

WEEK THREE: IF/THEN - COLOSSIANS 1:21-23

message...*21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 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, 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.*

meaning...If we continue in our faith, remain steadfast and live gospel-centered lives, then we will experience the reconciliation that comes only through Jesus.

muse...An “if/then” statement or argument is how we live our lives. Whether it be life experience or decisions or relationships, we always encounter consequence to our actions. Somehow, though, this whole idea seems to get lost when it comes to our relationship with Christ.

Have you ever weighed options when making a decision? How about jotting down the “pluses” and “minuses” to something? Or, certainly more often for me, looked back in some sort of regret for going through the consequence of something you did? This is not only life, this is life in Jesus Christ.

We have the opportunity to not only choose to follow Jesus, but to choose to follow Him *fully*. The equation does not get equalled out unless we fulfill our part. While this is a delicate balance—and we do not want to forget that grace is involved!—it does require us to act. Doesn't it seem odd that we would allow the Creator of the universe to incarnate Himself, experience the brokenness that we live in, ridicule, persecute, and crucify Him, and then expect Heaven in return? While He did all those things out of sheer love for us and the desire to redeem His Creation, we go on living no differently, as if the “if/then” somehow doesn't apply. Does it in your life? If not, why? Then what do you need to do?

memory...We close out this section on the preeminence of Jesus Christ with a strong if/then statement by Paul in verses 21-23 of the first chapter of Colossians: *And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil 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, 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.* If we follow him with all of who we are, then we are seen—reconciled by His death and resurrection—as holy and blameless in His sight. This is no small thing! Quite the contrary, in fact, for to be seen that way by the only One worth to be seen like that is to be considered a brother or sister of that One! If we remain in Him, then He will remain in us.

meditation...v 21 How often do you see yourself as alienated from God versus reconciled? Why is there such a battle? How often do you acknowledge who you are versus who Jesus is? Why do you think both are important?

v 22 What does the word “reconciliation” or “restoration” mean to you? What does Paul say is the idea behind it in verse 22?

v 23 Our focus of faith is often on the “if” statement: *...if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast.* Which parts of life do you most struggle with this? Why? Perhaps the “then” side needs to become a wholly other part of the gospel in *all* of life we need to see: *...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.* Why are these both crucial to living out the life of a follower of Jesus?

The very act of following Jesus is more than just a one-time decision. In fact, it is a series of decisions each and every moment every day we live. What does it mean to “continue in the faith?” How does that translate to your life? What do you need to do to continue?

While we experience the ups and downs of daily life, we are not to shift our hope from anything other than the gospel of Jesus. This is, of course, easier said than done. When has/does your hope shift to something or someone other than Jesus? Why? How do you keep your hope in Him? Practically in your life, what do you need to maintain that hope?