

Jesus, Our All in All – Reconciled, 1:20-23

When Paul met Jesus for the first time, he didn't truly know Him. In fact, Paul wasn't even his real name. If you recall, Saul of Tarsus was one of the most ruthless persecutors of early Christians. He was chasing them down, arresting them, punishing them, and even killing them. To better grasp today's context, it is important to understand Paul's background. But, to save time we are not going to look at every detail concerning Saul/Paul. Instead, I just want to share some of the highlights.

Saul was born to Jewish parents who happened to also be Roman citizens. This dual status was a tremendous privilege for Saul, especially after his family moved to Jerusalem. It is believed that somewhere around the age of twelve, Saul was invited to study the Hebrew Scriptures under the teaching of Rabbi Gamaliel. Gamaliel was one of the most prominent leaders in the Jewish Sanhedrin. It was under his teaching that Saul developed an expert knowledge base of the Hebrew Scriptures. Because of his close ties with the Jewish Sanhedrin, and his Roman citizenship, Saul also gained professional and political influence among the Romans. These powerful influences are what helped shape and mold the educated, politically driven, and zealous nature behind Saul, the person we however know as Paul, the Apostle. Saul, while on his way to Damascus, was met by the person whom he was persecuting. It was in this moment where Saul, because of his personal encounter with Jesus, began transitioning to the missionary and Apostle we are so fond of. Acts 26:12-18 is how Paul describes his encounter with Jesus. **Read Acts 26:12-18.** Saul's education, his background as a Pharisee, his Roman citizenship, and his unrelentless zeal all contributed to his successes in life. Even more so once those traits had been subjugated to the lordship of Christ.

Now, let's go over to Colossians and look at what Paul had to say to the church there about their own experience of conversion. **Read Colossians 1:20-23.** Last week we looked at Paul's description of the Pre-Eminent One. The last point he made to the people at Colosse, seen here in verse 20, was that Jesus is the "Reconciler" of all things. This included being their reconciler. It also means that Jesus is our reconciler. What does this statement mean though? What does it mean to be reconciled? Well, the verb used here, which translates as "to be reconciled" means that something, or in this case, a person, is completely brought back into a former state of harmony. Paul wants us to understand that Jesus is the only One who can bring us back into the presence of a holy God. He reminds us that reconciliation came at a high price. In fact, Paul states, that our reconciliation was paid for by the blood of Christ. It is Jesus who makes peace for us with God.

In verse 21, he reminds also that every person, because of the curse of sin, must be reconciled before God by the method established by God. Paul uses the idea of alienation to convey his thoughts here. He said they were once "alienated and hostile" towards God. This is what sin does to us. It prevents us from standing in the presence of God. It hardens our hearts towards God. It causes us to see God in ways that He is not. Hostility breeds enmity and strife between us and

God. While alienation removes any chance we have for fellowship and intimacy with Him. Paul says that it is because of these things that the people at Colosse were driven to do “evil deeds.” Could you imagine what Paul would say about the Church today? Were the Colossians sinners? Absolutely! But then again, not much has changed since their time. **Read Titus 3:3.** We must never forget that we do not have the ability to save ourselves from God’s wrath. Just one sin makes us guilty before God. It is not “us” who stands in opposition to a holy God, but it is the “sin in us” that prevents us from entering His presence. Consider the necessary price to cover our sin. To redeem us from sin, and of course to reconcile us to God. That’s right, Jesus paid the price. You are ***Reconciled*** only because of Him. **Read Titus 3:4-7.**

Remember how some of the people Paul was addressing didn’t believe Jesus had a real body. In verse 22, Paul made it a point to teach them that part of the price for their reconciliation included Jesus’ suffering in the flesh. Listen to what John has to say about people who do not believe Jesus was God Incarnate. **Read 2 John 1:7.** Our faith is based on placing our trust in what Paul is teaching here. The shedding of Jesus blood and the death of His body on the cross is what brings us back to God. No one is good enough to save him/herself. No amount of good work will ever reconcile a person to God. Paul, in our passage from Colossians, says reconciliation presents us to God as “holy,” “blameless,” and “above reproach.” Because I am reconciled by Christ and through Christ, God sees me as He originally intended; sanctified, guiltless, morally pure, and spiritually acceptable. Is this how God sees you today? I sure hope so. If so, can you simply say with me: **Thank you Jesus!**

Paul, in verse 23, concludes that it is belief in true reconciliation that drives the believer to remain faithful. Does your relationship with Jesus feed you? Does your relationship with God encourage you? Does your relationship with the Holy Spirit empower you? Remaining faithful to Christ is not something we should see as a chore or a job but should be something that we “get” to do. Faithfulness is so much easier when we let the power of God’s Spirit be the driving force behind it. Paul teaches that faithfulness to Jesus keeps us stable and steadfast. Jesus is not wishy washy. Walking with Him is easier than walking without Him. Paul also teaches that faithfulness to Jesus prevents “shifting from the hope of the gospel.” When you are close to Jesus, you’ll recognize temptations when they come and be properly equipped to walk away from them. You’ll recognize false doctrines and have the knowledge to ignore their lies. Trusting Jesus allows you to manage hardships with stability and strength.

What else can we learn from today’s passage? Every Christian need to occasionally be reminded of who they were before they met Jesus. Not so that you feel guilt or shame, but so you can see how much better life is with Jesus than it was without Him. I’m reminded of the words to one of my favorite hymns. “I once was lost in sin, but Jesus took me in.” Because of Jesus, I am no longer lost to my sin. Instead, I stand able to enter God’s presence – holy, blameless, and above reproach. Not by any good deed, but only because I am reconciled to God through His Son Jesus Christ. This sort of reminder helps us appreciate the blessings we enjoy now and the one’s we’ll enjoy later because of Jesus’ faithful work on our behalf. It is the reason Paul uttered these words

– “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” (Philippians 1:21) Paul, after his conversion, became the model imitator of his Savior Jesus Christ and remained faithful until the very end. Is this something people will say about you one day? Is the greatest thing someone will say about you when you’re gone from this world something like this... Boy, he/she loved Jesus. I surely hope so.

There is also a lesson here for the non-Christian. Those who do not know Jesus are lost in their sin. Viewed by God as a hostile enemy and destined to face His righteous judgement and condemnation. Those who choose to remain that way will remain alienated from the Father and will continue to pursue their own self-righteousness, which leads to continual participation in evil deeds. But, as Paul reminded the people in Colosse, it doesn’t have to remain that way. Jesus’ death on the cross, through His broken body and His shed blood can reconcile all that for you. Jesus stands ready to be your reconciler and redeemer, to be your Lord, if you are willing to accept Him. If you are willing to believe in Him. I hope today is your day because what awaits you with Jesus far outweighs what is to be gained here on Earth.

Finally, one last thing can be learned from today’s passage. Paul states that he became a minister of the gospel to participate in its proclamation to every person under heaven. Now I know that every person is not called or gifted to serve as a pastor or as a leader in the church, or as a missionary, but it is true that every Christian is to participate in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “*Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*” (Mark 16:15-16) Proclaiming Jesus is what every Christian has been asked to do. Belief in the message falls on the hearer. So, let’s make sure we deliver it truthfully and faithfully.

Are you where you need to be with Jesus? If not, will you do whatever is necessary to make it right before you leave today?