

Introduction

- I. Paul's intention in vv.21-23 is to exhort the Colossian church to not be drawn away from Christ but instead to persevere in the gospel preached to them (v.23). He does this by reminding them of the miserable state they were in before they believed the gospel (v.21) and of the state into which the gospel of Jesus Christ had brought them (v.22).
- II. Let us remember that the reason for our miserable state before Christ is because without Christ our sins still stand against us, separate us from God, and condemn us. Moreover, until Christ delivers us, we're still slaves to sin. Christ alone can deliver us from sin and reconcile us to God (vv.19, 22).
- III. Let us also remember that God created man *upright* (Ecc 7.29) and the condition described here is man's *fallen* condition, into which we brought ourselves by our *rebellion* against God.

We were alienated from God

- I. We were alienated. The word signifies estrangement and unacquaintance. God is a stranger to natural man, Ex 5.2.
 - A. Though created by God, after His image and likeness (Gen 1.26-27), man is born alienated from God.
 - B. God and man can't walk together in peace and fellowship because they don't agree on anything, Amos 3.3!
 - C. The worst of it is that man is *willfully* alienated from God. His alienation is the result of his willful rebellion, Gen 2.17; 3.6.
 - D. Natural man says to God, "Depart from us" (Job 21.14); and to Christ, "We don't want your rule" (Lk 19.14). This is *every* man's condition without Christ, Eph 2.12; 4.18.

We were hostile to God

- I. We were hostile to God in our minds. Not only is there no inclination toward God, but there's a real hostility and enmity toward God.
 - A. Though this enmity may not be radically evident in man's behaviour, it is rooted in the heart all the same and therefore affects the whole of man's life so that he lives

indifferent to God, willfully separated from God, and with unbelief towards God and His truth, Rom 8.7.

Our conduct was sinful before God

- I. Man's hostility to God can't but show itself in all that he says, feels, does, and thinks. Man is determined to live as a law unto himself and not be constrained by God's laws.
 - A. The result of this determination is that man's conduct is willfully made up of evil deeds.
 - B. And while the evil of man's deeds may not always be visible to us, God sees them as evil because none of them is done out of love for Him, out of obedience to Him, and for His glory (1Cor 10.31; Ps 73.25). Instead, all that man does is done with reference to himself as at odds with God.
- II. This is a severe indictment against human nature.
 - A. But man's greatest problem is not so much what he is by nature, but that what he is by nature *blinds* him to what he is by nature, 2Cor 4.4; 1Jn 2.11. This, in part, is what makes man's fallen condition a most miserable one. He's deceived about his fallen and helpless condition.

Reflections

- I. See what necessity there is for regeneration by God, Jn 3.7.
 - A. There's no cure for the enmity against God that's found in your natural heart. You must have a new heart to love God and a new spirit to obey Him, Ezk 36.26-27; Js 1.12.
- II. See the absolute necessity for reconciliation with God through Christ, 1Sam 2.22-25.
 - A. Regeneration gives you a new heart and removes the hostility, but for your guilt and sins, you need a Reconciler, and Jesus alone is that Reconciler, Eph 2.12-14.
- III. Let every believer never forget that this is what you were. Remember the kindness of the Lord to you and consider what requital you owe Him since this is your past, Ezk 16.1-14.
- IV. Let every unbeliever know that this is what you are. This is the saddest condition one can be in outside of hell, and it is your present condition. Remember that Jesus Christ is the great Reconciler, Redeemer, and Saviour. Turn to Him and live, Ezk 18.30-32.