

IF You Continue Colossian 1:21-23

Sermon Discussion

The Study

The Apostle Paul pushed back against the Gnostics, who reduced Jesus to a lowly spirit who only got people started on the path to enlightenment, which was the Gnostic version of salvation. Paul refutes that by saying Jesus is the One Who reconciles us to God and makes us holy, blameless, & above reproach.

Vs. 21-22 • Jesus reconciled us to God by His death on the cross. That reconciliation makes us holy, blameless, and above reproach.

V. 23 • Paul now issues a caution, a warning. The Colossians must continue in the faith and not be moved away from the Gospel to ideas promulgated by the errors of the Gnostics. Note that Paul doesn't just say the Colossians will become "*unfruitful*" if they move away from the faith, he conditions their being reconciled to God on it.

The Discussion

Two possible opening discussions are >

- 1) Consider the power of shame to shape behavior. How many of our large and small decisions are made based on a desire to avoid shame? Pastor Lance said humanity's invention of philosophy, religion, achievement, wealth, power, etc., is all a kind of "fig leaves" we use in a sophisticated attempt to hide shame. What do you think he means by that, and how do these things act as a dodge for shame?
 - 2) The main controversy in this passage is found in v. 23 where Paul seems to say people can fall away by not continuing in the Faith. What is your view on this issue? Why is it important to hold discussions on this with a commitment to mutual respect while disagreeing?
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Discuss with your group what the removal of shame should mean in how we see ourselves and relate to God and one another. If God's forgiven & reconciled us to Himself, how should that affect how we treat one another?

In light of vs. 21-22, are you "*on probation*" before God? Are there *limitations* on God's acceptance of you?

What is Paul's abiding appeal in v. 23? How does what he says here inform the debate over whether or not someone can lose their salvation – that is, what would Paul say to the issue?

Have you heard of the movement called "Deconstruction" or "Deconversion"? How does what Paul says in v. 23 speak to those who are "moving away" from The Gospel? How ought we deal with/treat those "deconstructing" their faith?