

**THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE
OF GOD'S SALVATION**

Colossians 1:21-29

Reader: Ivan Snyder

Intro: I want to express my appreciation to those who ministered the Word while Lucille and I were on vacation at the coast with Gary and Martha, and Will and Katie. Will and Katie joined a couple of days late because Pastor Will had both the morning and evening services on the 14th. Last Sunday Dr. Lockwood spoke in the morning service and Ron Bystrom in the evening. Dr. Lockwood filled in for me at the Wednesday night prayer service and also twice at the Saturday morning men's prayer meeting.

And then I want to thank all of you who prayed for us, as well as for those who sent cards on my birthday. The weather at the coast was not perfect, but it was acceptable. We had a lot of time to read and to pray, and it usually happened that we got into discussions in the evening which lasted until the early hours of the morning. All in all it was a good time. We are thankful, too, to Tony and Susie Tosti of Hillcrest Chapel for the use of their home which is right on the beach in Pacific City, which is near Lincoln City. On both Sundays that we were away we attended the Pacific Coast Bible Church in Pacific City, and enjoyed the Pastor and the warm welcome of the people.

We miss you all when we are away, and prayed for you while we were away. But it is good to be back home, and I have been looking forward to getting back into Colossians. So I am hoping that you all will be glad to keep reading this wonderful NT epistle, and I trust that the Lord will give us His blessing because that is what is supremely important.

Let me remind you of the part of chapter 1 which we have covered before we go on to the verses which Ivan Snyder read for us a few minutes ago.

The Apostle Paul did not establish the church in Colosse. But he knew some of the people, and, of course, they were very familiar with him and the ministry that he had many places in the Roman Empire. Colosse was located in the part of the world which is now the country of Turkey. We don't know who founded the church, but some think that it was probably Epaphras whom Paul mentioned in chap. 4, v. 10. I think that we all know that Paul wrote all of the epistles in the NT

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beginning with his letter to the church at Rome and going on to the one chapter epistle to Philemon who was a member of the Colossian church. The epistles do not appear in the order in which they were written, but we do have his letters to the churches first, and then his letters to three individuals – Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. We learn from the second verse of chapter 1 that Timothy was with Paul in Rome where Paul was being held by the Roman government when Paul wrote this epistle. Contrary to what you might think, Paul did not write to the church in Colosse primarily about himself, his troubles and his needs. But he wrote about them and his concern for them. False teachers were on the scene, and the object of their teaching was to turn them away from Christ. They were trying to make Christ less than Who He was: the Son of God Who had become Man in order to provide salvation from sin for sinners. So, after telling them that He prayed always for them, and that he was thankful for the several evidences that there were that those in the church had Colosse had really been saved, Paul told *what* he was praying for them. And then he immediately began to write of what we can truthfully call, *the glory of Christ!* And this is how he did it.

He was leading up to his statement at the end of verse 18 concerning the Lord Jesus Christ where he said, “that in all things He,” Christ, “might have the preeminence.” And then he mentioned four areas in which Christ was “preeminent.”

First of all, Christ is preeminent in salvation. You see this from the latter part of verse 12 and going on down through verse 14.

Secondly, in just one verse, verse 15, Paul said that Christ was preeminent as the revelation of God.

Thirdly, in verses 16 and 17, Paul declared that Christ was preeminent as the Creator of all things. All of creation originated with Christ, and all creation came into existence for Him.

And then the fourth point that Paul mentioned is that Christ is preeminent in the Church. He is the Head of the Church, which is also called in Ephesians 1:22 and 23, the body of Christ.

And let me add a fifth point here which I have not emphasized before. It is this. When you add these four points together you can see that they indicate that Christ is preeminent in the Bible, the Word of God, where

we learn all that God has been pleased to reveal to us about Himself and about His Son. In John 5:39 it is recorded that the Lord Jesus told some Jewish religious leaders,

39 Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me (John 5:39).

After His resurrection the Lord Jesus joined two of His disciples who were walking from Jerusalem to the little town of Emmaus a few miles away. They were confused about what had happened to the Lord, and especially about the report that He was alive. Do you remember what the Lord said to them and then what did with them? We are told in Luke 24:26-27:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concern-ing Himself.

The Bible is all about Christ. If you talk about salvation, you have to talk about Christ. If you talk about knowing God, you have to talk about Christ. If you talk about creation, Christ is the Creator. You can't overlook Him. And if you talk about the Church in the NT, Christ is the Head of the Church. The key to understanding the Church is to understand Christ.

I hope that these truths will be written upon our hearts in such a way that no one will ever be able to make you think less of Christ than how He is revealed in the Bible.

But now we come to our text, beginning with verse 21 of chapter 1 here in Colossians. And for the latter part of this chapter we have what a great Bible teacher named John Eadie called, *The Application*.

In fact, that title could be applied to the rest of the Epistle. As I have said in the beginning, Paul was not writing because he wanted to tell the Colossian church about his needs, but because he wanted to tell the Colossian church about their needs.

I am sure that most of you have heard before what I am going to point out from this passage. But we all need to hear it again and again. I want to show you here how Paul deals with the three tenses of salvation – the past, the present, and the future. And I will use two words which he uses, and a third word which I believe describes what Paul was saying about the future. We may not get through all of this today, but if we don't, we'll get

it next Sunday.

Now the three words are these:

- I. Reconciliation. This is the past tense of salvation.
- II. Continuation. This is the present tense of salvation.
- III. Consummation. This is the future tense of salvation.

It is perfectly in agreement with Scripture to say, “I was saved,” meaning at some time in the past. It is also in agreement with Scripture to say, “I am being saved.” But it is also in agreement with Scripture to say, “I will be saved.”

You will find a form of the first word in verse 21. You will find a form of the second word in verse 23. Paul doesn’t use the third word, but consummation has to do with the finish, or completion, of what God is ultimately going to do with all of us who are saved – saved from the penalty of our sins, and saved from the power of our sins.

Let us look at the first word.

I. RECONCILIATION (Col. 1:21).

But before we can understand what it means to be “reconciled,” we need to understand two other words which Paul used here, the words “alienated” and “enemies.” “Alienated” means *estranged*. It means that we are “without God” as Paul said in Ephesians 2:12. It is to have no hope for the future. And this all people are by nature. They may talk about God, or use His Name in profanity. In fact, all people by nature and by birth are at enmity with God.

Paul described this in Romans 5:10 and 11 in these words, speaking of our past,

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

The word translated “atonement” at the end of verse 11 should be “reconciliation.” But what does “reconciled” mean? It means that God has taken the initiative in taking away our sin by the death of Christ on the Cross so that when we are brought to faith in Christ, the Lord removes the enmity from our hearts, and we become friends of God. By nature we

have no desire to make things right with God. And if we wanted to, we don't have that kind of power. Our alienation from God, and our opposition to God is because of our sin. Christ died to secure the forgiveness of our sins, and to bring us into fellowship with God.

Our reconciliation with God is once-for-all. It means that "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). As Christians we may sin, and our fellowship with God is temporarily affected. But our reconciliation always remains the same for everyone who is saved.

Notice our text again in verse 21 through the first statement of verse 22:

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

22 In the body of his flesh through death . . . (Col. 1:21-22a).

Once you are reconciled, you can never again be not reconciled because your reconciliation, and mine, are not by anything that we have done for God, but because of what Christ has done for us by His death to secure our reconciliation with God.

But now let us go to our second word. It is the word

II. CONTINUATION (Col. 1:23).

Now I believe that this is one of the major points that the Apostle was making in this epistle. We all have known people who have at some time have made a profession of faith in Christ, but as time goes on, they begin to falter. They are not as faithful in attending church. They have other things to do. And finally they are gone. They don't come back. Sometimes they do, but many times they do not.

Paul was not giving the Colossians a false hope. He was not saying that if you have ever professed faith in Christ, you are saved no matter how you live. He was saying here that you can be sure of your reconciliation with God "IF you continued in the faith, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel." Let us look at the whole verse, verse 23:

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister (Col. 1:23),

Perhaps you remember that the Apostle John addressed this subject in his

first epistle. This is what he wrote in 1 John 2:19:

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

(The words “no doubt” are not in the original text, so read the verse omitting them.)

The evidence that you have been truly reconciled to God is that you will continue in the faith. What is “the faith”? It is the teaching, the doctrine, of Scripture. And remember that Paul in the earlier part of this chapter has emphasized especially what the Bible teaches, and in particular what the Bible teaches about Jesus Christ.

What else will you notice about those who do not continue in the faith? They forget about “the hope of the Gospel.” What is “the hope of the Gospel”? This brings us to our third word; the word

III. CONSUMMATION.

Remember that this word has to do the completion of our salvation, what God’s ultimate purpose is in saving us.

At this point we need now to go back to the last part of verse 22. Verses 21 and 22 deal with the first part of our salvation, when we are reconciled to God, and then on to the end, the finish, the consummation of our salvation. What is it? “To present you holy and unblameable, and unreprouvable in His sight.”

In verses 27 and 28 Paul gets back to the consummation of our salvation. Follow in your Bible as I read these verses:

27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Col.1:27-28).

When you take an honest look at your life today, do you think such a consummation is possible? It certainly can’t be if it is dependent upon us. But it is not dependent upon us. When Paul wrote to the church at Rome,

he said this in discussing the consummation of our salvation in these words:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:28-30).

The good for which God is working all things together is to conform you and me to “the image of His Son.” But for now remember:

- I. Reconciliation.
- II. Continuation.
- III. Consummation.

Concl: Next week I want us to look at these verses again to see God’s plan for accomplishing this glorious purpose, and to understand more fully the words which Paul used to describe what the Lord is doing in the lives of all who are truly reconciled to Him through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.