

## **Alienation and Reconciliation.**

Colossians 1:20-22:

<sup>20</sup> And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

<sup>21</sup> And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

<sup>22</sup> In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in his sight:

### **The Greatness of Our Alienation.**

“Sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works.”

**"Alienated" is not an uncommon word in Scripture, and is found in both Testaments.** “Aliens” means “foreigners”, and even stands for those who cross national boundaries against the law of the land. In this sense it

stands for trespassing. The prophet lamenting the incursion by the Babylonians and their theft of the people's property, writes - "Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens." (Lam.5:2). Hebrews uses the word in the same way concerning forces opposed to Israel. These were not made up of men of faith but unbelief, whom God counted as His enemies too. When Israel trusted in God they "turned to flight the armies of the aliens" (Heb.11:34).

**"Alienated" has a spiritual application.** The Ephesians are described as "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise" (Eph.2:12). In their unregenerate state they were not merely ignorant, but actively opposed to the Gospel. It is the same for all who are born into the world by natural generation. We are foreign to God and to His Christ. We are strangers, ignorant, cut off from Him, with a dividing line between. By nature we have neither the ability nor the desire to be one with Him. The

unconverted man's keenness to trespass the law of God is proof positive of this. Sinners are far from being friendly, loving, agreeable, loyal, peaceful, compliant, governable. They are in very truth "aliens" to God.

**The word "enemies" describes the deep-seated opposition to holy things that there is in every man who is alienated from God.** It is a very strong word in the Greek. Εχτηρος (exthros) implies irreconcilable hostility, proceeding out of a personal hatred bent on inflicting harm. Philippians 3:18 speaks about "enemies of the cross of Christ." These are they who are given up to their sin and who violate obligations imposed on them not just by the law of God, but also those obligations imposed on them by the death of the Saviour. Paul writes: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

**Those who are alienated from God do not always show their opposition openly.** But in their thinking they are still His enemies. The text says they are “enemies in their mind by wicked works.” “Mind” in the original is διανοία (dianoia), and stands for critical thinking. *Dia* is the root of the English word “diameter” and means “across to the other side.” *Noia* is from *noiéō*, which means “to use the mind.” Therefore those who are “enemies in their mind” are those who have taken into account both sides of a matter and after having thought things through still come down on the wrong side.

**“Enemies in their mind by wicked works” tells us that there are works of the mind as well as works of the hand.** Without the mind working, man himself does not work. Therefore it is the activity of the inner man which is of paramount importance. Wicked works of the mind may not always be translated into action, but they are no less

serious. God takes the will for the deed and goes to the root cause of our alienation from Him. Sinful actions are only the symptom of the problem. We should more concerned with the origin. Sinful thoughts and purposes are the seed of self-destruction. It has been put this way – “Thoughts become words, words become actions, actions become habits, habits become character, character becomes destiny” (anon). Galatians 6:7 says, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

## **The Glory of Our Reconciliation.**

**The meaning of reconciliation is simple.** It is "restoration to favour." It comes from the Latin *reconciliare* which signifies "bring together again, regain, win over, make friendly." So there is a personal and practical side to it. The word is also used in economics for making financial accounts consistent, for harmonization. This speaks of the legal side of reconciliation and tells us that it is not real

unless it is just. God's determination to restore us to fellowship with Him is not realized without a "balancing of the books." As sinners, we are in deficit toward God, because we have fallen short of His glory (Romans 3:23). How far short? Completely! We are so impoverished we cannot pay the smallest part of it. Only an all-sufficient God has the resource to "balance the books", to "settle our account" with Him. Unless He does, we remain alienated from Him.

**God's mercy in reconciliation is highlighted by the word "yet."** Despite our natural corruption and opposition to the Almighty, He nevertheless took in hand to remedy the situation. What matchless love! Gospel mercy is such a rich favour that the best thing we have cannot be compared to it. The Psalmist expressed it thus - "Thy lovingkindness is better than life" (Ps.63:3). Here is a picture from the Old Testament. Now Moses knew that though God was just He could still be kind. For the blessing of

mercy in the case of a disobedient people he was lost for words, and in order that they might have it he would have gladly died. He could not bear to see Israel perish from the face of the earth. Listen to his impassioned plea for those who had corrupted themselves by idolatry even at holy Sinai: "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." (Ex.32:32).

**Then there is the message and means of reconciliation.** The message is clear and the means is Christ crucified – “Now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death.” The price has been paid and the work has been done, and sinners have been brought into fellowship and communion with God. God incarnate laid down His life for us. He was the only One who could satisfy Divine justice, and this was the only way He could bring us "to himself" (V.20). That Christ is God is emphasized in ch.2. There we are told, "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the

Godhead bodily.” "The body of his flesh" shows us that the humanity of Christ was real. Had it not been He could not have died for us or accomplish by His death what the Bible says He accomplished. God incarnate died and shed His blood. The blood of the Lord Jesus is not a metonym for His death. There is an intrinsic value and vitality to this very day in the crimson tide that courses in Immanuel's veins. In Him "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph.1:7).

**Finally, there is the majesty of reconciliation.** This is seen in its end, which is to "present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight." "Holy" means without corruption. "Unblameable" means without charge. "Unreprouvable" means without condemnation. Believers are now at one with their Maker, legally cleared of every debt, and one day shall stand without actual fault before Him. The reconciled are justified and will soon be glorified. Hallelujah!



**So then, let us trust Christ completely, recognizing that His Person gives such a value to His work that no other Saviour is needed.** Come to Him in prayer and ask Him for the forgiveness which He bought for you entirely at His own expense. He will give it to you. He is inclined so to do, and He cannot deny Himself!

*There's a Spanish story of a father and son who had become estranged. The son ran away, and the father set off to find him. He searched for months to no avail. Finally, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. The ad read: Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father. On Saturday 800 Pacos showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers." (Bits & Pieces).*