

Colossians: Continuing in the Hope Held Out in the Gospel

Colossians 1:21-23

²¹Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²²But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—²³if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

What You (Christian) “Once” Were—Alienated

“Though God has forgiven and forgotten your past sins, yet don't forget them yourself. Often remember what a wretched bond slave you were in the land of Egypt. Often bring to mind your particular acts of sin before conversion, as the blessed Apostle Paul is often mentioning his old blaspheming, persecuting, and injuriousness, to the renewed humbling of his heart and acknowledging that he was the least of the apostles, and not worthy to be called an apostle, and the least of saints, and the chief of sinners.”

Jonathan Edwards' Resolutions and Advice to a Young Converts, p. 29

Where You (Christian) “Now” Stand—Reconciled

How You (Christian) “Must Persevere”—Continue

“Nevertheless, the condition is a real one, and it is very important not to rob the words of their intended rhetorical function. As his strong pleas in [Colossians] 2:16-23 make clear, Paul is genuinely concerned that the false teachers might ‘disqualify’ the Colossian Christians (2:18). This being the case, Paul would clearly want his words here to be taken with great seriousness. He wants to confront the Colossians with the reality that their eventual salvation depends on their remaining faithful to Christ and to the true gospel. Only by continuing in their faith can they hope to find a favorable verdict from God on the day of judgment. We have in this verse, then, a real warning. This warning, along with many similar ones, presents the ‘human responsibility’ side in the biblical portrayal of final salvation. God does, indeed, by his grace and through his Spirit, work to preserve his people so that they will be vindicated in the judgment; but, at the same time, God's people are responsible to persevere in their faith if they expect to see that vindication.” Douglas Moo, *Colossians*, p. 144.

Questions to Consider as You Respond to the Sermon

1. How can remembering what you once were (before Christ) lead to praise and gratitude? (v. 21)
2. What encouragement do you get from knowing the blessings that are yours “in Christ?” (v. 22)
3. What is one practical step you can take to help you continue in the faith? How can you help a brother or sister in this church “continue in the faith?” (v. 23)

Next Week: Col. 1:24-29 (Send questions about Colossians to jamesbradleyaucoin@gmail.com)