

Series: *Colossians – Christ Above All*

Title: "Holy, Blameless, Above Reproach" (Colossians 1:21-22)

Speaker: Rev. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/24/2010

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Introduction

In our last message we focused on Colossians chapter one, verses 21 and 22. Today we're going to continue this part of our study. If you're able to open your Bible to this passage with me, I hope you'll do so. We're also going to be looking at a number of other related passages of Scripture. As we begin today, let me read these verses for you once again – Colossians chapter one, verses 21 and 22:

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.

As we saw last time, in these verses Paul is continuing to tell the Colossian believers about the preeminence of Christ in the church. And here once again, he makes it very personal. In effect what Paul is saying here is this: "If you are a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ today, I want to teach you and remind you about the preeminence of Christ in *you*. This is not something that is merely true in some abstract way. This is true about you personally." That's what Paul is telling us.

And as we saw last time, Paul reminds the Colossians believers about four things. And if you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for your salvation today, these four things apply to you also. Paul is saying this: "If you are a Christian, if you're trusting in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, remember these four things." And let me name them for you once again:

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First, Christian, remember what you once were: You were alienated from God, and you were an enemy of God.

Second, Christian, remember what you now are: You have been reconciled to God the Father, even though you are still living in a sinful world.

Thirdly, Christian, remember what you will be: Christ is going to present you perfect and faultless and above reproach, on the Last Day.

And fourthly, Christian, remember how the change came about: Jesus Christ did it all, by taking on human flesh and dying for you.

Your Past and Present

Last time we focused on the past and present aspects of these four points. If you are a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ today, never forget the fact that the Bible says that you once were an alien from God and the enemy of God. That was your past condition, before you trusted in Christ. But now, presently, you are reconciled to God. You are now *positionally* holy and blameless before Him. And that came about because of the once-for-all death of the Lord Jesus Christ, God in human flesh.

Now, before we go on, I want to remind you about something else. As you read the Bible, it's important for you to be careful to observe every word. That's why it's important for you to have a trustworthy translation of the Bible in your hands. That's why I recommend that you use either the Authorized King James Bible, or the New King James Bible. Those are both reliable translations of the Word of God from

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reliable manuscripts in the original languages. There are a lot of other English Bibles on the market today, but most of them have a lot of problems. Many of them aren't even translations. They're paraphrases. Men have put the Word of God into their own words, and they've introduced their own ideas. They've contaminated and polluted God's Word with man's word.

The Bible *alone* is the Word of God. That's why I encourage you to use a reliable translation, the Old King James or New King James. I'm mentioning this right now for a reason. God the Holy Spirit inspired the very words of the Bible – every word. As you read the Bible, you need to pay attention to every word. Every word is there for a reason. Every word is there so that you can understand the truth. And in the Bible, one of the things that is important as you read is to observe the tenses of the verbs – the things that are past, the things that are present, and the things that are future. That's one of the reasons why it's so important for you to use a reliable translation.

Now let me relate this to the passage that is before us today in Colossians. Paul says, chapter one, verse 21, "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works" – you were once alienated, past tense – "yet now" – present tense – "He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you" – future tense – "holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight."

Believer, you once were alienated from God and the enemy of God. But that is in the past. Christ has died for you and He has made peace for you with God the Father.

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Because of the death and resurrection of Christ you are now reconciled to God. That is your present condition.

We read the same thing in Romans chapter five, beginning at verse one:

“Therefore having been justified by faith” – past tense, that has already happened, and it was something that was done for us, we did not do it for ourselves –

“Therefore having been justified by faith we have” – literally, we are having, a present and continuing state – “we are having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,”

“Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand” – literally, in which we are now standing – “and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” – the future glory that awaits us.

That’s your past, and your present, and your future. Today, you are *positionally* “holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight,” verse 22. As a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, you have been justified by faith. You have been declared “not guilty” before God. Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for your sins. “The wages of sin,” Romans 6:23 tells us, “is death.” Jesus died the death that you deserved to die. He has paid the price for your sins. And because that is true, the rest of Romans 6:23 tells us that “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Isaiah 53:6 tells us that your sins have been laid upon Christ.

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But Second Corinthians 5:21 tells us that something else has happened: A great exchange has taken place. Your sins have been laid upon Christ on the cross, but as a result of His perfect sacrifice, His righteousness has been laid upon you. That is why you have been declared "not guilty" before God. You are still a sinner. You are still living in a sinful world, you still have the sin nature, and you still commit acts of sin that require God's forgiveness. But Christ has paid for all of your sins, past, present, and future. And when God the Father looks upon you, *positionally* He sees you as "holy, blameless, and above reproach in His sight," as we read here in Colossians 1:22. And that is because of Christ.

Your Present Standing is Not a License to Sin

Now let me stop for just a moment and add something briefly. And we're going to focus on this point more next time, as we move on to verse 23. But let me take a moment to say this to you today: The fact that Jesus had paid for all of your sins, and the fact that you have been declared "not guilty" before God – neither of those things constitutes a license for you to sin. Neither of those things gives you the right to live any way you please. That was a problem, even in the early church. People thought that way. But Paul answered that kind of wrong thinking decisively in Romans chapter six. Beginning at verse fifteen, he says this:

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to

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death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you [once] presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. (Romans 6:15-19)

That is your present responsibility as a Christian – to live a life that is pleasing to God. Not to *earn* your salvation, but *because* you are saved. And that is why you need the Word of God. The Word of God tells you how you are supposed to live.

Your Future

But then in our passage in Colossians chapter one, we come to a future aspect. And let's now move on to that. Jesus Christ is going to present you not only *positionally* "holy, blameless, and above reproach in His sight," but *actually* "holy, blameless, and above reproach in His sight." Christ is going to bring the work of reconciliation to its culmination.

In the time we have remaining today I want to begin focusing on three aspects of this. And let me put it before you as three questions: First, when will that happen? When will you be presented *actually* "holy, blameless, and above reproach in God's

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sight”? Second, how that will happen? And finally, what will it mean for you as a believer when it does happen?

First of all: When will we be presented *actually* “holy, blameless, and above reproach in His sight”? First Corinthians chapter 15 gives us part of the answer, beginning at verse 51. Paul says,

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

“O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:50-58)

The first part of the answer to this question – When will we be presented *actually* “holy, blameless, and above reproach in His sight? – It is found here in the promise of Christ’s second coming. We are going to be raised up incorruptible, when both the

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dead in Christ who rise first, and those who are alive and remain and are caught up together with them, meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air at His second coming.

We find the second part of the answer to the "When?" question at the end of the book of Jude, beginning at verse 24:

Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24-25)

When we are caught up into Heaven, Jesus Christ is going to present us to the Father. He is going to present us, He is going to cause us to stand, before the presence of His very throne in Heaven. We read more about this in Hebrews chapter two, beginning at verse ten:

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation [Jesus Christ] perfect [or complete] through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He [Jesus] is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." And again: "I will put My trust in Him."

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And again: [notice this carefully] "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Hebrews 2:10-15)

Jesus is going to present us before the Father, and He is going to say, "Here I am, and the children you have given Me. Here are my adopted brothers and sisters. I haven't lost one of them, Father. I've brought them all home to glory. And here they are, holy, blameless, and above reproach in Your sight."

Ephesians 5:25-27 tells us that "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."

So that answers the "When?" question. We're going to be presented before the throne of God, actually and forever holy, blameless, and above reproach, when Jesus comes again.

That brings us to the question of *how* this is going to come about. And we find the answer in two passages. First of all, in Romans chapter six, beginning at verse three, Paul says this:

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Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. [And notice this –] For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. (Romans 6:3-6)

And then at the beginning of First John chapter three, we have this further explanation of the answers to the "How" question:

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but [notice this –] we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (1 John 3:1-3)

And in Hebrews chapter nine, verse twelve, we read this, that Christ "with His own blood...entered the Most Holy Place [in Heaven] once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." Christ's blood is on the heavenly altar forever. And throughout all eternity, if you have trusted in Christ alone for your salvation, you will be able to point

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to that heavenly altar and say, "That is why I am here, that is why I am like Christ – glorified, made perfect. It's because of His blood on the altar. All of my sins have been forgiven, and I have been made holy, blameless, and above reproach in God's sight, because of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and nothing else. It is all of grace. I am here in the glories of the new heavens and the new earth because I am a sinner saved by grace."

Freedom From Sin: What Will It Be Like?

We still have one more point to cover, and I thought we might get to it today, but we've run out of time. And I don't want to neglect this next and very important point. And that is this final question: What is it going to mean for you personally, to be in the glories of the new heavens and the new earth, and to be completely changed so that you are holy, blameless, and above reproach in the sight of God forever? What is it going to mean to be free not only from the power of sin, and the guilt of sin, and the bondage of sin, but also from the very presence of sin, and from the very possibility of sin, forever and ever?

Next time I want to pick up right here at the end of Colossians chapter one, verse 22, and finish by answering that question by taking you over to the book of Revelation chapter 22. And then we'll move on to Colossians chapter one, verse 23, which is an extremely important verse, a pivotal verse, in the entire book of Colossians. So I hope you'll join us for that in our next message.

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