

THE PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS

II. Colossians: Nurture In Living Focused On The Supremacy And All-Sufficiency Of Christ

D. Nurture In Noting The Hope Of Holy Living Through Christ's Reconciling Work Of The Cross (Colossians 1:21-23)

I. Introduction

- A. When the Apostle Paul wrote the "Prison Epistles" of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon, the fact that he was in prison troubled believers, Philippians 1:12-13; Colossians 2:1-2; 4:7-8 and Philemon 22; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1672, "Introduction to the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians."
- B. An early form of Gnosticism that held the body was "inherently evil" (Col. 2:21-23; *Ibid.*, p. 1690) and denied Christ's true humanity and true deity (B. K. C., N. T., p. 674) plagued the Colossian Church in Paul's absence, threatening to stunt Christian growth due to a low view of Christ and His salvation, and due to unholy living.
- C. Accordingly, Paul wrote Colossians 1:21-23 to clarify how Christ by the death of His actual, physical body spiritually reconciled lost men to God that they might live victoriously pure lives opposite Gnostic heresy, and this section of Scripture addresses the hope of believers today attaining truly holy lives through Christ:

II. Nurture In Noting The Hope Of Holy Living Through Christ's Reconciling Work Of The Cross.

- A. Paul wrote that his readers had once been alienated from God, at enmity with Him in mind "in" (*en*) evil works, sinning due to their inward hostility toward God, Col. 1:21a; *Ibid.*; U. B. S. Greek N. T., 1966, p. 695.
- B. Nevertheless, **now** God had reconciled them by the body "of His [Christ's] flesh" (*sarx*, *Ibid.*; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 750-752), a direct, great critique of the seminal form of the Gnostic heresy that then plagued the Colossian Church, Colossians 1:21b KJV (1:22a NIV, ESV):
 1. Opposite the Colossian Gnostic claim that the body was "inherently evil" (*Ibid.*, Ryrie, p. 1690), Jesus as God indwelt a body, and even delivered that sinless body up as an acceptable sacrifice to God!
 2. Thus, by the death of His body, Christ wrought a reconciliation of estranged people at enmity against God!
- C. The goal of God in this reconciliation was far more than a reconciliation in itself, but a massive transformation in sinful men, a transformation from performing sins wrought in enmity against God to works of perfect righteousness wrought in a reconciled status with the Lord, Colossians 1:22 KJV (Col. 1:22b NIV, ESV):
 1. A question exists among scholars as to whether the "holy and without blemish and free from accusation" qualities of Colossians 1:22 NIV are positional in one's standing at the instant of salvation, or in one's experience of living the Christian life. (*Ibid.*, Bible Know. Com., N. T.)
 2. Well, the phrase, "in his sight" (Col. 1:22 KJV) qualifies these "holy, without blemish and free from accusation" qualities, and the Greek phrase from which it is rendered is *katenopion autou* (*Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.), "before Him," with *katenopion* carrying the **literal** meaning "in the **presence** of," **NOT** the **figurative** idea, "in His estimation," Moulton & Milligan, The Voc. of the Grk. N. T., 1972, p. 335, 220.
 3. Thus, Paul alluded to the **total** sanctification package -- **positional** sanctification at justification (Rom. 3:21-26), leading to **progressive** sanctification in the Christian walk (Rom. 6-7) and one's finally standing before God's heavenly **presence** in **ultimate** sanctification purified from sin and its effects (Rom. 8:23).
- D. To that end, Paul urged his readers to continue in their faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope of this ultimate sanctification first presented in the salvation gospel, Colossians 1:23:
 1. The words in the Greek text rendered "If" that begin Colossians 1:23a are *ei ge* (*Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) and literally mean "if, that is," "if, indeed," (C. F. D. Moule, An Idiom-Book of N. T. Grk., 1975, p. 164).
 2. In using this expression, Paul was not doubting his readers' salvation, but indicating that only those with a true faith in Christ who rely on Him enjoy full sanctification in their walk, *Ibid.*, Bible Know. Com., N. T.
 3. The marvelous, reconciling gospel of Christ had been proclaimed throughout the world so that all men had access to such blessings of Christ's reconciling ministry unto them, Colossians 1:23b.

Lesson: *By the death of Christ's physical body on the cross, God through faith in the Gospel of Christ takes lost men at enmity with God in great acts of sin and so reconciles them positionally to Himself that they by a life of faith in Him can enjoy a Christian walk that is holy, without blemish and free of accusation, only at the rapture to be experientially perfectly holy, without blemish and free of accusation in God's heavenly presence!*

Application: *(1) If we have not yet done so, may we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. Then, may we (2) walk by faith in Him for the power to live lives that are holy, without blemish and free from accusation (3) as we await PERFECTLY holy, without blemish and free from accusation status in God's presence in heaven at the rapture!*