

Colossians 1.²¹⁻²³

4. 'The best message'

Background

'This is the gospel ..' (v.22). Just as the previous verses ([Col.1.15-20](#)) comprise one of the NT's most concise and distilled statements of the person and work of Jesus, so these 3 short verses comprise a succinct, yet remarkably comprehensive, statement of the gospel. As such, the passage repays careful study, for all the basic components of the gospel message are found here; it's worth taking your time to tease out the meaning and implications of what Paul declares here in such a concentrated form.

1. He starts with a reminder of our *natural* state as human beings. Outside of the Lord Jesus Christ, the condition of us all is what Paul describes here as 'alienation': and this, of course, this also therefore is our plight and what gives rise to our greatest need.

You should note, and give careful thought to the two primary ways in which that 'alienation' finds clearest expression – in our minds or thinking, on the one hand (see [Rom.1.21-23](#)), and in our conduct and behaviour on the other.

2. Paul then proceeds to set out the dramatic change which the gospel effects. Instead of being 'alienated' we are now 'reconciled', a new relationship with God which affords us significance, dignity and security. "Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God," is how Peter similarly puts it ([1 Pet.2.10](#)).

It's not, however, simply a relational change that is brought about, it's a moral change as well – as the latter part of v.22 indicates: not just an *imputed* righteousness, that is (to use the theological jargon), descriptive of justification, but an *imparted* righteousness also, pointing to the sanctifying work of God.

3. Such a change, however, involves a huge spiritual, relational and moral revolution. How on earth is it effected? So you'll see that Paul spells out in stark terms just what was required to bring about such a radical change: and again it's with a striking economy of words that he highlights the price paid to effect such change. Again, there's much to tease out!

4. If such change has been made *possible*, through the work of Jesus, how does it become *ours*? This, of course, is where the necessity of faith comes into play as the 'sharp edge' of the gospel call: the nature of such faith, the perspective of such faith, and the scope of the call to such faith are all referenced here by the apostle – and all of these warrant careful consideration in terms of their application to our lives and our proclamation of the gospel.

5. Which leads on to a final component of the gospel – namely, the privilege of service to which it leads us. We are brought not only into the family of God, but into His service as well: our new life, in Christ (no longer outside Christ), has at its heart the service of the gospel – all we are and do and say is geared now to the furtherance and progress of the gospel.

'Days' 4-7 complement the first 3 'days' which focus on the Colossians passage. It'll be best, therefore, to concentrate on 'days' (1), (2), and (3) and use Eph.2.1-22 as an aid to your thinking. There are, thus, some additional questions on the first 3 'days'.

1) Monday 17th October – before

Read [Colossians 1.21](#)

“.. once you were alienated from God ..” (Col.1.21)

As a believer there’s a ‘before-and-after’ to your story! Remembering the deepest (and darkest) truth about yourself in the BC (before Christ) part of your story ensures there’s a lasting praise and gratitude in your heart. Once you **were** .. now you **are**!

How did that ‘alienation’ from God express itself in your conduct and in your experience?

What does Paul mean by saying that you ‘*were enemies in your minds*’?

Compare [Deut.6.5](#) with Jesus’ re-statement of that commandment in [Matt.22.37](#): why do you think Jesus changed the wording?

In what ways can you say that you love the Lord ‘with all your mind’?

In [Rom.12.2](#) Paul points to the renewal of our minds as being the foundation of that transformation which will one day see us conformed to the likeness of Jesus: how is that renewal of the mind best effected in the life of a church?

Prayer: *May the memory of what I once was serve only to deepen in my heart a sense of wonder and of gratitude for all that, in the riches of Your grace You’ve done for me.*

2) Tuesday 18th October – reconciled

Read [Colossians 1.22](#)

“.. But now He has reconciled you ..” (Col.1.22)

Reconciliation is a key theme in the Scriptures unfolding of what God has wrought for us in Jesus. A relational revolution has happened – from being in the past God’s enemy to being now His child: and a moral transformation is the result. All through Christ.

Why is our reconciled relationship with God so entirely dependent on the physical death that Jesus died?

If a friend spoke negatively about ‘holiness’ how would you answer the person and how would you define ‘holiness’?

To what extent do your/our prayers reflect the concern of the Lord in the gospel to present His people ‘holy in His sight and without blemish..’?

In what ways can we best cultivate such ‘holy’ living in the life of our fellowship?

To whom have you made yourself accountable as part of your pursuit of holiness?

Prayer: *Thank You, good Shepherd, that You sought me when I was lost, raised me up from the pit, and now You lead me in paths of righteousness for Your own Name’s sake.*

3) Wednesday 19th October – commitment

Read [Colossians 1.22-23](#)

“.. if you continue in your faith, established and firm ..” (Col.1.23)

True faith involves a deep relational commitment – mirroring the commitment of love which the Lord in His grace extends to you and which instils in your heart the confidence that He will complete what He’s begun and fulfil what He’s promised.

What is the hope you’ve been given in the gospel, and what reason do you give for your cherishing that hope (see [1 Pet.3.15](#))?

How can it be said that God’s salvation in Jesus is *unconditional* when Paul seems to insert a ‘condition’ here (‘..if you continue in your faith..’)?

As a believer yourself, how does your being ‘a servant’ of the gospel find expression?

Prayer: *Keep me ever trusting You, O God of hope, and fill me again today with all joy and peace, that my hope may overflow to others by the power of Your Holy Spirit.*

4) Thursday 20th October – grace

Read [Ephesians 2.1-10](#)

“.. it is by grace you have been saved ..” (Eph.2.5)

That grace by which a person encompasses the greatness of God’s love and the riches of His mercy. That work of grace in your life, whereby you were brought you’re your deadness in sin to newness of life, is always for the display of His incomparable glory.

In what ways do you recognise that, apart from the grace of God in Christ, you ‘gratified the cravings of your flesh’?

You were (re)created in Christ ‘to do good works’: in what ways is that now evident in the way you live your life?

Prayer: *In grace You became poor, my Lord, and thereby I have been enriched beyond all measure: help me today to show such grace towards those around me.*

5) Friday 21st October – near

Read [Ephesians 2.11-13](#)

“.. you who once were far away have been brought near..” (Eph.2.13)

Check the adjectives – ‘separate’, ‘excluded’, ‘foreigners’: you were ‘far away’. Whatever worldly wealth you might have had, you were without both hope and God in the world. Jesus’ death was the price paid to bring you to God and give you hope.

Why is it so important for believers to remember what once they were outside of Christ?

It’s equally important for believers to remember what now they are: what are the great blessings of having been ‘brought near’?

Prayer: *Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee! And, though it be a cross that raises me, still all my song would be, nearer, my God to Thee, nearer to Thee*

6) Saturday 22nd October – peace

Read [Ephesians 2.14-18](#)

“.. His purpose was to create in Himself one new humanity ..” (Eph.2.15)

Peter described the gospel to a Roman centurion in terms of ‘peace’ ([Acts 10.36](#)): that theme of relational ‘peace’ (vertically with God, horizontally with others) is central to the gospel – and both the great need, and the great longing, of humanity.

How does your life exemplify this ‘peace’ of which Paul writes here?

What lessons about prayer do you learn from v.18 which is as good and concise a description of prayer as you’ll find?

Prayer: *Help me today, my Lord and Saviour, so to bathe in the wonder of that peace You have secured, that my every word and deed and thought is that of a peacemaker.*

7) Sunday 23rd October – dwelling

Read [Ephesians 2.19-22](#)

“.. In Him you too are being built together ..” (Eph.2.22)

The church is a construction site! Amidst the bustle and dust of a work still in progress, something wonderful is being built by God in the lives and common life of His people – He now dwells among His people: and He means to radiate His glory through them.

How do these verses inform your understanding of what the weekly gathering of God’s people for worship will comprise?

The temple was where God’s presence was experienced: in what ways will that sense of His presence be experienced in the public worship of His people?

Prayer: *You inhabit the praises of Your people, Lord ([Ps.22.3](#), KJV)! Come, then, by Your Holy Spirit as Your people gather for worship today and presence Yourself among us!*