

Reconciliation - Colossians 1:21-23
James Muldoon - Carey Baptist Church – 3 August 2008

This morning, we're going to think about reconciliation between human beings and God. What applied to the Christians at Colossae applies just as much to people today. We're going to learn lessons from these 1,952 year-old words which matter immensely to us all.

i What they had been

v21 shows that the Colossians had been enemies of God. They had been downright hostile towards him. That had come out in their evil behaviour: for example, they'd dishonoured their parents, hated, sinned sexually, stolen, lied, coveted. And it had come out in their evil thinking: for example, they had refused to worship God, had worshipped other gods, had been totally uninterested in finding out what he required of them.

As a result, they had been alienated from God. They were not on speaking terms with him. And the fault was in no way on God's side. It was entirely on theirs.

So what? All of this matters because human nature does not change. People still engage in evil behaviour and evil thinking. Therefore they are still enemies of God. Therefore they are still alienated from God. And it's all their fault.

In fact, it's even worse. The Colossians are a picture of each of us individually. Can you honestly say that you've never dishonoured your parents, never hated, never sinned sexually, never stolen, never lied, never coveted, always worshipped God, never worshipped other gods, and always been interested in what he's required of you? No, you cannot! That means that you are showing yourself to be his enemy. Therefore you are alienated from him.

What a terrible way to live! And yet, that's the way humanity has chosen to go. And that's the way each individual human being has chosen to go.

ii What had happened to them

v22 speaks of a radical transformation which has taken place in the lives of the Colossians. Once they were enemies. Once they were alienated from God. But now they've been reconciled. Now they're at peace. Now they're friends. And that's a miracle!

Paul tells us that it has all happened "**by Christ's physical body through death**". Jesus Christ is God the Son made man. He had a physical body which he never used to sin. And he died. The question is: how on earth did that bring reconciliation between God and the Colossians, between God and us?

We've seen that we were alienated from God because of our evil behaviour and evil thinking. But what if someone comes along and cleans us up? What if someone comes along and makes us pure instead of evil? What if someone comes along and makes us "**holy in God's sight, without blemish and free from accusation**"?

Then that reason why we're alienated is gone. And instead there's reconciliation, peace, friendship.

That's what Jesus Christ has done. As he died on the cross, he drew all the evil which people like the Colossians and you and me had committed onto himself. And he died to take it away. Our evil behaviour and evil thinking has been dealt with by Jesus Christ! So now there's reconciliation, peace, friendship.

At least, there is for those who trust in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ did everything necessary when he died on the cross. But you must trust him if you want to know that reconciliation in your own experience. You need to confess your wrongdoing to God. Pray. Own up to it all. Confess it to him. Ask him to forgive you. And you need to trust in Jesus Christ who died to save people. All you can do is trust that he has taken your wrongdoing away; so trust him. And you need to start to live your life for him. We can't expect to receive reconciliation and then go on living in a way which displeases him. No. We must seek to live our lives by his rules.

That's how to be reconciled to God. Jesus Christ has done everything necessary. So confess your sin to him. Trust in Jesus. And then live for him. Have you done that? Those who do not, tragically, live their lives alienated from God. Worse, they spend eternity alienated from God, and that, of course, means not getting to heaven. Isn't it time you were reconciled to God?

iii What they must do

But before you become a Christian, you need to count the cost. In **v23**, Paul is saying that the Colossians must continue in their faith and that that gives evidence that they are truly reconciled to the Lord. He does not mean that a real Christian can end up being totally alienated from God again (see **Philippians 1:6**). He is simply urging them to persevere. They must cling to their faith. They must be established and firm, like a building with deep foundations. They must not be moved from the hope which the gospel has given them. They must persevere. And their perseverance will give evidence to themselves and to the world that they are reconciled to God.

The point is that Christianity is for life. It's not a phase you might go through. It's not a temporary prop to help you through a tricky passage in your life. It's not a take-it-or-leave-it matter. It's for life. It's a lifelong commitment. Before you become a Christian, you must count the cost. You are, in a sense, giving the rest of your life away. You are promising to live to please God for the rest of your days.

That's a major commitment. You must count the cost before you make that commitment. But what is the alternative? Continued alienation from God in this life. Alienation from God throughout eternity. And to go for that option is not the most cost-effective choice in the end.

Alienation is a terrible thing. Reconciliation is a wonderful thing. So won't you be reconciled to God? Won't you confess your sin to him? Won't you trust his Son, Jesus Christ? Won't you start to live for him? Nothing in all the world could be better than knowing that he is your friend.