



Growth Sheet

Once Enemies, Now Reconciled

Colossians 1:21-23

Summary

To this point in Colossians, Paul has expressed his prayer and gratitude for the Colossians (1:1-14). He has pointed to Jesus Christ as the Lord of creation (things as they *are*, 1:15-17) as well as Lord of *new* creation (things as they *should be*, 1:18-20).

Now Paul gets specific and personal. He reminds the Colossians that the story of Christ's making peace by the blood of his cross has become *their* story: "And you," he writes, "who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death" (1:21-22).

Once Enemies, Now Reconciled

The words in 1:21-23 actually comprise a single sentence that explains past, present, and future aspects of the Colossians' salvation. At the hub of this sentence is the verb "reconciled" (22) and everything else revolves around that main idea. This passage, therefore tells us what reconciliation means for the past, present, and future.

The order that we find in the text, however, is a bit different: past, *future*, and present. This passage teaches us that *our past problem and future promise motivates our present perseverance*.

1. The problem in the past (1:21-22a)
 - a. What the problem was: enmity with God (1:21)
 - b. How the problem was solved: Christ's death (1:22a)
2. The promise for the future (1:22b)
 - a. Who they will be with: God ("before him," 1:22)
 - b. What they will be like: "holy and blameless and above reproach" (1:22)
3. Perseverance for the present (1:23)
 - a. Positively: continue steadfast in the faith, stable and steadfast
 - b. Negatively: not shifting from the hope of the gospel

Discussion and Application

1. What do you think people mean when they ask, "What's your story?" Suppose someone were to ask you that question. What pivotal events would come to mind? Why is it

important to understand our life stories—those past events that shape our present and future?

2. The Bible teaches that the story of every human being begins with this sad chapter: “separated from God.” According to Colossians 1:22, what can happen to change that story? See also Romans 5:1, Colossians 1:20.
3. Why would the Bible make a point to remind us of such a tragic past? What effect does this have on our level of joy, gratitude, and humility?
4. According to Colossians 1:22, what is God’s future purpose for reconciling us with himself? See also Jude 24, Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:14. How does this motivate our present pursuit of holiness?
5. When Paul begins verse 23 with the word “if,” he is assuming what follows to be true. In other words, those who have been reconciled with God *will* persevere in the faith. Is there a real danger of people “shifting away from the hope of the gospel”? What would it look like if someone did so? What are some ways we can encourage each other *not* to shift away from the hope of the gospel? See also Hebrews 3:13 and 10:25.