



Sermon – October 25, 2020
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Verses Covered This Week

Colossians 1:21-22

Ephesians 4:17 - 18

Well as you're seated, let's grab our Bibles. We're going to spend our time this morning in Colossians chapter 1, verses 21 and 22. If you're a guest with us, welcome home. We're glad you're here whether you're in the room or gathered online. We want you to know Central is a place where we come together every Sunday because we believe Jesus is alive. And we come to God and His word for these messages because we believe that God's word is living and active. It's sharper than any double-edged sword, able to pierce our hearts. And our longing this morning is to see God do just that. If you remember, last week when we were in Colossians, we saw the way that Paul is speaking of how in Christ God is restoring the world. But now he's going to take that message that's true of all of creation and bring it to bear on our own hearts. To speak of how in Christ God is reconciling us to Himself. So let's see how he says that here in verses 21 and 22.

²¹And you, who were once alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²²he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

You know, they say that the day before Halloween is the skinniest day of the year. Because then the candy starts coming and then candy gives way to Thanksgiving and all the eating around that. And then it's the Christmas holiday season and you get to enjoy everything that's there. And this is the season filled with before and afters. So maybe for you when you're bringing your kids up to the Fall Festival today, you'll have a before and after picture of them. Before they put the costume on and with it on. Or coming into Thanksgiving, you're going to have that meal with just the ingredients before its made and then you'll show off the finished product side by side. Or maybe you're all in for Christmas and you will take a snapshot of your house before the decorations go up and put it next to the finished product once it's done. We have this tendency in our culture to compare how it started and how it's going. There's this desire to do that. And that gives way after the holidays end into the January time period with New Year's resolutions. And you'll see all these advertisements that come up about exercise or dieting and weight loss. And they way they'll entice you to trust their product or their program is they'll put those before

and after pictures side by side so that you can see the physical transformation that happens right in front of you.

Well there's a sense in which Colossians 1 this morning is giving us a sense of the before and after of the gospel. And it's not a physical transformation that shapes our appearance; it's a spiritual transformation that shapes our standing before God. And I want you to notice what's happening. Paul, over the course of the last few weeks we've been studying how in verses 15 through 20, he gives us this hymn, this high praise about Jesus. He is asserting the gospel. But now beginning in verse 21, he turns his attention to asserting the gospel to applying the gospel. To taking what it is that Christ has done for the world and helping us to see what Christ has done for you and me. And at the heart of Jesus' saving work is the act of reconciliation. And what we're going to notice as we work through these two verses this morning is that Paul unpacked for us today three dimensions of our reconciliation in Jesus. And I want you to notice the first one back there in verse 21. We're going to see first the premise of our reconciliation. The premise of our reconciliation. So Paul says,

²¹And you, who were once alienated and hostile in mind, you were doing evil deeds,

Why was reconciliation necessary? That's the premise behind it. The reason for it. And what we're going to find is that Paul speaks about sin in a way that it shapes every aspect of who we are. From our heart to our head to our hands. There is nothing that is not corrupted by the effects of sin. And that's the reason that reconciliation is necessary. Because that sin has separated us from the family of God. So think about how Paul speaks of it here. He talks about it at the beginning of verse 21. How sin destroys us by making our hearts hard. He talks there about how we were once alienated. He's looking back to this one time in the past. What was true of us and what he describes it as is that of alienation. We were estranged. We were separated. We were severed in our relationship with God. In fact, if you were to look back in the original language. The way that he words this is something that is true in the past, that has ongoing implications for the present. We weren't just alienated before, but apart from Christ that is still true of us today. There is this sense of separation that shapes every one of us all the way back to the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve partake of that forbidden fruit, they turn themselves away from God. They hide in their sin and shame. There is a separation, an estrangement, an alienation that occurs.

In my family, we grew up, we went to the A&M versus Texas games every Thanksgiving or the day after Thanksgiving. And when you came to Kyle Field to watch one of those games, you felt right at home in a sea of maroon. But I remembered going to Austin and being one of the few spots of maroon in a sea of burnt orange. And I'll not soon forget one of those times our uncle, who was a longhorn, was nice enough to give us his parking pass right by the stadium where normally only longhorns would park. And we parked our maroon car and we get out of it filled with marron. And it's like every tailgate around us just froze and stared. And I don't think they liked us being there. And we began to get an interrogation. And I'll be tame in the way that I describe it. But they said, "How did you get this parking pass?" And we said, "Well, our uncle gave it to us. It's his." And they said, "Well, tell your uncle he's a loser." They didn't like the fact that we were there. From that moment forward, as we headed into the stadium, for the duration of the game, we could sense that alienation. That we were unwelcome. That our presence didn't fit; that didn't match. There was this sense of isolation and separation from what

was everyone else in the stadium was experiencing. And there's a sense in which when Paul speaks about our alienation from God, that's the picture. That we are separated from Him. But I don't want you to miss something about why it is that that happened. So hold your spot here in Colossians 1, but slide a few books back to Ephesians chapter 4. And I want you to see in Ephesians 4, verses 17 and 18 why it is that we are alienated from God. Because Paul unpacks it in this letter that he wrote about the same time as he wrote the letter of Colossians. Notice what he says in verses 17 and 18 of Ephesians 4. He says:

¹⁷Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.

Do you see it there at the end of verse 18? Why are they alienated? Why are they separated from God? It is because of a hardness of heart. When we turn away from God in our sin, when we are separated from Him because we fail and fall short of His glory, the Bible teaches us that over time there is a hardness against God that builds in our lives. It's like callouses that form on your hands whenever you're using them for manual labor or for repeated use that toughen our hearts up against God and His work. There is a hardness that is there that is causing for each one of us apart from Jesus and alienation from God. But notice that verse 21 makes our standing even worse than that. Because we're not just alienated from God, it also teaches us of the way that sin destroys us by making our heads hostile. Do you see what it says right after that? It says we were hostile in mind. Now when Paul speaks of mind, he's not talking about your brain. He's talking about your thought-life, your mindset, your perception, your understanding, your sense of purpose that at the very core of who we are and how we think, there is a hostility, an enmity, a disdain. We are enemies of God. Our thoughts are hostile by nature to them. And as a result of that, what happens is those thoughts often lead to actions that pull us away from God. So you see the way he goes on there that we were doing evil deeds. He tells us that sin destroys us by making our hands harmful. That those hostile thoughts result in evil actions. We are doing things that are displeasing to God in expression of those thoughts of hostility that are in resistance to Him. And what I want you to recognize and not miss this morning is the desperate state that every one of us finds their selves in before God if we don't know Jesus. We are separated from Him. We are far off. We are prodigals that are running away. We are hostile in mind. We are resistant to His goodness. We are doing things that are evil in His sight. There is a judgment that we deserve. That's the premise of reconciliation. It is necessary to be made right with God. And we watched that happen just this past Sunday here at Central. So during the first service, there was a guy that was visiting from San Marcos with a friend. They had a spiritual conversation the night before. And the friend invited him to church and they showed up and they were sitting in the back while the sermon was going on, during the message. And as the service ended, they got up to leave. But this man fell under conviction and he turned to his friend and he said, "I need to go speak to that pastor." And he came up to me between the services and he began to share his story with me. Carlos, was his name. He's a student at Texas State and he talked about how when he was young, he had lost his, some of his family, his sisters, in a tragic accident. And how that had gripped him. It had hardened his heart towards God. He was angry at God, blaming God for the loss of his own sisters. And as a result of that, he had turned away from God and was doing things that were displeasing to Him. But he knew at his core that he had no peace. That he was running from God and there was no hope. And God, through his word and by His Spirit, changed his life last week. And right here between the

services, he was reconciled to God. One who was far off was now brought near. One who was a foe of God was now brought into the family. That was what happened in that moment. And Paul is showing us that it doesn't matter how far we walk away from God, it doesn't matter how long the journey takes, that when we meet Jesus it can change us in an instant. And I want you to notice the way that that happens. Because we're going to see a second dimension of reconciliation beginning in verse 22 when Paul talks about the process of reconciliation.

So look at how he says it. He says at the beginning of verse 22.

²²he is now reconciled us in his body of flesh by his death.

So after showing us our need of reconciliation, Paul now begins to speak about the nature of reconciliation. How it happens, what is the process? And I want you to see here as he begins to speak about it, he talks about it as a sudden reconciliation. Now you might be quick to skip over this word, but notice he says, he has now reconciled us. This word now is in contrast to verse 21 where it talks about who we once were. That what was once true of us is no longer true. And now we have been made new. New we have been set free. We now we have been delivered. We've been reconciled. There is an immediacy, an urgency, to the transformation that occurred. It is sudden. It meets you in a moment. I imagine if we shared our testimonies with one another, there are so many of you that can talk about how you didn't even see the gospel coming. But God in His kindness met you in your weakness and set you free from your sin. That's what Paul is speaking of here. This sudden reconciliation. And when he says the word reconciled, it's the same term he used back in verse 20. We saw that last week. That the idea behind this concept is that what happens is when hostility is overcome by humility, that those who were once foes are now restored as family. That God welcomes us into His family. That He takes those who are far off and brings them home, welcoming them as sons and daughters. But I don't want you to miss the richness of what Paul is saying here. Because when he speaks of reconciliation, he's picking up on a picture of God's saving work that has been playing out for centuries before he wrote this letter through God's work with His people in the Old Testament. So think about your Old Testament for a minute. What happens? You see this cycle occur where the people of God turn away from God and their sin. God brings judgment upon them and in the midst of their judgment, they cry out for deliverance and God brings restoration and reconciliation; and then over and over we see that process repeating. And that finds its culmination, the ultimate judgment that comes in the Old Testament is in the exile. Where the people of God are removed from the promised land. They are taken away from the presence of God and His promises. And as a result of that, judgment comes. But what does God do? He meets them in that moment. And He brings them back. He restores them to the land. They rebuild the temple representing the presence of God and there is a sense of restoration and reconciliation that occurs. Well when Paul speaks here of the reconciling work of Jesus, He is picking up on this imagery. But think about the great reversal that happens. We are far off from God. We are exiled because of our sin. But what does God do? He doesn't bring us back first. What He does first is He rebuilds the temple. That temple as we saw last week is Jesus Himself; the place where the manifest presence of God dwells. And as He brings about the restoration of that temple, He now welcomes prodigals home. He now invites enemies to be sons and daughters. He brings us back from exile in reconciliation.

One of the things our family has really loved about our church has been the chance to jump in with Central Sports. We've got several that are playing football right now, a few of them will jump into the basketball. And one of the things I appreciate the most when I'm out at our fields on Saturdays are the volunteers who officiate the games. And the reason is because I imagine just about every time the ball is snapped, they can throw a flag if they wanted to. Somebody's doing something wrong. They're braking the rules. They aren't doing things exactly in an appropriate manner. And they could call a penalty at each occasion. But you know oftentimes what they'll do is they'll overlook it. They'll pretend like it didn't happen. And why? It's not because it's unimportant; it's because these kids are still learning the game. They're still trying to figure it out. There's this willingness to overlook, to pretend as if everything's fine for the sake of the rest of the play. Well there can be a danger to look at God's reconciling work as just like that. That what God is doing is agreeing to overlook our sins, our failures, our shortcomings. As if He just looks the other way and pretends they didn't happen so that the rest of His redemptive work can go on. But what Paul is reminding us of here is that is not what is happening in the gospel of Jesus Christ. That God doesn't overlook our sins; He overcomes our sins. He takes what He has done in His Son and He satisfies His judgment Himself. He pays the penalty that we deserve. He dies in our place so that we can be made new. In other words, the Son of God is alienated from God so that those of us who are alienated from God might be brought near. Might be made His sons and daughters. And we need to recognize that that happens in a moment; it's sudden. But I also want you to see here in the text that it is not just a sudden reconciliation, but a sacrificial reconciliation. So look at how verse 22 goes on. He says,

[In his body of flesh by his death,](#)

Paul uses both terms for the body in the original language: flesh and body. He's emphasizing the physical nature of the sacrifice of Jesus. We don't know exactly why He does that. We don't see that anywhere else in the New Testament. Perhaps he's highlighting the humanity of Christ. Perhaps he's countering some of the false teaching that is happening in the Colossian church. Regardless of the reason, what Paul is showing us is that reconciliation requires sacrifice. That without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness of sin. And that reconciling work happens as the culmination of the Old Testament sacrificial system. That Jesus takes on flesh, God becomes man, so that He might go to the cross for you and me to make a payment for our sin. And that's exactly what Paul has just been talking about. If we were to look back in verses 13 and 14 of Colossians 1, how that we have been rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of His beloved Son. And the way that that happens is through the process of reconciliation. That in Jesus, God has sacrificed His own Son so that we can be made a part of His family. I'm not sure if you caught it this week, but NASA made a big breakthrough. For years, they've been studying asteroids from a distance. But several years ago, they launched a mission to send a probe out to an asteroid that landed on that asteroid this week. This asteroid, Bennu, has been around for, it's ancient. It's been around for a long period of time. It's been travelling around the galaxy, but NASA wanted to study it up close. In order to do that, it had to send out a rescue mission. It had to travel great lengths at significant expense in order to get into the orbit of that asteroid. And then once this probe was in the orbit, then they had to make it descend and to land on one spot, the only spot on this asteroid that was deemed safe to land; at about the size of a small parking lot. Well in order to do that, this probe had to use different thrusters because there was a large, two-story bolder that they had affectionately nicknamed Mt. Doom that was in the way. And so you fire off the thrusters, you kind of get over

the top and then it brings it down to land right on the surface of this asteroid. The first time this has ever happened in human history. And the purpose of this rescue mission was in order to bring back some of the material of the asteroid so it could be studied. That what could be seen from far off now might be brought near. And the way that they did it was they had to pierce the ground. They used an instrument that struck it and dug into it. And at the same time, they used nitrogen and blew it down into the surface so that it would bubble up and to blow up some of this debris so that it could be drawn into a container to be taken back to be studied later on. Well when you think about the reconciling work of God, think about the rescue mission that Jesus has gone one for you and me. He has come from a far place. He has paid a high price. And the way that He does it, the way that He rescues you and me is He pierces our hearts. The wind of the Spirit blows in our midst and makes all things new. So that we might be drawn into a saving relationship with God through the sacrificial reconciliation that can be only found in Jesus. Paul doesn't just tell us why we need reconciliation; he shows us the nature of reconciliation.

But notice with me the way that this verse closes. Because you're going to see beginning in verse 22 a third dimension of reconciliation when Paul speaks of the purpose of reconciliation. Why is God doing it? Look at the second half of verse 22. He says,

[In order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him,](#)

So what's the purpose of reconciliation? Paul is going to show us several reasons for reconciliation here in the second half of this text. And you'll notice that in the same way sin affects our heart, our head, and our hands. Everything about us Paul is going to reveal how reconciliation restores our head, our heart, and our hands. So notice how that portion begins. He talks about how reconciliation makes our hearts holy. He tells us there specifically, in order to present you holy. There is this great shift that happens at salvation. Where hearts that were hard are ripped out and replaced with hearts of stone that are now made holy through their saving relationship with Jesus. Paul speaks there using the term present. And that word present combined with holy and blameless, he is picking up imagery from the Old Testament sacrificial system. Where the people would bring their sacrifices to the priests and in order to be accepted by God, they needed to be holy and blameless. And the priests on their behalf would present that offering to God. So that they might receive reconciliation and deliverance from their sin. And when Paul speaks of what God is doing in the gospel, he's talking about how He sets us apart in holiness. That He sets us free to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel. Jesus becomes a living sacrifice for you and me so that you and me can become a living sacrifice in the way that we live before God. But notice what else reconciliation does. Reconciliation also makes our heads blameless. He speaks there about how we're not just holy, but blameless. There is this idea here of being without blemish, spotless, faultless. There is no defect in our lives. And the only reason that is true is because of what God has done for us in Christ. Remember, before we met Jesus, our minds were hostile to God. Our thoughts were hardened towards Him. There is a darkness, a resistance, a rejection, a rebellion. But when we meet Jesus, it changes everything. And now when God looks at us, He sees us as blameless. That the blood of Jesus has washed us clean from all of our sin so that even when you go through those seasons of struggle, even when that besetting sin takes root in your heart in a way that is too enticing for you to resist. If you know Jesus, God is looking at you, not on the basis of your failures, but on the basis of the blameless and matchless blood of Jesus. He says, we are holy, we are blameless. But notice how it finishes there. He tells us that reconciliation makes our hands above reproach. Our

actions are now no longer displeasing to God. Evil in His sight. He tells us now that we stand before Him above reproach. That our appearance before God, our actions is that of in right standing. That we are flawless. That we are beyond accusation. That there is no judgment that the enemy can bring against us when God brings us before Him in Christ. Don't miss the way that this verse ends. See those, that little phrase there, before Him. There is coming a day, and perhaps for some of us soon, where we will stand before Him and we will stand before Him to face judgment. The Bible teaches us that the wages of sin is death. That our sin separates us from God. That we are worthy of condemnation. And for those that don't know Christ in a saving way, when we stand before Him, it will be judgment. We are not a part of His family so we do not receive the inheritance. But the beauty of the gospel is that when we put our faith in Jesus, when you look to Him as your Savior, your Lord, and your Treasure, you are now reconciled. You're brought into the family. You are holy and blameless and above reproach. You stand before God, not condemned; He welcomes you home. You are a beloved son or daughter in whom He is well pleased.

There's a lady by the name of Dianne Hood who was walking to her car one night back in 1990 in Colorado. She'd been in a Lupus Support Group. She'd just been diagnosed with this disease and was starting to ravage her body and she was in a low emotional state and she needed some comfort. And as she walked out of that, her difficulties met a tragic end because someone, as she was walking to her car, appeared wearing army fatigues and a ski mask and took her life. The police began to investigate this murder. And what they discovered not long after is that the woman who killed her was a lady named Jennifer Reali who just so happened to be the mistress of Dianne's husband. And at the time this created national news, she began to be known as the Fatal Attraction Killer because this happened right after a movie by a similar name came out right before that. And if that wasn't bad enough, as the cops continued the investigation, they determined that Jennifer didn't act alone. That in fact, Dianne's own husband was involved in conspiracy to the murder. Both of them were found guilty and sent to prison. I first learned that story when I met Dianne's son Jared. We were in college at A&M at the same time. Became very close friends. Can you imagine the heartache you experience as a child? Can you imagine what it would be like to lose your mom at that early stage in your life? And even worse than that, to know that your dad was seemingly involved in it? I can't even imagine the anger, the hostility, the rage, the frustration that you would have towards those two people. But an amazing thing happened before I met Jared. Before I met Jared, when he was growing up with his grandparents in Dallas, he met Jesus and Jesus changed his life. And this boy that was likely filled with rage was now often filled with joy. And the bitterness gave way to a hope that could only be explained in the gospel. And I'll never forget, on one trip we got to take up to Colorado together while we were in college, Jared for the first time got to visit the prison where his dad was located and speak to him face to face. Can you imagine the courage to look your dad in the eye after all those years? When Jared sat down with him, he told his dad that he loved him and he forgave him. And when Jennifer Reali, just a few years ago, was up for parole, it made national news yet again because even though some didn't want that to happen, one of her most outspoken supporters for that reconciliation was my friend Jared. Jared's life had been changed by Jesus, but he wasn't the only one. Jennifer came to know the Lord while she was in prison and was doing ministry in prison during that season. And while she was up for parole, Jared wrote a letter to the one who would make this decision. And he said to them, I believe she should be set free. Her life has been changed and I want the world to know that I am forgiving her in Jesus' name. What would possess someone to do that? How is that even possible? How

could you forgive the person that killed your own mother? Well it can't be explained by anything that this world has to offer. The only way it can be explained is that because Jared had received forgiveness in Jesus, he was willing to extend it to even those who were his family's deepest enemy. Because He'd experienced the reconciliation of Christ, he could offer reconciliation in this world. And the hope of the gospel, the call of the gospel that we have before us this morning, is to receive that reconciliation ourselves and to minister that reconciliation to those around us. Because the best way we can display the reconciliation that we have in Christ is by seeking reconciliation with one another.

Let's pray together.

Father, in Your word we're reminded of the brokenness of sin. And so often we look around this world and we see it collapsing. We see hardness of heart. We see alienation. And yet we're reminded that that's not true in the culture; it's true for each one of us apart from Jesus. And I'm asking You, Father, if there are people in this room or watching online right now, that have never experienced what it's like to be reconciled to You, Lord, that You would welcome into their, You welcome them into Your family today. And I pray for those of us that have been brought in to Your family, Lord, that we would be ministers of that reconciliation. That we would seek unity in our body, in our community, in this world. That you would help us to be faithful in fighting sin knowing the way that You have set us free to be holy and blameless and above reproach by the power of Jesus in whose name we pray. Amen.