

LESSON 5

RECONCILIATION THROUGH CHRIST; PAUL'S LABORS FOR THE COLOSSIANS

In verses 21 through 23, Paul discussed the previous lost condition of the Colossians. Because of their reconciliation through Jesus' death, they would be presented holy and blameless before God if they remained in the faith.

THEIR FORMER CONDITION (1:21)

In the past, the Colossians had been alienated from God. Their minds had been hostile to Him—not because of God's desire, but because of their own rebellion against Him.

1. The need for reconciliation is based on what characteristic of God?

THEIR RECONCILIATION THROUGH THE DEATH OF CHRIST (1:22)

Even though the Colossians had been hostile in mind towards God and His wrath was upon them, Jesus made friendship possible through His death.

2. What two things were accomplished by Jesus' death?
3. What false doctrine was Paul's use of the words "fleshly body" probably in response to?
4. Where else in the New Testament is the phrase "beyond reproach" used?
5. How does a person receive continual cleansing of sins?
6. At the judgment, who will accuse those who have been cleansed?

THEIR REQUIRED FAITHFULNESS (1:23)

Being presented blameless before God is conditional. This is expressed in the Greek εἰ (εἰ, "if"). Those who will be presented blameless before God are those who continue in the faith. A one-time faith is not enough.

7. What metaphor is implied by Paul's use of the words "established" and "steadfast"?
8. What does Paul mean by "all creation" in verse 23?

HIS JOY: SUFFERING FOR THEIR SAKE (1:24)

Paul's personal ministry for Christ required him to serve in the face of opposition and persecution. His message was that the past mystery of God had been revealed: Gentiles could now have hope of glory through Christ's being in them. The purpose of Paul's labors was to bring every person to maturity in Him.

Jesus had shown Paul that he would suffer as His witness (Acts 9:16). Suffering is unpleasant. Paul did not enjoy suffering, but he did rejoice in the benefits it could bring to the Colossians.

9. How did Paul's suffering benefit other believers?
10. How did Paul's persecution cause him to suffer beyond "in [his] flesh"?
11. What did Paul mean by saying his suffering was "filling up what is lacking"?
12. How is the meaning of "afflictions" different from that of "suffering"?

THE MYSTERY REVEALED TO THEM (1:25-27)

In this passage Paul explained that he served not only Christ but also the church. However, by ministering to the needs of the church, he was serving Jesus. Christians do not correctly serve Jesus when they isolate themselves from their fellow Christians. Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me" (Mt. 25:40).

13. What was the purpose of Paul's stewardship?

14. What does the word “mystery” in verse 26 mean, and to what does it refer?
15. How has this mystery been made known to the saints?
16. Does 1 Cor. 2:14, 15 imply that non-Christians cannot understand God’s Word?

**HIS GOAL FOR THEM:
COMPLETENESS IN CHRIST (1:28, 29)**

Jesus was the heart of Paul’s preaching (1 Cor. 2:1, 2) and the preaching of others (Acts 8:5, 35). Even though the basic message—the cross of Christ—may seem foolish to the world (1 Cor. 1:18), it is based on the revelation of God’s “wisdom” (σοφία, *sophia*; 1 Cor. 1:24; see also Col. 1:9).

17. What ideas are included in the meaning of “admonishing”?
18. When might Paul have meant that he would “present every man complete in Christ” and to whom?
19. What sort of “power” does Paul speak of in verse 29?