

July 25, 2010  
Pentecost 9

*"Peace with God in the Physical Body of Christ"*

### **COLOSSIANS 1:21-29**

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**O**nce you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. <sup>22</sup> But 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-- <sup>23</sup> if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved 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. <sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. <sup>25</sup> I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness-- <sup>26</sup> the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. <sup>27</sup> To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup> We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. <sup>29</sup> To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

On the night that Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples and said to them, "Peace be to you." He then showed them the nail marks in his hands. Jesus connected the peace of forgiveness to the nail marks in his hands. In the words just read to you, the Apostle Paul assures us that we are reconciled to God or have peace with God by Christ's physical body.

The question I want to offer you this morning is this: Is the peace you enjoy with your God based on what you find in yourself or what you find in Christ? Or let me word this question in another way. Is the peace you have with God partly found in Christ and partly found in you, or is it entirely Christ and Christ alone? You know the answer to that question.

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians who were being influenced by Gnostic teachers who said that Jesus was great because he could help you find the champion in yourself. The Gnostics believed that God was a force in the universe who caused emanations to shine forth. If you tapped into these emanations the way you might hook up an electrical cord, you could get the power you needed to get closer to God and be more spiritual in your life. These Gnostics wanted Jesus to be their guru and spiritual guide to help them get connected inwardly to this power source. The body was considered evil because it got in the way of getting connected inwardly to the force. They hated the teaching of Paul that emphasized how Jesus came to this earth in the flesh with a physical body to take our sins upon himself and die for them so we could have peace with God.

To illustrate how this teaching of Gnosticism influenced people then and now, I have brought along this little rock. Imagine this is part of a large meteor that showed little rocks like this over hundreds of miles. Imagine this rock was connected to some power source

in the universe. If you hold on to it a certain way and rub it, it begins to change your life. It heals your illnesses, it makes you feel better, it even helps you live a better life as long as you rub it and hold it a certain way. The Gnostics said that if you just have the right feelings inside you will have the power you need to feel better and even be accepted by God. Remember any attempt to supplement what Jesus did to give you peace with God will ultimately supplant what Jesus did for you. Remember Jesus plus nothing equals everything. Jesus plus anything means nothing.

### **Jesus prepared peace through his body**

It is so important to believe that Jesus prepared the perfect peace we need with God by suffering and dying for our sin with his physical body. God prepared this peace or reconciliation for us because we were totally removed and apart from God. Paul wrote about this huge separation that exists between people and God with these words, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior." Sin separates us from God. It causes us to fall short of God's glory. Look back at your early life. Your parents did not have to send you to sin school to learn how to be naughty and sinful. You inherited this evil from your parents. Paul says that we were enemies of God, because we do not like to be corrected and told where we are wrong. And we hate to be told that there is absolutely nothing we can do to save ourselves. We like to think we can polish some spark of goodness in ourselves and use that to make up for the wrong we do.

This evil even keeps us from realizing how much our sin deserves God's anger and wrath. This past week some people were visiting Yellowstone National Park. The woman was taking pictures of a buffalo alongside of the road. The man decided to get closer and through a stick at the buffalo. The buffalo charged the man. He got out of the way, but then it turned on the woman, gored her and knocked her to the ground. Foolish human beings don't realize how dangerous some animals are. All of us foolishly underestimate the wrath of God that must be poured out on all sin.

What a huge blessing and joy it is to know that Jesus did everything, I mean everything necessary to reconcile you to your God. "But 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." There was a moment and time in history when the sin of the world was all placed on Jesus. Listen to how our reconciliation and peace with God are described in 2 Corinthians 5. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." God takes people like us who are alienated from God because of sin and then declares us righteous and without blemish because of Jesus. When Jesus was baptized the Father spoke from heaven, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased." Because of what happened to the physical body of Jesus, the Father is able to say this morning to you and me, "I am pleased with the life you have lived because my Son your Savior has made you acceptable to me."

You don't want to lose what Christ has done for you by trying to add something you do to what is already perfect. Christ plus nothing is everything. Christ plus anything is nothing. Paul pleads with the people not to lose what they had. "If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel you heard and has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, have

become a servant.”

Continue. Hold fast. Don't move. There is always this itch, this yearning, this hankering in my sinful flesh that wants to add something to what Jesus has done. On our way back from our vacation, we stopped in Sacramento to see the capital building. We walked in and it smelled like paint, oil based paint. On one of the railings going up the stairs there was a sign that read, "Wet Paint." There is something about a wet paint sign that makes you just want to touch the paint to see if it is wet. Tell a child, "Don't stick that bean up your nose" and what will happen when you turn your back. It is more than just curiosity that leads us to want to add something to what Jesus has done. It is our sinful nature that must always be kept under control by God's Word and the blessing of our baptism.

The book of Hebrews tells us, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross and the shame, and sat down at the right hand of God." Jesus sat down at the right hand of God because his work of saving us and bring us peace was finished. To add anything to what Jesus has done would be to destroy it.

While Jesus working of providing us peace with God through his physical body is complete, the work of getting message out to people is still left to be accomplished. God used the body of Jesus to prepare peace for us, and now he wants to use your body and mine to bring this peace to other people.

### **Jesus promotes this peace through out bodies**

Paul writes how this work of promoting peace through out bodies is not complete. "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church." There is something still lacking in Jesus afflictions for our sins. What is still lacking? People are needed to promote what Jesus has done through their sufferings and their afflictions. In 2 Corinthians 4 the Apostle Paul wrote, "We bear about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul knew what it was like to be a servant of Christ and use his body to promote what had happened to the body of Jesus for our sins. In Acts 16 we hear how Paul and Silas were beaten severely with whips and then thrown into the inner part of the prison. At midnight they sang hymns of praise to the Lord, not sad songs, but songs rejoicing in their salvation. The other prisoners heard the songs. After God sent an earthquake and the chains came off the prisoners, the jailor want to learn more about the sufferings of Jesus for his sin. He even washed the wounds on the back of Paul and Silas and then listened to him tell them about Jesus. Anyone who saw the back of the Apostle Paul would see multiple scars from being beaten for the name of Jesus.

The story is told of a man from India who went from village to village telling people about Jesus. His hardships were many. After many long days and long miles of walking and much discouragement, he came to a village. He tried to share the gospel with the people. They rejected him and threw him out of their village. Dejected, he lay down under a tree and fell asleep. He woke up and found himself surrounded by people from the village who wanted to hear him tell them more about Jesus. Someone had passed by him when he was sleeping and saw the blisters on his feet. He told the other people in the village of what he saw and how this man must have something important to say because of all the pain and suffering he was going through to bring the message to them. Romans 10 comes to mind. "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the gospel of feet."

Might, we add, especially when they are blistered.

Paul considered it a privilege to be a servant of Christ and to suffer for Jesus. He felt honored to be part of God's mystery or God's plan to bring this message to the Gentiles. When Paul first became a Christian, the Lord Jesus said to Ananias, "This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." The Lord used the body of Paul to bring the good news of the people Jesus won for us by the suffering he endured in his body. The struggle wasn't always easy as he writes, "To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me." Yet he was confident the Lord was enabling him to use his body and his life to bring the message of peace to other people. Why am I still living on this earth? I have a message of peace in Jesus to share with people. I am one body, telling everybody about Somebody that can save anybody. Amen.