

The Believer's Response to the Work of Christ

(Colossians 1:21–23)

WHAT IS TRUE, AND WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIANS DO?

Christ's death provided a way for all people to come to God. Genuine faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ brings forgiveness and peace with God that lasts. Is there a distance between you and the Creator? Be reconciled to God. Come to him through Christ.

1) Genuine believers have peace with God, for they are reconciled to Christ (vv. 21–22; see also Romans 5:10–11)

- How great a peace? Non-believers are God's enemies (hostile in mind towards God). The language of estrangement in 1:21 implies a relationship that has gone seriously wrong. True salvation brings reconciliation. The Christian life ends with the promise of bodily resurrection, where believers are presented to God as His dear and beloved children. There should be no fear, for God has reconciled believers to Himself and made them acceptable in His sight.
- How did Jesus' death remove sin? His perfect life as God and Man was without sin, making Him a perfect sacrifice. Jesus took the total punishment (death) for our sins, ending its power over man.
- The "how" is answered; now, for the "why." His goal is to make believers His holy and blameless people, to transform their character so they can live consistent with their faith. The pattern is the perfect life lived by Jesus Christ. In a sense, Colossian believers were already perfect because they had been made acceptable to God in Christ, yet they were still being perfected so that, in the end, they would truly be holy, without blemish and free from accusation.

2) Believers are to remain firmly established in the Gospel (v.23)¹

- The litmus test is perseverance. True conversion is a lasting change. Those who do not stay the course have a question mark hanging over them. If we say, 'Jesus has saved me,' our life ought to reflect it. This explains Paul's phrase, 'If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast ...' When we are presented before the judgment seat of God, no accusation will be raised against us. In Christ, we will be irrefragable.

- While no true Christian is ever lost, there are some who falsely give the impression of having come to faith in Christ, but with the passage of time, this impression proves to be ill-founded. Paul urged steadfastness among believers so that there would be no doubt that God was keeping them by His grace.
- However, the Gospel does not work like magic. The mind, the heart, and the will must be involved. Our minds must hunger for Christ and His Word. Our hearts are to focus on Him in love. No number of sermons or Sunday school will shift a person to live for God without first having a born-again desire fed by the Holy Spirit.
- Authentic conversion implies what believers must continue to be:
 - They persevere.
 - They abide in Christ.
 - They have sure confidence, certainty, and conviction.

APPLICATION:

In seeking to reassure the believers in Colossae that what Christ had done for them in saving them was a blessing beyond compare, Paul gave them a working definition of what it is to be a Christian.

- A Christian was once God's enemy. He has been reconciled to God and owes this transformation entirely to Jesus Christ. He is under a tremendous obligation to go on, not to new things, but to go on entrusting himself to the Christ whom he first trusted at the outset. The Christian life begins with faith in Christ; it continues with faith in Christ all the way to the gate of heaven. It never moves beyond, or away from, faith in Christ. Where do you fit into this pattern of things?¹
- Pray for others to be genuinely saved. Do not take your faith or others' faith for granted. Do not be nonchalant about its responsibilities. Do not be fooled into thinking everything is okay. There are no other ways to God. Christ is the only solution to the human sin problem before God.
- Being out of a relationship with God mars your entire life and impacts your thoughts and behavior. Chronic sinful behavior twists the mind so that it becomes more at odds with God. Be on guard.

¹ J. Philip Arthur, *Christ All-Sufficient: Colossians and Philemon Simply Explained*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2007), 58, 60.