



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

*That Was Then; This is Now (Colossians 1:21-23)*

MARCH 30-31, 2010

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## **Weekly Bible Study Schedule**

- **Tuesday, March 30, 7 AM in HHR #5**  
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, March 30, 8:30 PM in Room #134**
- **Wednesday, March 31, 7am in HHR #5**  
-Breakfast Provided

## **INTRODUCTION**

So far in the letter to the church at Colossae, the Apostle Paul has written concerning things that are of utmost importance. He has heard from a leader and pastor of the church in Colossae about their faith, love and hope and gives thanks to God for these things in their lives (1:3-8). He then prays that they will increase in the knowledge of God's will so they will continue to please Him (1:9-12). Paul continues by explaining what God has done through Christ in qualifying, rescuing, transferring and redeeming them (1:13-14).

This thought leads into a song of praise as he writes about the wonders of Jesus Christ (1:15-20). True praise can often bring an interruption into one's life. It is easy to see how Colossians 1:21 would nicely flow in thought from Colossians 1:14. But Paul seems to contemplate on the Son of God in verse 14 and it interrupts his train of thought for a moment. Worship is not something reserved solely for Sunday morning at the church building. It can come at anytime a person thinks about the goodness of God and the excellencies of His Son.

After a moment of reflection and admiration, Paul gets back to the teaching concerning the work of Jesus Christ in the lives of the Colossae believers.

**Colossians 1:21-23** *And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, <sup>22</sup>yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy*

*and blameless and beyond reproach--<sup>23</sup>if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.*

Paul takes time to remind the believers of their former condition. There are some today who believe it is not good to think about or dwell on the past. Paul, on the other hands, reminds believers in many of his letters of their past life, not to reprimand or humiliate, but to show the greatness of God's grace in the salvation of His people (Ephesians 2:1-10; Romans 1-3; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:15-17).

It is healthy for the follower of Jesus to take a glimpse of where one has been and where God has him or her now. First, it keeps one humble; for God has done all things for our salvation and we added nothing to His work. Secondly, it helps one in relation with those who are not followers of Christ, who are still following their own sinful desires. For if it was not for the grace of God, one would be in the same condition as those around them. Therefore, instead of being proud and "looking-down" on others, one can reach across with a compassionate hand. Thirdly, it brings about another moment of praise and adoration to God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

## **THAT WAS THEN (1:21)**

After the exalted words concerning Jesus, Paul emphatically turns his attention to the people of the Colossian church. Even though he has never been to this church, Paul knows that all mankind holds the following elements in common.

## **ALIENATED (ESTRANGED, EXCLUDED, SEPARATED)**

All sinners, which includes all people (Romans 3:23), have been cut off from a vital relationship with their Creator. Isaiah 59:2 says, *But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.* The preceding verse says that God hand is not so short that it cannot save you, nor is His ear to dull to hear (Isa. 59:1). In other words, it is not God who is lacking; it is the sins

## **CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES**

**LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5**

**LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, ROOM #134**

**LEGISLATORS & STAFF: WEDNESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, BROADWAY BUILDING 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR CAFETERIA**

*PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL*

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## That Was Then; This Is Now (Colossians 1:21-23)

of the people who are keeping Him at arm's length. A Holy God cannot have fellowship with anyone who is stained with sin--and this includes every single person on earth. Therefore, all are cut off from Him. Unless the sins can be removed, there is no hope for reconciliation.

This alienation is further explained by the next two thoughts Paul brings up concerning the believer's former condition.

### HOSTILE IN MIND (HATRED, AT ENMITY)

Implied in the text is that this hostility was aimed at God Himself, which is a reflection of David's song,

**Psalm 14:1-3** *The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good. The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.*

In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul picks up this theme when he wrote that believers were once enemies against God (Romans 5:10); that the unchanged mind (one set on the "flesh" and not the "spiritual") is hostile toward God and absolutely unable to please Him (Romans 8:7-8).

Friend, let this serve as a reminder that there is no such thing as "being neutral" concerning God and His Son, Jesus Christ. You are either a follower of Jesus or an enemy of Jesus. There are no "Switzerlands" in this regard. If you have not been redeemed by Jesus and by faith are following after Him, you are against Him. Jesus Himself simply said, "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters" (Luke 11:23).

### ENGAGED IN EVIL DEEDS (DOING SINFUL THINGS)

When one is hostile in his or her mind toward God, they will act in opposition to Him. That which is in their mind will come out in their actions (Ephesians 2:1-3).

**John 3:19b-20** *...and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.*

**Mark 7:21-23** *For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.*

Both the attempt to do more good things than bad and/or having the desire to make up for one's mistakes are futile. When the depth of one's depravity and rebellion toward God is understood, one realizes his or her desperate condition. Unless God does something to bring reconciliation, we are hopelessly lost and eternally separated from Him.

### THIS IS NOW (1:22)

A reminder is needed at this point: Paul wrote this letter to the church at Colossae; to people whose faith and trust in is the "blood of the cross". It is these people who "were formerly..." If you are not a disciple of Jesus Christ, then the good news that follows was not written for you. It can be, though, if you trust the work of Christ instead of your own work to bring reconciliation with God.

### HOLY (SACRED, SAINT)

Those who were once alienated, hostile and evil have now been made new through the work of Jesus Christ. The first aspect is that they are now holy. Paul has already referenced the believers in Colossae as "saints" in his introduction and greeting (Colossians 1:2). The word used for "saints" in the greeting is the same word translated "holy" in 1:22. In other words, Paul is making the incredible statement that those who were once alienated, hostile and evil are now called "saints."

Being made holy or a saint means that these believers have been separated from evil and set apart unto God. Once they were in the midst of the debauchery and sin of the flesh and the world, but now God called them out and separated them from those things and separated them to Himself. This can be seen in what Paul wrote earlier, that they have been "rescued from the domain of darkness" and "transferred to the kingdom of His Son" (1:13).

**Ephesians 1:4** *...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.*

# Missouri

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### BLAMELESS (WITHOUT BLEMISH)

Not only are followers of Jesus made holy, but they are also without a stain of sin. A mechanic may wash his hands clean but still have the stain of oil and grease under his nails and on the fingers. The believer, though, when has been made clean has no stain of sin. God sees him or her with the imputed righteousness of Christ; that is, the purity of Jesus has been placed upon the stained sinner so that God no longer sees the sin and guilt. *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).*

### BEYOND REPROACH (UNREPROVABLE)

Not only has the former alienated, hostile, evil doer been made holy and without blemish, there are no longer any accusations that can be made to God about him or her. In the mind and eyes of God, He sees “unreprovable”. People, and even Satan (Revelation 12:9-10), may make accusations about the children of God, but their Father knows the truth. He is omniscient (all-knowing). He knows that they have been reconciled to Him through the blood of the Son and that they are now blameless and holy.

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**“FOR TRULY, HE HATH NOT ONLY DELIVERED FROM SINS, BUT HATH ALSO PLACED AMONGST THE APPROVED. FOR, NOT THAT HE MIGHT DELIVER US FROM EVILS ONLY, DID HE SUFFER SO GREAT THINGS, BUT THAT ALSO WE MIGHT OBTAIN THE FIRST REWARDS; AS IF ONE SHOULD NOT ONLY FREE A CONDEMNED CRIMINAL FROM HIS PUNISHMENT, BUT ALSO ADVANCE HIM TO HONOR. AND HE HATH RANKED YOU WITH THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SINNED, YEA RATHER NOT WITH THOSE WHO HAVE DONE NO SIN ONLY, BUT EVEN WITH THOSE WHO HAVE WROUGHT THE GREATEST RIGHTEOUSNESS; AND, WHAT IS TRULY A GREAT THING, HATH GIVEN THE HOLINESS WHICH IS BEFORE HIM... “**                      **--ST. CHRYSOSTOM**

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Please note that Paul is not saying that Christians can do no wrong. He himself expressed his own struggles with sin in Romans 7:14-24; a confession that every true believer makes. But when God sees His people,

He sees them as holy and blameless. Not because of their own work, but because of the work of Christ. It is the believer’s work of gratitude, after they have been made holy and blameless, to grow in the grace and knowledge of God and to perform the good works that God has created them to do (Ephesians 2:1-10).

Any “believer” who says or acts like they do not sin or are better than those who do sin are fooling themselves and not living in proper humility.

### HERE’S THE CHANGE (1:22-23)

First of all, be reminded, as has been stated above, that this change does not occur due to someone’s own work. Paul’s comments of “continuing in the faith” and “not moving away from the hope” do not bring the peace with God, or make one holy or blameless. These are the signs that one has this reconciliation.

For one to continue in the faith means that he or she is holding on to the salvation brought by Jesus, and not turning away to other ‘religions’ or trusting in something else for reconciliation. This faith is seen by the continued obedience and works done in our lives (James 2:14-26). And to not be “moved away from the hope of the gospel,” one continues with the inward attitude that comes when he or she is firmly secured in the truth of the Word. The person who continues to the end is the one who truly has the peace and the reconciliation that comes from the blood and body of Christ. “Continuance is the test of the reality of their faith.”<sup>1</sup> Paul is encouraging the Colossian believers to persevere in the signs of their changed status.

Please note that this ‘hope of the gospel that you heard’, Paul says, “was proclaimed in all creation under heaven.” This emphasizes the fact that the gospel is not constantly being changed to fit different cultures, but is consistently being proclaimed the same everywhere: “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3b-4). Any other gospel is false and their “preachers” are accursed (Galatians 1:8). And it is of this hope that Paul was made a minister, a servant, a deacon.

Since the change does not come through the work and efforts of the person being changed, how does it come about? It is paid for by the “blood of the cross” (Colossians 1:20) or as Paul restates it in verse 22

# Missouri

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“...in His (Jesus’) fleshly body through death...” Jesus did not simply donate a pint of blood at the local Red Cross. He, like the Old Testament sacrifices, was killed so that His blood may be applied for the removal of the sins of God’s people.

**1 Peter 1:17-19** *And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*

**Romans 5:8-10** *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

**Hebrews 13:11-12** *For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.*

**Acts 20:28** *Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

### CONCLUSION

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, be reminded that you were a dirty, rotten, evildoing enemy of God, but you have been reconciled to God through the blood sacrifice of His Son. Therefore, continue living in the faith and in the hope of the gospel. As we study Colossians, you will see that this is Paul’s basic structure of the letter. He discussed foundational doctrines of the faith (chapters 1 & 2) and then he gave instruction for living-out the faith (chapters 3 & 4).

If you are not a follower of Jesus Christ, may this serve as a reminder that this is your only hope. You still are an enemy of God. You still have a hatred toward Him and are not reconciled. You may think “I don’t hate

God”. The truth is, though, if you do not love and follow after Him, you do hate Him (Romans 3:10-18). Therefore, the word to you is the same as what Paul pleaded in 2 Corinthians 5, “Be reconciled to God”. Your only hope for reconciliation and peace with God is through Jesus.

God can forgive your sins--are you interested?

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<sup>1</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 44 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, Publisher, 1982), 72.