**“Do not move from the hope held out in the gospel!”**

Sermon-text: Colossians 1, 21-23 (22.06.2025 - Neuhofen)

*21 “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of[*[*g*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%201&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29487g)*] 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, and do not move 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.”*

The key that holds together the whole section 15 to 23 is the idea that Christ has come to bring about a reconciliation of massive proportions. “Through Christ God's purpose was to reconcile to himself all things” (20).

That is the big picture. Yet Paul moves on to the small picture. What Christ has done in this Cosmic way he comes now to offer to you, Colossians through the preaching of the Gospel.

“You individual Colossians, you also were once alienated from God and now you have been reconciled to him ´through Christ's physical body through his death upon the cross´” (20).

And here the Apostle is really saying five fundamental things, summarizing in a way the whole of the application of the Gospel to ME.

The *first* is his description of our *past situation:* once you were alienated from God and

you were hostile in mind to God.

But now, *secondly*, by God's grace as the Holy Spirit has drawn you to Jesus Christ you have come to enjoy a *present reconciliation*.

In the light of this alienation and present reconciliation Paul leads us on to a *third* emphasis because God's work is not finished in our reconciliation. He has in view a *future presentation*.

It is God's purpose “to present you holy in his sight without blemish and free from accusation” (22).

But that final presentation, *fourtly*, has an *essential condition.* It will take place “if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not being moved from the Hope held out in the gospel” (23).

And because these Christians in Colosse had fallen prey to another gospel that was NOT the gospel, Paul *fiftly* provides for them an *Apostolic attestation* that the gospel they heard is the true and only gospel.

The points 3, 4 and 5 we will consider this morning.

1. **Our future presentation**

Notice, firstly, the language here, drawn perhaps from two different sources.

This language of `presentation´ belongs either to *the world of the temple* and the presentation of a Sacrifice, or to *the world of the Law Court* and the presentation of a legal case before a judge. These metaphors provide us with helpful biblical illustrations of what Paul has in view.

1. God has reconciled us to himself in Christ in order to present us to himself as a priest would present a sacrifice upon the altar that is holy.

Just so, we are called into fellowship with Jesus Christ, in order that we at the last day can stand before him without a glimmer of reservation in the yielding of the whole of our Lives to Him - no longer being enemies.

1. Alternatively, Paul may have in mind the idea of a lawyer presenting a case before a judge, and the idea here would be that as we are presented at the last before the judge of all the Earth, the case for our Défense will be watertight and foolproof. Paul hints at that when he says: we will be able to stand there “*without accusation”.*

It's important for us as we think about what the gospel is meant to do to us for us to see that when Paul thinks about the gospel he never stops at present Christian experience.

He always moves on to *our final destiny*.

When we skim through every letter Paul wrote, we will find that, whenever Paul expounds the gospel, somewhere or another he brings us from our present Christian experience to our future standing before the Judgment seat of almighty God. So, the Glorious thing about the gospel is not simply that it gives us peace with God now, but that it will enable us to stand before him on the last day and gaze into His eyes, and know that we do not need to shudder, because it has been his purpose to bring us there in such a way that we will be able to stand before him.

Paul underlines that when he says: *“By his Grace He will present you holy in his sight”.*

*`Holy´* in the sense that we will be ALL his. There are different ways of trying to Define what the idea `holy´ means in the Bible. But one is when God says: “This is MINE and nobody else is having it. SHE is mine, HE is mine … reserved for me”.

That is what God is going to make public. There are many hints in the Bible that this is what He will do at the last day. He'll turn you inside out and what has been hidden and invisible of Gods work of grace will become manifest and utterly visible.

You'll stand in his sight with *“reserved for Him”* written all over your Life. *“Without blemish”.* Think of it …! And maybe the best of all: “*free from accusation”.*

As we grow in the Christian Life and the inner workings of sin are unravelled within us, sometimes we begin to despair… As God shows us more and more of ourselves and we discover how deeply embedded sin is in our lives, into our weaknesses and into our strengths… We're appalled at what we see.

It seems impossible that we could ever be free from that accusing finger of our conscience that says: “sinner!” But it is God's purpose, when he presents us finally before his Holy Trinity, that there won't be a single man, woman, child, Angel or Archangel, who will be able to point the finger or the wing and say: “sinful!” Amazing …

*Question:* Somebody asked me: *“how is it, that even when we progress in holiness even up to the point of death we are still riddled with sinfulness and yet at death, suddenly we become perfectly holy?”*

An intriguing question! I suspect the answer is something like this: you find yourself wounded and you think you need to put an Elastoplast on, in order that it may heal that

Most of us remember from childhood: an Elastoplast was put on our hand or our bruised knee. Mother said: wait 3 days and we waited … 2 days and then we began to pick at it until we

discovered that if we had to take it off it was going to tear off some hairs and it would hurt. Then mother came along and picked up the end and they ripped it off!

For a moment you had excruciating pain as the hairs were torn off and then you looked at the knee and … it was healed.

That's what death is for the Christian. It's not free from Pain. Christians too may go through even serious struggles in the last days of their life.

But it's just as the cold water on your face as somebody wakes you up in the morning that gives you a painful shock and then you will look up see his/her face and it will be Morning.

And you'll be clean and there won't be an accusing finger left in the universe able to point at you and say: “sinful”. Because his work in you will be complete.

*Comment*: in the New Testament Christian believers knew about the possibility of an awesome day when they would be presented before Caesar and would be given the thumbs down. But they were able to cope with that because so dominant in their minds was the prospect of a far greater day of judgment when they would be able to stand unblemished before the Lord and he would give to them “*the crown of their justification*” (2 Tim 4,8).

We don't think nearly enough about that …

And, like C.S. Lewis once brilliantly said, that is the reason we make so little impact upon this world. “*Not because we are too Heavenly minded to be any aptly use. but because we're too aptly minded, to be any Heavenly use”.*

And Paul says to these believers: the way to endure the trials and the difficulties of this world as a Christian believer is to see that the Destiny for which you've been reconciled is a destiny in which you'll be able to look into the face of God … and *not to be afraid*.

So there is this future presentation.

1. **An essential condition**

Paul underlines for us that there is an essential condition to that future Presentation: *“If you continue in your faith established and firm, not moved from the Hope held out in the gospel.”*

Is he suggesting now: you can be a true believer in Jesus Christ and lose all that?

No, Paul is not denying the security of the Salvation of the Christian believer.

He doesn´t doubt that our salvation will last, but that since *our salvation is given to us through faith,* it is only by faith and therefore in the continuation of faith that you go on receiving that salvation.

The real evidence that I've grasped Christ by faith and that my faith is *the real thing is that I continue to grasp Christ by faith* and continue to press on in loving and serving him.

What will happen if I continue in my faith? *Three wonderful things*.

1) “*you will be established”:* the language here has the idea of a *solid foundation*.

Paul says the same in Chapter 2: “Just as you received Christ continue to live in him, *rooted in Christ*” (6-7).

When you grasp Christ by faith one of the things that happens as you go on in that faith is that your faith begins to put down Roots like a tree. The more Roots you put down through faith into Christ, the stronger you're going to be.

2) You will also in addition “*be Firm”*. The idea at the root of this word is something like “*having a place to sit down”.* Paul seems to have in mind the ability to stay seated when things get rocky.

If you go to the Rodeo-event in Linz you'll see these fellows on the bucking Broncos staying in the saddle … Paul says: “Faith enables you to stay in the saddle when life becomes a kind of bucking bronco underneath you. Not because of the strength of your faith but because of the strength of the one, who keeps you in the saddle, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

3) Then Paul uses another term *“not moved”.*  If you continue in your faith … you are not going to be thrown off Christ by the circumstances and not moved from the Hope held out in the gospel. “*Not shaken”*, not shifting from The Hope held out in the gospel.

Part of the significance of this language is probably the fact that the Lykos valley in which Colossae was found (in Turkey) was an earthquake region.

Either shortly before or shortly after Paul wrote this letter (in 61 or 62 A.D) the whole valley was shaken by an earthquake. Paul either under the governance of the holy spirit before that took place, or deliberately after it took place, is saying to them: so long as your faith is clinging to Jesus Christ not even an earthquake will be able to disrupt and uproot you.

Life can be like that for the Christian believer, who can find him or herself in a situation where nothing seems to be reliable any longer, all things that gave me security seem to shift. But Christ doesn't shift, we are not moved from the hope that is held out in the gospel.

Remember Hebrews? It says Christ is my hope and “*my anchor in heaven*” (6:19).

The picture of a boat in a storm: how is that boat going to be secure? It's secure because its anchor is secured in the seabed or elsewhere. The same is true of the Christian believer. We may be buffeted but will not be lost provided we continue in the faith. The same teaching as in 1 Peter 1: “*we have this glorious inheritance that is reserved in heaven for us*”.

*Question*: *how am I going to get to Heaven?* Answer: *it is reserved* in heaven for us who are kept by God's power through faith. You can't leap out of faith and say: How can I have Assurance if I don't have faith? You can't. All here stresses the blessings of Faith.

 “Established, firm, unmoved”. He challenges us to go on in that faith and to keep that Faith fixed on the hope that is in the person of Christ. Look nowhere else but to Christ.

**C) An apostolic attestation**

Paul confirms what he wants to teach them with an Apostolic attestation.

There were competing teachers coming along in Colosse who said: “this message you got from Epaphras who got it from Paul was okay, but *we've something better for you*.”

When somebody says that, how do you know what the real gospel is?

Paul encourages these Colossians by telling them: *the gospel you heard through the preaching of Epaphras is the real one*: it is the gospel 1) that you heard; 2) that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven; 3) of which I became a servant.

These are *three ways to distinguish the true from the false Gospel*.

1. *you heard it*. Obviously, many people hear the gospel who are not Christian believers.

What he's appealing to is *the impact the Gospel made upon them,* when they heard it.

Why do we believe this gospel? One reason is: because it radically changed my life.

“Once I was blind, now I can see”.

Interestingly, people who come along with a better gospel, are always topping up things. Their Ministry doesn´t bring people to saving faith in Jesus Christ but tries to make cosmetic adjustments. But the authentic gospel raises dead Sinners and gives them new life.

1. *it has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven.*

What´s appealing to the gospel: the 11 apostles plus Paul filled the ancient world with the gospel. Thomas from Palestine ended up in India, preaching the gospel so effectively, that there's a Christian Church all over the Country named after him (the Mar Thomas Church) that traces its roots to his proclamation of the Gospel in India.

You recognize the authenticity because it is consistent with the apostolic teaching.

So, do not spend all your time trying to find out what's wrong with the sects. Spend your time trying to find out what's right in the New Testament!

1. *I became a servant of it.*

Paul who was the source of the Gospel, was a *`diakonos´,* somebody whose life had been transformed through it. The authenticity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is clear from the fact that it turned him into a servant who showed patience and grace and the willingness to take the second servant's place in order that others might hear the good news.

That's why it's so essential for us and our fellowship to be a fellowship that mirrors and illustrates the gospel. And that's one of the Privileges that we have when those who come in and listen to the preaching of the Gospel are actually able to look around the congregation and say: “so that's what it looks like!” I

In the light of this we ourselves go out into the world and we may be the only authentication of the Gospel somebody who meets us tomorrow will ever see.

 *Pfr Jan B.Wilmink*