

Text – Colossians 1:21-23

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Main Point: **Persevere in the Gospel**

Introduction (400)

There is nothing more frightening than thinking you are saved when in reality you are not. To think you are destined to heaven when you are in fact in you are on the way to hell. What is all the more frightening is that Jesus himself warns us that there will be people who think they have dedicated their life to Him, yet Jesus says to this person : “ *I never knew you, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.*” (matt 7-21-23) What frightening words!

Will Jesus say this to you? How are you sure?

Of course, what we all hope for is that Jesus will welcome us with open arms and declare “*Well done good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your Lord*” (Matt 25:23). But how can we be sure? How can you be sure.

The passage we are looking at this afternoon carries a warning and an encouragement. It is a warning to Persevere in the Gospel. To continue in the Gospel.

And those who persevere in the Gospel are guaranteed to be welcomed with open arms on that glorious day when we are face to Face with Jesus. But those who stray from the gospel for salvation will be turned away by Jesus.

Imagine a friend of yours has been rescued from a drowning accident. And from now on he needs an oxygen mask to enable him to breath. The oxygen is what saved his life and it is also what is keeping him alive. But as his strength grows, he starts to think that he does not need it after all and he is tempted to take it off. But to remove it would be fatal.

The Gospel is like this oxygen mask. It has saved us and is sustaining us. To remove it with it would prove fatal. That is what this passage is about. We must persevere in the Gospel. We must continue as we started. Trusting in the work of Jesus and nothing else.

To help us heed this warning we will break our passage into three parts.

First we will look at the first half of verse 21, where we remember life before Christ where we will **Ponder the Past**

Then we will look at the second half of verse 21 and verse 22 where we can see we can rest on the work of Christ. Where we are **Reconciled in the Present.**

And then in verse 23 we will look at the warning and command to Persevere in the Gospel, to continue how we started. Where we hear the warning To **Persevere to the Future.**

Part 1 – Ponder the Past (v21a) – 700

Teach (350)

1. Link

So with all that said, let us look closer at the start of verse 21 and **ponder our past state** before Jesus saved us.

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works,

2. Antagonistic not Apathetic (100)

The first thing to notice is that, before the Colossians were believers, they were enemies of Jesus. They were not sitting on the fence waiting to be swayed but they were actively opposed to him. They were not neutral in their thinking about God and Jesus.

And that is the same for all people that Jesus saves. Before he intervenes, people are enemies of God. This is important to understand. Those who do not follow Jesus as their Lord and Savior are actively against Jesus. No one is neutral or apathetic to Christ, they are either his followers or his enemy.

3. Mind=Heart/ Disposition (100)

The second thing to realize about the fallen condition is that it is not firstly a matter of actions but an issue inside of us. Notice in what way the Colossians were enemies. Paul says *“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind”* It was a matter of the mind. This is referring to a person’s mindset or a person’s disposition. The Bible also refers to this as “the heart”. And we can think of this as a person’s control centre. The place where loyalties are established. So Paul is saying that before Jesus saved

the Colossians their priorities and loyalties were arranged with Jesus as their enemy.

4. Wicked works flow for a wicked heart (100)

And thirdly, having a mind, a disposition, that is against God produces wicked works. People are not enemies of God since they do wicked deeds. No they do wicked deeds because they are enemies of God. Now this may sound like a technical nuance but this is an important distinction. The root of our enmity with God is our heart, the fruit of our enmity with God are our wicked works.

Apply (350)

1. Remember your state before Jesus (100)

So, as we read these verses, think back to the time before Jesus saved you. Think back to the time when you too did wicked things because you were an enemy of God. Maybe you reacted in anger whenever people offended you. Maybe you indulged in the lusts of the flesh for instant pleasure. Maybe you constantly disobeyed your parents because you wanted to do things your way. Your outward actions would have looked different, but your problem was the same as everyone else. Your heart was an enemy of God. Each of us has a different past but none of us can claim a past free of wicked deeds.

2. Remember how desperate things were

And the key thing to remember as you dwell on your past state is how desperate and hopeless things were. You were the enemy of the most powerful being in the universe. Your whole being was bent on serving yourself and pleasing yourself instead of Glorifying God. And there was no conception of how that could

change. There was not even the desire to change. The situation was hopeless and desperate.

3. Remember that there was nothing you could do about it

You were faced with inevitable peril, and there was nothing you could do about it. Even your “good” actions, say helping the poor, looking out for the sick, or humanitarian work could not change the fact you were an enemy of God. Because remember your actions were just the fruit of your sinful heart. Even if you sat in a room and did nothing your heart would still be an enemy of God. Things were desperate and there was nothing we could do about it. You were drowning with no hope of rescue.

But why does Paul remind us that we were enemies of God? Why does he want us to dwell on this hopeless and desperate time in our history?

Because when you remember what God saved you from, you will see the futility of wanting to add or subtract from the Gospel.

Which brings us to the second part of our study, because Paul not only wants us to ponder our past, but He also wants us to remember that Jesus has **reconciled us in the Present.**

Part 2 - Reconciled in the Present (v21b-22) - 700

Teach (350)

1. Link

Look closely at the end of verse 21 and verse 22:

yet now He has reconciled ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight

You were an enemy of God and “*yet now He has reconciled*” you. The all powerful, just and good God of the universe is now at peace with you. But how is that possible?

2. Reconciled by his perfect life (100)

You were reconciled “*in the body of His flesh*”. Jesus, the second person of the God-Head came in a body of flesh, and lived among us. Not only did he live among us but He lived a perfect life of obedience to the Law and Will of the Father. You were reconciled by His life which was holy, blameless and above reproach in the sight of God the Father.

3. Reconciled by His death (100)

But you were also reconciled “*through death*”. Who’s death? The death of Jesus on the Cross. Through his death he paid for my sins and for your sins. We were enemies of God and our sinful actions had piled up the wrath of God against us. Your wicked actions deserved a just punishment. And by pure justice you deserve to go to hell. But Jesus chose to save you. Jesus chose to reconcile you. And by his death he paid the punishment in your place.

4. He presents us holy, blameless, and without blemish because his record is accounted to ours (100)

So, rejoice! We have been reconciled by Jesus through his life of obedience and his death of payment. But that is not the end in itself. Notice in the end of verse 22.

Why did he reconcile you? He reconciled you “*to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight*”. Jesus is looking forward to the day when you will be presented to the Father, and on that day you will be holy, blameless and above reproach.

But this will only be possible because your sins have been paid for and because you stand clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. You will stand in the holiness of Jesus. You will stand in the blamelessness of Jesus. You will stand above reproach because Jesus is above reproach.

Apply (350)

1. Rest in the finished work of Jesus

For you who trust in the work of Jesus will you can know that you will be presented holy, blameless and above reproach. And so rest in that finished work of Jesus. He has done a great work and He has done it completely. It is good for the soul to rest in his finished work on the cross. Your greatest worry has been dealt with. The cause of greatest anxiety is resolved. All other worries and concerns will seem small when you compare them with the eternal destiny of your soul.

2. Are you trusting in Jesus?

But if you do not trust in Jesus as your savior, then you should be worried and restless. You should be anxious and fearful. Are you good enough? Have you done enough? If you died today would God let you into heaven? The Bible answers those questions clearly and negatively. Are you good enough? NO. Have you done enough? NO. Would God let you into Heaven? NO.

Only Jesus is good enough and has done enough. And only if you trust in his work on the cross will God let

you into heaven. Because to trust in Jesus as your savior is to have your sins wiped clean. To trust in Jesus as your savior is to have the perfect works of Jesus counted as if they were your own. If you trust in Jesus, then you can be sure of heaven. If you trust in Jesus, then you can rest. Then you will have peace with God. And that peace will overflow to all aspects of your life. So please, trust in the work of Jesus and you will be saved.

3. Illustration of needing the oxygen to revive a drowned person

So in our past, we were drowning, with no hope of rescue. In fact we were dead with no breath left in us. But Jesus did a great work. He rescued us in our desperate state. And just like a drowned person will need oxygen to revive them, we need the work of Jesus to bring us back to life. And for those who trust Jesus, we can breathe deeply. There is no need to frantically fight for air but to remove the oxygen would be fatal.

Which brings us to the third section of our study: The warning and encouragement to **Persevere to the Future.**

Part 3 – Persevere to the Future (23) – 700

Teach (350)

1. Link

Read with me verse 23 again:

²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

2. To move away from the gospel is to reject Jesus' work

At first this verse sounds like there is a condition on our salvation. Is Paul saying we need to do some things in order to be saved? Commands of "*Continue*" and telling us to "*not moved away*" sound like works we must do.

But the intent is actually the opposite. What are we to continue in? Continue in the Faith. And what are we not to move away from? From the hope of the gospel! Paul is simply encouraging the Colossians to continue how they started. They were saved by Faith in the work of Jesus. That same faith in the work of Jesus will see them through to be presented holy before the Father.

So the encouragement and warning is real. To move away from the hope of the gospel is to reject the work of Jesus. To reject the work of Jesus places you back as an enemy of the all-powerful God.

Jesus lived a perfect life, he died a horrific death, he reconciled you, and you can look forward to the day of being presented holy "²³ *if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, **and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel.***"

Apply (350)

1. How were you saved? Faith in Jesus How do you persevere? Faith in Jesus.

So as we ponder this warning and encouragement, remember that how you were saved. Were you saved because you had some special hidden knowledge? Were you saved because you gave so much to the church or did so many acts of service? NO! You were

saved by faith. By faith alone. By faith in the work of Jesus

As we grow as Christians, mature and get involved in church, it could be tempting to rely on our own works for salvation. You discipline yourself with study and start to understand the depths of God's word and you may start to think this knowledge is helpful for your salvation. Or you are giving generously and serving faithfully at church and maybe you start to think that these good works are helping you gain favor with God.

But you must remember that you were saved by faith in the work of Jesus. In the same way must also persevere by faith in the works of Jesus. Now study, service and sharing are good things and fruit of a changed life but not the basis of your perseverance. To try to persevere in your own strength and your own works is to move away from the hope of the Gospel. And outside of the hope of the gospel there is no hope.

So please take the time to think about that. Are there false teachers in your life who are telling you that you need to add to the work of Jesus? Do you feel a weight that you need to work hard enough, to know enough, or to serve enough to prove to God that you were worth saving? Do not believe those lies from within or outside. Hear God's warning to continue as you started. To trust in nothing else but the Gospel. Because the same Gospel which saved you from your desperate state in the past, is the same gospel which is sustaining you today and the same gospel which will present you to God perfect and Holy.

Think of our friend with the oxygen mask. As he regains his strength he is tempted to forget how desperately lost he was. He is tempted to forget how

dependent he was on the oxygen to be revived and to forget how dependent he is on the oxygen to sustain his life. In the pride of his new strength he could be tempted to take the mask off. But with damaged lungs he would only be able to take a few breaths before being unable to breath, and that choice would be fatal. The warning here is “do not take the mask off”. To remove the oxygen mask is to choose death. In the same way, to move away from the hope of the Gospel is to choose death.

Conclusion (400)

So as we bring the study to a close, let us think back at the words of Jesus. Words of condemnation on one side and words of reconciliation on the other. Which words will you hear?

Will you be part of those who think that their own works give them merit of salvation. Those who think that with the right knowledge, the right works or the right giving gained some favor with God. These people may be very active within the church, may even seem spiritual but they are not persevering with the Gospel. To those Jesus will say: “ *I never knew you, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.*” (matt 7-21-23)

But then there will be those who remember their past and how desperate things were. Those who rest in their present reconciliation and trust in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. There will be those who persevere in the gospel till the end. Those who will finish as they started with Faith in Jesus. Those who are trusting in nothing else for their right standing before God. To those Jesus will say ““*Well done good*

and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your Lord”
(matt 25:23)

And that can be you too: ²³ *if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard...*

Let us Pray