

**Col. 1:21-2:15, Theological Foundation**  
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**Overview**

1. 1:21-23 is Summary of what follows through 2:15.
  - a) 1:21-22, "You ... hath he reconciled," is amplified in 2:10-15.
  - b) 1:23a, "Not moved away from the hope of the gospel," 2:4-9.
  - c) 1:23b, "I Paul am made a minister," 1:24-2:3.
2. All three parts of the Summary grow out of the notion of reconciliation in 1:20, and tell what that reconciliation means in our case.
  - a) 21-22, its Cause
  - b) 23a, its Condition
  - c) 23b, its Communication

**A. 1:21-22, The Cause of our Reconciliation**

1. 21, Their Former State
  - a) Alienated: made foreigners; like Adam and Eve, shut out from the fellowship with God that man was created to enjoy.
  - b) Enemies in mind. Man feels himself shut out, and instead of humbly begging to be admitted to the divine presence, he insists, "I don't like you either!" God's righteousness shuts the door to heaven against us; but our own hatred bars it on our side.
  - c) "by wicked works," lit. "in." This is the sphere of both the alienation and being enemies. Their wicked works lead to the alienation, and people prefer the state of enmity over mean forsaking these works.
2. 22, God's Remedy: He has reconciled us.
  - a) What is it? A change in us that brings us into harmony with him. NB: In the Bible, God is never reconciled. He does not need to change. We do need to change, and he has provided the means for that change.
  - b) How? "In the body of his flesh, through death." Notice that Christ's death actively accomplishes this reconciliation. Modern evangelical theology moves the focus off of the death of Christ, onto the faith of the believer. The NT does not diminish the role of faith, but also emphasizes that the death of Christ actively saves his elect.
  - c) Why? "To present us before him"
    - 1) What is this presentation? The word means "to stand" or "to

be appointed" in the royal court; cf. 1 Kings 12:32; Est 4:5. How shall we first enter God's presence in heaven? It would be a high enough honor to be led to the throne by an angel, but this verse, together with 2 Cor. 4:14 and Jude 24, teach that God himself will bring us into the heavenly court.

2) Our appearance in that presentation:

a> Our Position: Holy, set apart, members of a "peculiar people," citizens of heaven.

b> Our Practice: Unblameable, lit. without spot, without blemish (like the sacrificial lambs). As believers, we are to live pure lives.

c> Our Reputation: Unreproveable. Focus here on what others say about us. Some actions might not violate God's word, but still leave us open to reproach; we are to "abstain from all appearance of evil," 1 Thess. 5.

**B. 1:23a, The Condition of our Reconciliation**

1. What is this the condition of? Usually taken to be the presentation. He has (unconditionally) reconciled you; and if you continue in the faith, he will present you faultless. However, since "present" is an infinitive and "continue" is finite, Hollenbach's second constraint (1985:7) indicates that the conditional clause goes back to "reconcile."

2. What is the meaning of such a condition? How can a past event be conditional on something in the present? Condition can reflect evidence for a state of affairs, as well as cause. E.g., Matt. 12:26,28, where Satan's casting out of Satan would be a mark of the division of his kingdom, and where the Lord's success is evidence that the Kingdom of God has come. So here: we can take it as a fact that God has reconciled you in the special sense spoken of here, IF you show the appropriate evidence.

NB: Example of the doctrine of the "Perseverance of the Saints." Note how the apostle approaches it: not "eternal security" (whatever you may do, you're saved), but "if you are truly saved, you will persevere."

3. What is the evidence? Stated positively and negatively.

a) Continue in the faith.

1) Grounded: of a building, "having the foundation laid." Not just a shack resting on the earth and ready to blow away, but tied to the ground. Cf. Matt. 7:24-27.

2) Settled: firm. The result of having a foundation.

b) Negative: Not moved away from the hope of the gospel (i.e., to another gospel).

**C. 1:23b, The Communication of our Reconciliation**

He now focuses their attention on this gospel that they are not to abandon, and three of its characteristics.

1. "Which you heard." Unlike the gnostic teaching, this gospel was not a secret doctrine to which they committed themselves before they were entitled to examine it. Their faith does not rest on any hidden assumptions accessible only to the more mature. The gospel is all right there, laid out in the open.
2. "preached to every creature," an echo of Mark 16:15, "preach the gospel to every creature." Cf. 1:6. Past tense is misleading; aorist may be gnomic, "which is preached," without regard to time. The point is that it is a universal gospel, for all people everywhere. Why give up a universal faith for one that is very restricted in its application?
3. "I Paul became a minister." Thus endows it with the weight of his own authority.