

Thanksgiving & Prayer

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[0 : 0 0] Now, with the Lord's help, let us turn and consider words we have in this chapter we have read together. The letter of Paul in the Colossians on chapter 1.

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

If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

One or two thoughts on these words. Now, at the time of Paul's writing this letter, Colossae had become a very small town in an area of Asia Minor that we know called Turkey.

It had been a very large, prosperous town down through the centuries. It had a very favourable, fertile space of land round about it.

[1 : 5 0] And it was conducive to having large flocks of sheep. And certainly that was something upon which the economy of the area continued to be built, even in the days of the Apostle.

The world was a very large flocks of sheep. And around that there was a woolen industry established, the dyeing of wool, the weaving of woolen cloth.

But many years before the Apostle sent this letter to Colossae, the main road between east and west had been passing through Colossae, through that valley in which Colossae was built.

But at one point, under the Roman authorities, the road was moved. And so that the road no longer went through Colossae.

And it's as if it was bypassed. The main traffic couldn't go through Colossae anymore. And it suffered and became a very minor town in comparison to Laodicea and Hierapolis, other towns that were further up the valley.

[3 : 1 3] They became the boom areas where the banking was and the commerce was carried on. And when the Apostle was writing this letter, as I said, Colossae had become a term bypassed by the commerce of the world.

Something like some of the towns, maybe I shouldn't speak in these terms, but somehow the A9 road from Perth to Inverness, when they were building it, some of the towns were being bypassed.

And they don't anymore receive so much traffic. Some of them do, but some of them don't. And some of them have suffered commercially because of that.

It was bypassed. Such a situation was with Colossae. But the Apostle is writing to this small town with a small population because it wasn't bypassed by the Gospel.

Epaphras, in verse 7 of chapter 1, brought the Gospel to them. And they embraced the Gospel.

- [4 : 30] And the Apostle is writing to them as those who have embraced the glorious news of Jesus Christ. Despite their being a town bypassed by much of the activity of commerce, the Lord remembers them in love and in mercy and in peace.
- And Paul thanks them and prays that the Lord's blessing and grace and peace would be upon them.
- But as is nearly always the case, you find that the Christian community, wherever it is, it's beset by problems and dangers of various kinds.
- And the Christian community, the Christian community, the Christian community, the Christian community, the Christian community, the Christian community, the Christian community. There is so much going on and so many pressures in the world that seek to deviate our affections and draw us away from the things of God.
- And such was the case also in Colossae. In fact Colossae had a mishmash of religions. What expositors call a synchronistic or a synchronism of religions coming together.
- [5 : 54] A mixture of all kinds of thought. For example there was the Gnosticism. People who thought that they had a particular access to God through the mind.
- There were people who derided Christ and said well surely Christ isn't the only one through whom we can have salvation. And you find people like that in our own generation today.
- Surely there is an access into heaven through all of the religions they say. And some people in Colossae not only had that kind of pressure on them but there was also a group that wanted to worship angels.
- Using angels as intermediaries between people and God. And there was also a Jewish community that wanted to live an ascetic lifestyle.
- Self-denial to the nth degree. And it is as if all of these aspects of homemade religions and heresies and philosophies of this world were brought together.
- [7 : 02] And there was this very unhealthy atmosphere around and within Colossae. And part of the reason that the apostle writes this letter is that he wants to highlight Christ.
- And he does that in this particular chapter. For example in verse 15. He presents Christ as the one who is the invisible God. He is the image of the invisible God.
- Verse 16. He is the all powerful one creating all things in heaven and on earth. And he is holding all things together. Verse 17. He is the head of the church. Verse 18. The first born from the dead.
- Verse 19. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily. And verse 20. He reconciles all things to himself by the blood of his cross making peace. And so on. He highlights Christ. He focuses on him.
- And of course that is something that the scripture always does. Think of what the apostle writing to the Hebrews says. Let us run our race with patience. Looking unto Jesus. The author and finisher of our faith.
- [8 : 14] And that word looking unto Jesus means looking away from everything else that would seek to distract us. And focusing wholly and wholeheartedly upon Jesus alone as saviour for our souls.
- As our good shepherd who is able to lead us through this world safely into heaven at last. Well that's my way of introduction.
- He will come into verse 21. And he focuses particularly on themselves. Having spoken about the way the Lord Jesus Christ has reconciled all things to himself.
- In verse 20. He knows in verse 21 he says, You. You. Who once were alienated and hostile in mind. Doing evil deeds and so on.

You. Christian community in Colossae. And there are three things I want to highlight in relation to what he says in verses 21 to 23.

[9 : 16] I know there is a tremendous depth and breadth in everything that he says. But I just touch on a few things. First of all, he highlights and reminds them of what they once were.

Before the gospel came and before they submitted by grace to the word of God in conversion. What were they like?

You, he says, who were once alienated, hostile in mind. Doing evil deeds. These three things. And secondly, what Christ has done for them.

You see what it says in verse 22. He has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above which before him.

What an amazing statement that is. But I'm reading sermons in that particular phrase itself. But I'm just going to touch on it for a moment. And thirdly, what he asks of them as they live in this world.

[10 : 29] Verse 23. If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven.

And of which I, Paul, became a minister. He wants them to stay committed. Despite the pressures they may be under. Despite the kind of philosophies that may fill their ears.

And the distractions that the world and the devil and the flesh may throw at them. He says, I want you to commit yourself and be stable and steadfast in the faith.

Not shifting from the hope of the gospel. First of all, he reminds them what they were before conversion.

I highlighted three things. And the first of these three things is, you were once alienated. Alienated. Now, the word means you were estranged.

[11 : 36] You were shut out. What were they shut out from? From whom were they shut out? Well, I think it's clear, first and foremost, that they were shut out from God's fellowship.

Everyone who is unconverted, he is a stranger to grace and a stranger to God. He is shut out from the fellowship and intimacy with God.

When did this happen? And how did this happen? Well, you have to go all the way back to Genesis. And if you go back to Genesis chapter 3 at verse 23, you'll find there that the Lord God sent Adam and Eve out of the garden.

Why? Because they had sinned against him. And he drove out to the man and he placed an angel and a flaming sword, keeping it away to the tree of life.

In other words, if Adam wanted to go back into the garden to avail himself of eternal life to eat of that tree, he had to negotiate and meet up with this flaming sword of God's justice.

[12 : 55] And it says here, you were alienated. And that's the way we all are by nature. We all have been driven out.

We are all strangers to grace. We are all by nature lost, hell-deserving sinners. And that's what he says to them.

You were alienated from God's fellowship and from the life that is everlasting. And there is something else he says also.

That they were hostile in mind. They were hostile to God. They were opposed to God. They were opposed to the truth of the Gospel.

Opposed to God's way of salvation in Christ. Isn't it interesting when you come and you talk to people about the way of salvation. And almost in every area suggest, well, I'm doing this and I'm doing that and I'm doing the other thing.

[13 : 58] I'm certainly not as bad as my neighbour who does this, that and the other thing. I would never do that. And they base their hope for eternal life upon what they're doing. But you see what we have here.

These people, and we all by nature, are opposed in our mind to God. Hostile in mind. If you were to read in the epistle to the Romans, chapter 1, verses 18 to 23, you will find there that these people to whom the apostle, or of whom he is writing, in Romans 1, verses 18 to 23, they were surpassing the word of God.

The word of God had come, but what were they doing? They were stamping on it. They didn't want to hear its accusations. They didn't want to hear of the way Christ alone was able to save them.

They just didn't care about God's way of salvation at all. And that's the way we are by nature. We are hostile in our mind to God, to his word, to his day, to his Christ, to all that he commends to us.

You know what it says in Psalm number 2, don't you? From those who refuse to obey the Lord, they are portrayed for us there as those who say, we want to break his bands from us.

[15 : 32] They feel that the word of God is like chains around them, not allowing them to do their own thing. And what's their solution? Not to comply with what the Lord is saying, but to break free from what God is asking of them.

And that's hostility in our mind. And then of course, the third thing he says of them, doing evil deeds.

It's as if the scripture here is saying what the psalmist said there in Psalm 24, the psalmist says, whose hands are clean, whose heart is pure.

And unto vanity, who has not lifted up his soul nor sworn deceitfully. These people's hands are not clean. Besides the fact that their heart is not pure.

And they have given themselves to vanity, and given themselves license to do everything that preaches themselves. And you know, we do by nature what priests are ourselves.

[16 : 44] We do evil deeds. If you were to look at Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 2 onwards, you find this idea explained a little bit more.

The apostle there says, Ephesians 2.2, that they were following the court of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience, living in the passions of the flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and of the mind.

And they were without God and without hope in the world. What a picture! Under three headings.

Alienated, hostile, doing evil deeds. And we must bring this home to ourselves, because it's not just talking about the people in Colossae.

He's talking about the whole of mankind. For mankind by the fall lost their communion with God, and have come under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the evils of this life, the miseries of this life, to death itself, and the pains of hell forever.

[18 : 01] That's the way we are by nature. But he puts this into the past tense, when he's talking to them. He says, you once were alienated and hostile in mind, and doing evil deeds.

But what happened? Well, now they are reconciled. In verse 22, he has well reconciled.

Isn't that an amazing thing? People who are alienated, enemies, doing evil deeds. Now he has reconciled.

The word reconciled, as you know, has to do with taking parties who were at odds, together into a peaceful relationship.

I find it used so often about breakdowns in marriages, and things of that nature. There was reconciliation. They came together. There was peace.

[19 : 15] Well, this word here, Christ has reconciled these people. And literally, the word used in the Greek, is to bring back fully to a former state of harmony.

What does this mean? What was the former state of harmony that existed between Adam and God, before Adam sinned and fell by his transgression?

Well, if you read in Genesis 1, verse 26, you find the Lord saying, Let us make man in our image after our likeness.

And then Colossians 3, verse 10, it says, You have upon the new self, which has been renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator, the Lord himself.

And one more, As we have borne the image of the man of the earth, we also shall bear the image of the man of heaven.

[20 : 27] See, he's talking about something radical that has come to pass in the experience of these people. That they have been brought into fellowship with God.

And not only has it been kind of a movement, a step, as it were, a change of lifestyle, it has actually been a change of nature.

A change has come about in their heart, in their affections, in their mind, in their will. They are new creatures or new creations in Christ Jesus.

And what does he say? You are now reconciled in his body of flesh by death.

What needed to happen for people who are such rebels and take aways against God to be brought into a saving, friendly relationship with him?

[21 : 39] Well, it's very interesting, isn't it? See these words in the middle of verse 22. In his body of flesh by his death.

He said that the Lord Jesus Christ, in bringing his elect people to God, took unto him a human nature.

That's what he's talking about in there in verse 22. In the body of flesh. In the words, he became they man. He became a man like you and I, human.

He obviously had no sin. But he was they man of they man. And he had to take human nature because he was coming to stand as the representative of human beings who had violated his law and who had come short of his glory.

And whom he had loved from all eternity and agreed to come in the fullness of time to redeem them by his own blood.

[23 : 03] When Paul took Romans in chapter 8, at verse 3 I think it is, he's talking about that Jesus Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh and false sin.

He had flesh. And he looked as if he was like every other individual in the world. But he was sinless.

He was the sinless savior. The sinless mediator. The sinless one who came to save those who had sinned against him.

You see, the eternal God became man. And he takes the room and place of his people as mediator.

He came to pay their debt. He came to obey the law in all its details.

[24 : 09] The law that they had broken. And he obeyed it for them. From the beginning of his life to the end. He magnified the law and made it honourable.

But also, besides a life of obedience, he had a life of suffering. Because he was suffering the punishment due to his people for the sins that they had committed.

So, he came in obedience. And he came suffering the punishment. And his obedience was unto death. And his punishment was unto death, even the curse of death of the cross.

Didn't I say how amazing I have prophecy looking down the centuries. And he wrote about 700 years before Christ came into the world.

He, he says, talking about Christ. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastis meant a more peace was upon him.

[25 : 21] And by his stripes we are healed. He has now reconciled in his body or flesh by his death.

When he came to Calvary, he was crucified there. The holy instead of the unholy. The just instead of the unjust.

The pure instead of the impure. The obedient instead of the rebel. The holy instead of the unholy.

And what does he say upon the cross? It is finished. He satisfied God's divine justice in all its detail.

He gave to God's justice and God's just demands all that was required. And it is finished, he said.

[26 : 21] And he bowed his head. He gave it up to the ghost. What proof do we have? That all that Christ has done was sufficient to reconcile his people unto God.

To make peace between believers and God. And he said. Well, they used to say. That the resurrection of Christ on the third day.

Was as it were God's signature. Of approval. Of all that Christ had done. He rose triumphant.

As king mediator. As the saviour of those. Whom he came to redeem. And you see here.

The purpose behind all of this. Not only was to reconcile. But also to present you holy. This verse 22.

[27 : 29] Holy and blameless. And above reproach before him. Reconciliation is one thing. Having the blessings of the gospel.

In a day of grace is one thing. But there is more to salvation than that. He giveth grace and glory.

And withholds no good from them who live uprightly. And this is what he is talking about in the second half of verse 22. He says. He has done this in order to present you.

Holy and blameless. And above reproach. You who were once alienated. And hostile in mind. Doing evil deeds. Now are going to be presented holy.

And blameless. And above reproach. And above reproach. Before him. Isn't it amazing? He is going to present us.

[28 : 30] As if he is presenting us to God. Behold me. And the children. And God has given me. He is presenting them.

To the whole universe. Presenting them. To devils. Or at least exhibiting them. Before the whole universe. So that everyone will know.

These are those. Who were once. Sinners. Deserving hell. But whom I reconciled. By my.

Death on the cross. And now. Through the work of the Holy Spirit. They are found. Totally holy. And blameless. And above reproach.

What does holy mean? It means. Separate. Yes. But so far as God's people are concerned.

[29 : 29] They are at last. On the day of their death. The soul is made perfect in holiness. And it does immediately pass into glory. But the great day of resurrection is still to come.

And the bodies of the saints are going to rise. Incorruptible. And holy. And to be joined again with their souls. With their souls. So that the whole personality.

Is perfectly holy. Body and soul. And he is going to present. His people. Thoughtless. Without one trace. Of sin.

Or even one. Sin of thought. Nothing will enter into heaven. That work as abomination. Or make it alive. Holy. And without blemish.

Blemeless. None can find anything wrong. With his people at last. Because he himself has undertaken. To sanctify them.

[30 : 31] Holy. Above reproach. And they are presented before. Him. Whose eye examines.

The depth of every thought. Who knows every angle. From which. Our thoughts come. Who knows the thoughts.

And intents. Of our hearts. And he. Who sees us. Perfectly. He acknowledges them. At last.

As is all. And finally. What does. The apostle say. To these people. Who have had such an amazing experience.

Through the gospel. Who were once alienated. And hostile. And doing evil things. Now they are. Reconciliation. And they are. On the way to heaven. Verse 23. Brings in.

[31 : 29] The reality of living in the world. Yet. I mentioned at the beginning. The number of pressures. There may be. Upon a Christian. The world. Throws. Everything it can. As a Christian. To throw you off the rails.

The flesh. The flesh. The flesh. Is the same. The devil. Uses. Every trick. In his book. That God. Permits him to use. To deviate you.

From the slated. Now. The world. The devil. The devil. Uses. Every trick. In his book. That God. Permits him to use. To deviate you.

From the slated. Now. The world. From the slated. Now. Road. But he. Puts this. Particular. Burden. On this.

Small. Group. Of Christians. In this. Bypassed. Little town. Of Colossae. And he says. It's real. That you have to continue. With the faith.

[32 : 25] Stable. Steadfast. Not shifting. From the hope. Of the gospel. That you heard. Which has been proclaimed. In all creation. Under him.

Continue. Looking. Unto Jesus. Continue. Looking. Unto Jesus. Continue. Walking. In the path. Of God's work. The Lord says.

This is the way. Walk ye. In it. Steadfastly. Unmovable. Abounding. Doing the work of the Lord. Not shifting. From one place. To one place. To one place.

To one place. To one place. To one place. To one place. To one place. To one place. To one place. To another. But the focus. Is upon. The glory ahead.

Where Jesus is. And he has promised. That all of his people. Will be brought to be with him. At last. And our hope. Our focus. Must be upon him. And the fulfillment. Of the promises. That he has given.

[33 : 20] To his people. Remember in John 14. When the Lord Jesus is. Encouraging his disciples. The fact that he had told them. That he was about to leave them. Their hearts were filled with salt. But he said. I'm going to prepare a place for you.

And if I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again. And receive you unto myself. But I'm going to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again. And receive you unto myself. But where I am. There you may be also. That's his part.

To us. But the whole responsibility. Is. To the people. When the Lord Jesus is. And if I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again. And receive you unto myself. But where I am.

There you may be also. That's his part. But the only responsibility. Is. Is. To the Lord Jesus. And the Lord Jesus is.

And the Lord Jesus is. is to continue in the faith. Don't mix anything in with Christ alone.

[34 : 18] You know, the Galatian church, they wanted Christ, plus their own works of some kind. You mustn't do that. It's as if you devalue Christ when you bring anything else in beside him as a hope of salvation.

It has to be Christ alone. In him alone is my hope. Looking to his word as the only rule he has given to direct me.

And anything that doesn't square up with the scriptures, turn away from it. The scripture is the inspired word of God. And receive it wholly and walk by it completely and unashamedly in our present day.

You know, some of you, I suppose, know who David Attenborough is. And he has programs that are at all, not at all, sympathetic to the scriptures.

He talks about evolution and the evolutionary theory. And it's not so long since he was talking about it. In quite dismissal terms of the argument from design.

[35 : 37] William Paley, long ago, he advanced this argument that, well, if you have a watch intricately made, there must be a watchmaker. just didn't happen.

And he was extrapolating from that, well, if you have a world and the complexities that exist in nature, example, the eye, or other aspects of the human body, or other aspects of nature, there must be a designer.

You can't just say it happened on its own. It's Attenborough's sort of washing his hands or that kind of way of thinking at all. These things are so dangerous.

That kind of flippancy with the word of God is so dangerous. And the problem is that so many people take these things as, shall I say, I say, gospel.

And they just take these things on board and live their life thinking, well, it's all happened by chance and God isn't in it anyway. And we don't need God at all.

[36 : 47] Well, the scripture here says continue in the faith. However much you may be derided, however much you may feel in the minority, always remember one plus God is almost a majority.

If God is with you, who can be against you? And you continue in the faith, stable, steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel.

Like some people who have left aspects of the scriptures and embraced other things and try and slot these other ways of thinking into the scripture narrative.

Can't be done. Can't be done. You praise God that you have the word of God, the Bible, intact. And our business is to get to know it more and ask the Lord for it to be more and more part of our thinking, part of our outlook, part of our life, that we may magnify him and glorify him rather than seek to our own thing.

Did anybody here this evening who hasn't turned to the Lord yet? there was a text I was going to quote to you.

[38 : 22] And you find it in Isaiah 55 verses 6 and 7. It says, Seek the Lord while he is to be found. Call upon him while he is near.

Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him and unto our God for he will abundantly pardon.

Isn't it amazing? The wicked encouraged. The unrighteous encouraged not in their wickedness but in their unrighteousness but encouraged to come to the Lord with the assurance given by himself that he will have mercy upon you and he will abundantly pardon.

praise the Lord for the gospel. Praise the Lord for the work of the Holy Spirit who is able to apply the word of God savingly to our hearts and to our lives.

You, he said, who were once alienated and hostile in mind to enable deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

[39 : 44] May God grant us all. Amen. Lord, we thank thee for the word and we pray that it may indeed find a place in our hearts unto an eternal benefit.

We pray for the blessing of the gospel to continue with every one of us who may go from strength to strength and at last be found in thy presence in Zion.

Go before us now. Bless us as we sing thy praise in conclusion. For Jesus' sake. Amen. We'll bring your worship to our close singing from Psalm 73 in the Scottish Sotter.

Psalm 73 is on page 316. Psalm 73 at verse 23 Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee.

Thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me. Thou with thy counsel while I live wilt me conduct and guide unto thy glory afterward.

[41 : 12] Receive me to abide. Whom have I in the heavens high but thee, O Lord, alone? And in the earth whom I desire besides thee there is none. My flesh and heart doth faint and fail, but God doth fail me never.

For of my heart God is the strength and portion for ever. Psalm 73 verses 23 to 26 and we stand to sing.

Never the best of him O Lord, I am with thee Sinnerly,apat and Sebastian s sister s ■ ine sable as hsung o sally sea ou x in se sable s from s Ital as far santa Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[44 : 00] Thank you.