we're going into like this season of normalizing a disease, of accepting a disease, even more so it seems than anywhere in history, that the moral compass is nowhere to be seen, that if it feels good, if it makes you feel good, it must be good.

[18 : 06] I worry about my son's future, you know, what he's going to be walking into in school is we're going to be raising him as a Christian and hopefully one day he will choose Christ.

But I know in so doing that if we keep going in the direction it's going to be challenging, he's going to meet opposition. But until this sickness is identified there's going to be a fundamental problem that nobody's going to understand they're sick without understanding that we are alienated, that scripture tells us we are alienated from Christ.

But people don't understand that there is a cure to be administered. And there's actually a set of beliefs leaking its way into pulpits today of having faith without repentance, having life in Christ without having a death with Christ.

There's no repentance. It's like being resurrected with Christ but not having that death of Christ. But just continue upon in your sickness and God will accept you.

R.C. Sproul mentions back in one of his writings about a writing of Luther.

[19 : 31] Luther used a simple analogy to explain this very thing. He described the condition of a patient who was mortally ill. The doctor proclaimed that he had the medicine that would surely cure the man.

And the instant the medicine was administered the doctor declared the patient as well.
And at that instant the patient still felt sick.

But as soon as the medicine passed his lips and entered his body the patient began to get well. So it is with our reconciliation and start to get better.

The process of becoming pure and holy is underway and its future completion is certain.
So in other words of R.C.'s words here that justification in Christ is immediate.

When you place your faith in Christ it is immediate upon that profession of faith transferred from dark to light. But the sanctification journey the process of getting well afterwards it varies between people but it is a sanctification journey it is not a sprint by any stretch of the imagination but it is a marathon that will one day be certain when we are glorified with him in heaven as scripture tells us.

[21 : 08] The cure which Christ alone is qualified to administer to us sick and wretched people reveal vital signs after it's been administered. Evidence of being pure holy blameless above reproach holy meaning having characteristics of moral or ritual purity by definition a context often emphasizes having one thing over another holiness not having both it's one or the other and it's also an identity of which is characterized in the person the essence of God our eternal God and blameless as this verse says in verse 22 blameless is something being free of guilt being free of spot of stain being cleansed and then being above reproach to understand not not subject to deserving or worthy of a charge or wrong doing those who experience the supremacy of Christ in salvation will lead lives which reveal this of holiness of blamelessness of being above reproach and we see these terms in qualifications of an elder in scripture and a deacon in scripture but if we understand the sanctification process of being made holy being set apart we understand that the whole church saints in Christ are also called to be striving towards the very qualifications that are held in the highest authorities of the local church the elders and the pastors the overseers as 1st

Timothy 3 states in Titus 1 5 but these aren't just for a certain set of people this is also for the church these are our strivings when you are set free from sin that these are your strivings these are not just for the guys up there preaching the word but this is also for the church and just as God invites us to respond in light of his supremacy as we spoke about last week in last week's message that his church is to respond in light of that supremacy over all creation over the seen and unseen today we can be urged to the reality of this recovery process there from God invites us church to respond in light of his reconciliation in living in a manner in complete opposition of which he has rescued us from that God invites us to respond in light of his reconciliation in living in a manner in complete opposition of that which he has rescued us from and the third and final point in this text as we move into verse 23 we see

God's condition of reconciliation and it is this sanctification journey in verse 23 it says if indeed you continue in the faith stable and steadfast not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you have heard which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven in which I Paul became a minister if indeed you continue in the faith now I want to warn you this is not saying that there's a means of discontinuing in the faith that when God starts a work he finishes that work in us but what this verse is saying actually is a Greek construct of if indeed is something known in the original language it explains a condition which is certain like if indeed certainly you're going to continue in the faith stable and steadfast so it's indicating and highlighting something which is certain and

Paul is highlighting the reconciliation that reconciliation has immediate instantaneous effects just as we spoke about being in order to be presented however the growth which is to follow is not so instantaneous it is actually quite difficult church it is very difficult this process after we have been saved the growing process is very challenging and it calls for extreme faithfulness of patience and of diligence of work on our part that that it's like the grueling physical therapy after you've been injured that you're stretched and bended in different ways that it does not feel good but it is for your own good and we are supposed to do this together church together and look at this verse as well because if you caught we started this series several weeks ago and at the beginning of the chapter we went through a thanksgiving section and then a prayer section in this text and there's a lot of parallel words used between the thanksgiving section and the section today we see in this text it says from the hope of the gospel that you have heard which has been proclaimed proclaimed this is the very thing of which

Paul was giving thanks thanksgiving to God for in this church starting his address to the Colossian church but this points to the hope of the gospel that we spoke about in verse five if you can look back at verse five it says because of the hope laid up for you in heaven of this you have heard before in the word of truth the gospel and this verse continues off of that you'll see this going through this series a lot of repetitive words which brings emphasis on the text today from the hope of the gospel that you have heard which has been proclaimed in verse 23 this points us to scripture being the source of life not a self-help book you know doing little things together but when we gather when we intentionally gather and dig our heels into this physical therapy after this recovery process this sanctification process together we're coming together under

[28 : 38] God's word with God's word as a foundation and the rooting of our fellowship and our time together in this growth process and I'm speaking to each and every person that is joined with us today this is all of us together everyone the attributes and effects of this gospel message and the growth which results from such a miracle of gospel power the mystery of gospel power who would have thought God the infinite God would reach down in the history and do what no man could do and transfer us sinful men and women and present us holy and blameless the attributes and effect of this gospel message and the growth which results from this miracle of gospel power is observable through a

Christian who is stable and steadfast not wavering and this is the byproduct of continuing faith something that is certain something that is sure there's that cliché saying I told myself I'm not going to say it I'm going to say it but you know that one cliché saying that if you were prosecuted for being a Christian how much evidence would be stacked up against you it's so cliché but I mean it is true so you kind of see what this is saying that what evidence can be used against us of being Christians in our lives if this text suggests that we are to be a changed people that look distinguished from the world what evidence are we showing and how many times do we feel prone to chase after the byproducts that this passage suggests of being stable and being steadfast how many times do we chase after being stable and steadfast but neglect the very source of which these two byproducts stem from it's like we're people who want the manna without the wilderness we spoke about this in bible study yesterday there were people who want the manna without the wilderness were the people who want the blessings but we don't want the one of which whom all blessings flow from but the mind and the heart and the will must be engaged in this process of sanctification the mind the heart and the will must be engaged and involved it's not man's words or man's ideas of of 10 steps to being a better

Christian we all must have these engaged in order to bring this true growth to experience this true stability true steadfastness that having the mind engages is feasting upon and being fed and being rooted in the word of God the hope of eternal life the gospel as verse five says in Colossians it's like taking that I just spoke with somebody just recently of how mundane it is to take vitamin pills and these supplements that do help us and it seems so mundane like man I don't even know if this stuff is working but taking that vitamin pill but it seems like you don't realize that it is helping you until you stop taking it and then you start getting sick I have this problem with my vitamin

D levels I think everybody has it in Ohio honestly you stop taking the vitamin D pills you start sleeping in until you start missing the alarm clock in the morning it brings depression it has those effects but as you take these it's feasting and feeding on God's word and being diligent and receiving his word coming on Sunday mornings when you meet together coming under God's word as mundane and as ritualistic that it feels we do not know how much it is actually helping this growth process in our lives until we stop and then guess what church we begin to feel disconnected we begin to feel just I attend church I just don't know anymore just feel lost I feel hopeless I feel lost but once this affects the mind it also affects the heart which must express in the heart of

God's love towards one another charitability not hostility towards one another that when we have a changed mind when we have an engaged mind on his word taking that routine vitamin pill that it changes our hearts and how we deal with one another through charitability and not hostility not things of our former lives but things of our current heart responding not for attaboys from one another but in care and adoration for God alone and in that heart change it changes our will as Christians and it must reflect and expose a life which is patterned after him if a mind is engaged and a heart is engaged how else are we supposed to respond other than a will that is patterned after the one who has saved us being holy and blameless as we come to a close this morning church Paul is redefining the vision of reality he's redefining reality for this church a vision that rests on the identity of

[35 : 14] Christ which in verse 15 and 20 that him that we studied last week that this is the identity of Christ this changes our perspective it changes the reality our vision as a church just as the church in Colossi which then produces an identity of the church that starts with Christ that he is not only supreme over his own identity his creation he's always been and he always will be he is eternal but he is also supreme over his church and the process of his church what Paul is not doing here is providing quick solutions notice in this text you don't know specifically what the Colossian church is going through in this time we do know historically that there were Gnostics or false teaching at this time that he is combating but he's not specifically addressing specific situations within the Colossian church what he's doing instead he's hitting the very root of the problems they're facing which rest upon this false perception of reality

Paul is bringing in a new reality and once you bring in that new reality you grasp the true vision that Christ is supreme over man over ideas over the false teachings that is hitting the root of the problems that the specifics will work their way out when we build ourselves upon a foundation built on the truth it takes our eyes and our focus off of our individualized sin and places it on God it's not a bunch of do's and don'ts but it is placing our focus and our vision on God alone responding to to to supremacy so to wrap things up this morning it is the utmost importance that we are reconciled to Christ without this we would be wandering Israelites in the wilderness we'd be the disobedient Jonahs alienated separated from

God alienated and separated from his creation and alienated and separated from each other but the God of this universe desires and takes pleasure in reconciliation that the God of this universe the eternal God reached into history and hung himself put himself on the cross and bore upon himself through the incarnate Jesus Christ the wrath that we deserve he bore the wrath upon himself sparing us of judgment to hell Jesus Christ is the agent of this redemption he is the objective of God's active creation he is the one through whom God reconciles all things by the death on his cross and by this reconciliation church

God will present believers acceptable to himself and they will remain firm in the gospel that they have received this is not something that you can take away something that we fall away from this is a continuation of digging in together reconciliation is a picture of the gospel reconciliation is the gospel Jesus Christ so if you are not in Christ if you are alienated today if you just feel like if we're talking about this darkness this black blackness this void this emptiness this morning that you're like man yeah it's been a while I've been trying to do things on my own for quite some time now if this is you there is hope in the gospel and Christ beckons you to come and once you come you will never be the same his word promises that but this is also an invitation to his church this morning the body the assembly of believers this morning for the church to unite together to begin this life if we haven't been doing a good job of this up until this point to begin this life of reconciliation together united the

Bible tells us to unite the Bible actually tells us that there's no other way we can respond other than to unite that the very reconciliation that we see God bringing to us and saving us is the same reconciliation that we have with one another that our lives live together is a picture of the gospel uniting love binding us together is a picture of the gospel and enduring with one another and striving for one another and growing even though it's a painful physical therapy and recovery process we are digging in with one another the Bible tells us to unite and to strive together to not get caught up in small things because in light of his supremacy over all things everything is viewed with a new vision as being small in light of eternity in which I would like us all to respond together with this new perspective as we continue this journey through

[41 : 13] Colossians we have baptisms coming up church I'm working with three guys right now who will be who have had their lives changed over the last several months and a church who has been through transition that God is still working amen that's right we are starting small groups starting next month and I would love for you to pray diligently and earnestly if you've been doing this alone if work schedule has been prohibiting you from digging into this growth process with this church body uniting together if you're at a point where you're disconnected the Bible instructs us that we gotta dig in and we're gonna do this together so in the back there's going to be this sign up sheet and based on the need of small groups based on the interest and what

God reveals to you in your life every person sitting here and the families that are out of town this week are going to dig in together during this next season of small groups make yourselves known and then we will provide the small groups based on when your availability is because I trust that God alone is going to assemble these groups he knows what his church needs he knows how to get us get us growing he knows how to get us in this process of health and also back there if you have been attending Youngstown Metro for any certain length of time I want to have this invitation of getting more plugged in and we're going to be starting covenant partner classes of membership to the church because we value this we can't just come and go week after week and just attend and then leave and not be involved in life we want to hear voices we desire to hear this to endeavor together in this pursuit the

Bible is telling us to do so please church pray about this about this next season coming up because God will unite us he will grow us we have to surrender to him we have to dig in together please pray with me father we thank you for your word we thank you that you have that are people who have been alienated separated from God one time but through your saving grace through faith the grace alone that we are saved we are now reconciled to you we're presented as holy and blameless and above reproach foolish that certainly we are going to continue stable and steadfast but father how foolish would we be if we think that this stable stability and the steadfastness will come from anything apart from community with one another that is built upon the feasting and the reading and the rooting of your word it would be foolishness father this is your church we are your people we are a church family that you have organized and established here do with us as you will and whatever brings the most glory to you lord make it known let us do this together and seek this out together in

Jesus name amen