

Introduction

What is on your “to-do” list? How many items are you tracking? Do you feel that you are making progress ... or getting further behind? Some people are not at all stressed because they don’t spend much time thinking about getting things done, but many of you are probably like me and often feel overwhelmed with the number and variety of “gotta do”, “oughtta do”, “wantta do” and “oughtta wantta do” tasks. If you are trying to incorporate church ministry, family, work, and relationships it can be challenging. Then the faucet breaks and the grass needs to be mowed and you need to diligently plan for the future and keep your skills sharp and ... oh, yes, we need to sleep.

I’ve recently read – and remarkably actually finished – a book by Kevin DeYoung, called *Crazy Busy*. He is a pastor in East Lansing, Michigan, and identifies with everyone who feels like life is spinning a little too fast. It is possible to try to do too much, ignoring the limitations that God has sovereignly placed on us in terms of our time and need for rest. He also helps us see that we may not simply have too much going on, but rather that we are busy with the wrong priorities. Kevin DeYoung asks this penetrating question: Are you too busy to pursue God with your whole heart, soul, mind and strength? Could busy-ness be endangering your soul? It is in this vein that he asks readers to freshly consider the story of Mary and Martha at the end of Luke 10.

You recall the story; Mary and Martha were sisters of Lazarus, the man that Jesus raised from the dead. Jesus was a frequent guest in their home, and felt comfortable there. On this occasion, Martha was busy with preparations while Mary sat at Jesus’ feet and listened to His teaching. Martha was frustrated that she was making all of the preparations alone, and hoped a little nudge from Jesus would get Mary moving. Instead Jesus mildly rebuked her, saying “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:41, 42)

If you are feeling overwhelmed, you need to get some perspective. You need someone to help you see the big picture; where you came from, what has happened to you in Christ, and your eternal destiny. You need to see what is really important. You need someone to bring you to what I call a “Martha moment” when you see that you have invested too much in things that don’t ultimately matter. We need someone to help us choose the *best* out of the seemingly infinite *good* choices before us. The apostle Paul does that for us in Colossians 1, verses 21 to 23. He brings us the perspective that we need by explaining the *Reality of the Gospel* and the *Requirement of the Gospel*.

The Reality of the Gospel is the truth about our past depravity, present reconciliation and future glorification in Christ; the Requirement of the Gospel is the conditional aspect to this that prompts us to consider if we are genuine. It challenges us to be what we are in Christ. Together the reality of the gospel and requirement of the gospel bring us the perspective that we need in the midst of a distracting and busy world. Without some guidance, we would fill our lives with all of the wrong things, but the reality of the gospel and the requirement of the gospel remind us that our only priority *is* the gospel.

As I have opportunities to preach, I’ll go through the book of Colossians, a little bit at a time. It has been a while since we’ve been in Colossians, so I’m going to deviate slightly from our normal practice and read

more verses than I will preach; I'll start in Colossians 1:15, to give us more of the context for verses 21 to 23, the section that we are looking at this morning. While I read, listen for the contrast between our Lord Jesus and us, and listen for one thing that matters – the good part. Please stand while I read Colossians 1:15-23. Speaking of the Lord Jesus, the apostle Paul says:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

You may be seated.

The Reality of the Gospel

First, let's consider the reality of the gospel. Our understanding of what is real comes from the Scriptures, not just our senses. After explaining the glorious nature of our Lord Jesus, Paul says: "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him". This is a worthy summary of the entire Christian life; if someone asked you to explain the gospel or your testimony in a sentence, this would be a good one. What a glorious reality redeemed believers enjoy. It has past, present and future aspects.

Reality of the Gospel – The Past:

"And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds." This is the nature of every person apart from Christ's rescue. The apostle Paul shows us three aspects of humanity that aren't pretty: alienated, hostile in mind, doing evil deeds. Every human starts out alienated; estranged from God and an enemy of God. We don't start out neutral – we go from bad to worse.

Alienated is of course related to the word "alien" but we don't use that word often in everyday conversation. For me, growing up in the "space age" and reading science fiction, the word "alien" always conjures up picture of creatures from outer space. In reality, it simply refers to someone away from their country; a foreigner. People from other countries who have permanent privileges to live and work in the United States are called "resident aliens".

We start out belonging to this world but alienated – without any citizenship rights – with respect to God and His kingdom. Ephesians 2:12 tells us that as Gentiles, we were "separated from Christ, *alienated* from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

We are not only alienated, but also hostile in mind; these descriptions build in intensity. You could be an appreciative alien; a foreigner but a benign one. The description of us here, though, is much different; we had an aggressively negative mindset toward God. We were “hostile in mind”. Beyond that, we were engaged in “doing evil deeds.” The alienation of humans toward God is manifested in hostility of mind, and further manifested in evil deeds. There is an unfortunate flow from 1) alienation or unfamiliarity to 2) hostility of mind and attitude that 3) results in evil actions. That would be bad enough, but there is a downward spiral at work here: the evil deeds lead to more mental hostility which leads to more sin – even if you aren’t consciously aware of it. That is why the Bible can authoritatively declare that we are utterly incapable of rescuing ourselves from God’s wrath; we are locked into a death spiral of alienation, being mentally hostile to the only hope for rescue, and getting worse through sin all of the time.

There is a similar passage in Ephesians 4:18, 19, which says “They are darkened in their understanding, *alienated* from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.”

We were locked into sin, with no way to be reconciled to God even if we wanted to be – which we didn’t, because our minds were hostile to God, and getting worse all the time through sin.

If you are a believer, don’t get too comfortable, thinking “This is good information. I hope some unbeliever hears this and recognizes the peril of their soul.” This principle of sin affecting the mind works in the life of a believer as well. How much sin do you tolerate in your life? Could it be that the sin that you are tolerating in your life is poisoning your attitude toward your heavenly Father? That is a very challenging question! How about an easier one – what about me? Could it be that the sin that *I* am tolerating in *my* life is poisoning *my* attitude toward God? It is always easier to see sin in someone else’s life, but perhaps you have the same issue. It is certainly true that “the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7) but we need to be reminded to not sin! That is why Hebrews 3 tells us to “exhort one another every day ... that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” There is a connection between our sin and a hostile attitude toward God. As we sin we are hardened – that sounds like being hostile in mind – and it leads to a downward spiral in our lives apart from repentance and the grace of God.

We are being conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29) *and* we also are responsible to not sin. At Grace Covenant, we are not under any illusion about earthly perfection in believers lives; Ecclesiastes 7:20 says “there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.” If you have been around for a while, you’ve noticed that we always have a prayer of praise *and* confession. We will not have a week where we leave out the confession because no one sinned – that isn’t going to happen, but wouldn’t that be great? We look forward to being presented before Him without blame or fault, and that is true positionally, but not experientially. We sing the hymn “Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus” that has the line “just from sin and self to cease”. The apostle Paul expressed the same longing in Romans 7 – “I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.” I hope that echoes the yearning of your heart. If it doesn’t, perhaps you haven’t experienced the reality of the gospel. Our desires have changed; instead of giving ourselves fully to sin, we struggle with it and we want to please our heavenly Father. Praise God that there will be a time when, as another hymn says, all the ransomed church of God will be saved to sin no more!

Knowing the reality of our past should cause us to worship our Savior, who saved us when we could not save ourselves and when we would have resisted His salvation if we could. It also reminds us that we are still susceptible to temptation. The principle of sin hardening us should help us to soberly consider the sin that remains and the sin that we tolerate in ourselves.

The Lord “knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:14) God uses us to achieve His purposes not because of who we are, but because of His grace. We have this treasure – our ministry of reconciliation – in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. (2 Corinthians 4:7) God’s work will ultimately succeed because of Him and not because of us. His purposes will be done even if there are un-checked items on your to-do list and you take a nap this afternoon. It is really OK if no one brings a main dish tonight.

Our bodies need sleep every day and the pattern of creation is for one day of rest out of every seven. “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:27) It is not one more “to do” list item. It is not about rules, it is about rest. Periodically refraining from work reflects our faith that God will provide for us and accomplish His purposes even when we aren’t working – it doesn’t all depend on us. We tend to forget that when we pack our lives and schedules full of activity.

The Reality of the Gospel – The Present:

“... you who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death”

The good news of the gospel is that God overcame our hostility and rebellion. You could say that “in spite of” the fact that we were enemies of God, He redeemed us and you would be right, but it is also true that “because of” the fact that we were enemies God acted because no one else could solve the problem.

The word *reconcile* is a key component of this verse. What does it mean? Reconciliation means to bring together again; to win over again. It is from re- “again” + concilare “make friendly, bring together, unite in feelings”. So, Jesus has made God friendly toward us again; He brought us to God. He has changed His own disposition from wrath to grace. In the section that we read earlier, it says that Jesus reconciled all things to Himself.

Why did we need reconciliation? It is not because God has offended us, but because we have offended God. God loved us when we were unlovable and unlovely. Colossians 1 describes us as alienated and hostile in mind; Romans 5 says that it was while we were sinners – enemies of God – that Christ died for us. Both Ephesians 2 and Colossians 2 describe us as dead in our trespasses and sins. Evil deeds characterized us; we walked in them. Praise God that He didn’t just leave us in that condition; when we were dead, He made us alive in Christ!

He reconciled us to Himself, and as a result of that, our citizenship has changed. Once we were aliens with respect to God and friends with this world; now our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20) and we are aliens and strangers in this world (1 Peter 2:11) – resident aliens, if you will.

He has now reconciled us in His body of flesh by His death. He did not do this by remote control; He came in person. “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24)

There are some hints in the letter that the false teachers at Colossae were promoting the idea that the spirit world was good and the physical world was evil, or at least that the spiritual realm really counted and the physical world was unimportant. Paul explains in Colossians that Jesus created all of it – the spiritual realm and all of its beings as well as the earth and all of its creatures. He came to the earth and was not defiled by it; in fact He offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice for our sin. It was in His body of flesh and by His death that He reconciled us to the Father.

The present aspect of the reality of the gospel should also drive our worship because our Lord and King came in person to redeem us from the curse that our sins deserved. It was not an ordinary ransom; He gave His life. We were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from our futile way of life inherited from our forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18, 19)

As I think about my priorities and to-do list, the present aspect of the reality of the gospel reminds me that my time is not ultimately mine; I am a slave of Jesus Christ – I have been bought with a price. (1 Corinthians 6:20) He gave His life for His people “that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” (2 Corinthians 5:15)

The Reality of the Gospel – The Future:

Our text says that the reconciliation that Jesus accomplished was “... in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him” – there is a goal; the reconciliation was in preparation for something in the future.

There is an “already” aspect to this also; there is a sense in which we are holy and blameless and above reproach because the righteousness of Jesus Christ has already been credited to our account, but I believe that this text focuses on a future aspect of the gospel, especially because of the conditional statement that follows, which we’ll look at in a few minutes.

Ephesians 5:27 tells us that Christ gave Himself for the church “so that He might *present* the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.” We have been redeemed so that we can be in the presence of God forever! The apostle Paul was confident that “He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence.” (2 Corinthians 4:14) He will escort us into the throne room of God.

If that seems ordinary, you need to grow in your understanding of the holiness of God. We should be awestruck with the thought of being able to be in the presence of God and not be instantly incinerated! Because of our Lord Jesus, we will glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

We will stand before God, not in shame, but in glory! Our Lord Jesus will present us holy and blameless and above reproach. He came to earth to redeem His bride and He will bring us home. This gives us the true long-term perspective that we need in the midst of jobs and family and ministry and too many to-dos.

The future aspect of the reality of the gospel should give us hope; the kind of hope that purifies us; 1 John 3:3 tells us that “everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.” Jesus is going to present me before the Father holy and blameless and above reproach – why am I sinning, or even thinking about it?

The reality of the gospel is that we, who were helpless, have been redeemed for a purpose: a presentation in heaven. This world is not all there is – it is not ultimately real! My destiny should drive my decisions about time and priorities.

The Requirement of the Gospel

Now, let's consider the Requirement of the Gospel. Colossians 1:23 says that you will receive all of the benefits – the realities – of the gospel “if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard”.

We don't like conditional statements – the ones that contain “if” or “provided that” – especially because we believe that the Scriptures teach eternal security. Salvation is not our work, so we can't secure it through what we do, and we can't lose it through what we do. There is a certain tension in the conditional statements of the Scripture that the Bible doesn't attempt to fully resolve; it is a “both-and”. We looked at another difficult passage a few months ago in John 15 with its scary conditional language – “If anyone does not abide in me” Jesus said “he is thrown away like a branch”.

The author of Hebrews tells us that “we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.”

Paul says in 2 Timothy that “if we endure, we will also reign with him”. (2 Timothy 2:11-13)

What are we to make of these passages? Are they saying that we can lose our salvation? If not, how do we understand these verses? It helps to understand that our obedience (or lack of it) demonstrates the reality that was there all along. God has saved us, *and* we are responsible to “live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age”. (Titus 2:12)

Peter urges believers in his second epistle to “... be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election.” (2 Peter 1:10) You're saved – now confirm it by your on-going obedience.

A little later in the same letter, he says “...be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.” (2 Peter 3:14) Jesus came to the earth, taking on human flesh, and dying on the cross in order to present us before the Father holy and blameless, and yet Peter tells us to be diligent to be found that way. It is a “both-and”. We are saved by faith, not by our works, *and* we are to manifest godliness that confirms our salvation. If you do not bear fruit, are you really attached to the vine?

Paul tells us to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12, 13) Which is it? Am I working it out, or is God working in me? The answer is ... Yes!

We cannot be saved apart from the work of God, and we cannot be sanctified apart from the work of God. One of the verses from our Hebrews study downtown that particularly struck me was Hebrews 10:14 “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” That captures both the present reality of our position before God – perfected for all time, as well as the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit – those who are being sanctified. It is another “both-and”.

Paul says that we are not to shift from the hope of the gospel. Our only hope is in Christ. All of our eggs are in the gospel basket. Common sense – human sense – tells us that isn't a good idea; we should have a backup plan, some alternative in case our first plan doesn't work out. People may tell you to “hedge your bets” and in fact Chicago is home to at least 13 “hedge funds” which were originally designed to protect investors from losses if the market had a severe downturn. It is something to protect you if things don't work out the way you planned. Not shifting from the hope of the gospel means that we don't have a spiritual hedge fund account. Our only hope for eternity is in Jesus Christ and His work on our behalf.

You might say “well of course my only hope is in Christ. I'm not tempted to trust in Buddha or Mohammed or karma.” Are there more subtle ways to create a little “supplemental plan” in addition to the gospel that indicates that we have shifted from the hope of the gospel? Shifting from the hope of the gospel doesn't necessarily mean wholesale abandonment of belief in God or of Jesus as Savior, just moving away from faith in Jesus as the only available and only adequate savior. What if it is Christ *plus* something else?

Believers in Galatia were being persuaded by false teachers that they needed to obey the Law to be justified in addition to being saved by the sacrifice of Jesus. Paul warned them in Galatians 5:4 “You who are trying to be justified by the law are alienated from Christ; you have fallen from grace.” It is like starting over – being alienated from God. Paul called it a different gospel (Galatians 1:6) and challenged them with this question: “Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3)

What about you? Was the gospel just for getting started in the faith? Did you move on to something else? Or are you continuing in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard?

Shifting, moving or drifting away from the hope of the gospel can take many forms. The Colossians were vulnerable, so Paul warned them later in this letter, saying “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition” (Colossians 2:8) and helped them see the inconsistency of shifting from the hope of the gospel when he said “If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations” (Colossians 2:20) that are man-made? Human traditions and regulations can lead us astray from the hope of the gospel.

Another challenge is speculation: Paul reminded Timothy that “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.” In the current vernacular, we might “they don't know what they're talking about!” Note that they “swerved” from the basics of the faith and “wandered away” in their speculations.

We've just recently talked about money and its power to pull us, to cause us to shift from the hope of the gospel. 1 Timothy 6:10 says that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.” Temptation was their undoing, and they wandered away.

Sometimes it is just everyday life and its distractions that is the problem; Paul reminds us in 2 Timothy that we are to have the mindset of a soldier, and “No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is

to please the one who enlisted him.” (2 Timothy 2:4) Getting entangled with everyday life and forgetting to choose the good part comes naturally to us.

Traditions, regulations, speculations, temptations and distractions are all ways to be moved away, to shift from the hope of the gospel.

We’ve looked at several examples of shifting from the hope of the gospel, but what does not shifting look like? Here is a description from the apostle Paul: “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 15:58)

How can we continue in the faith, stable and steadfast? We need some help, and the Holy Spirit is ready to help us through means of grace, which include the Word of God, prayer and fellowship, including the Lord’s Supper and baptism, where we portray the gospel visually. The word of God is available to you – but you have to get up and start reading. The word is preached here every week – but you have to show up. There are people here who genuinely love you and can help you grow, but you have to open up. All of the means of grace require participation on your part.

Paul’s exhortation to be stable and steadfast is a call to be like God Himself – He never changes, never shifts. In fact, even if we deny Him, Paul says “He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.” (2 Timothy 2:13)

We are to continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting away from the hope of the gospel that we heard, and it is the gospel “which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven”. This is similar to Colossians 1:6 which says of the word of truth, the gospel, that it has come to them just as “in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing”. You might say really? In the whole world? Everywhere? Proclaimed in all creation? Is Paul getting carried away or being optimistic? We know that Paul wanted to proclaim Christ in regions where no one had heard yet; he said “I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation” (Romans 15:20) So the answer is not that Paul is saying every corner of the globe had been reached without exception, but rather that the gospel goes everywhere without distinction. The gospel is proclaimed everywhere without limitation, and everywhere it goes it bears fruit. It didn’t just take root in one place; it was so common for the proclamation of the gospel to bear fruit that Paul could say “indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing”. (Colossians 1:6)

It is hard for us as Gentiles to understand how much of a stumbling block this was to the Jews. They thought that the message from God had been given to them alone (even though are many Old Testament references to the Gentiles hoping in God), and other people had to at least become Jewish to receive it. The thought of the gospel going directly to the Gentiles was shocking and scandalous. We can get a sense of that in Acts 10 and 11, when Peter preached the gospel to the Gentiles and God made it unmistakable by confirming their regeneration with a special sign; it says that the Jews who came with Peter “were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.” (Acts 10:45) and when he recounted it to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, they were speechless, but then it says “they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.” (Acts 11:18) It was (to borrow an overused phrase) a paradigm shift for the Jews. Paul calls us to be loyal, to continue in the hope of the gospel that has been proclaimed everywhere without distinction.

I am glad that our church is involved in the proclamation of the gospel in many different places. We are leading Bible studies downtown and at Buena Vista Tower; Dave and Tim are preaching at Wayside, Brock at Pacific Garden Mission; and many saints are sharing the gospel in all kinds of settings. The gospel is going everywhere; it has been proclaimed in all creation without distinction, and we work, sacrifice and plan to spread it further and with greater saturation.

Praise God that it doesn't all depend on us, however. We rejoice whenever and wherever the gospel is proclaimed. I was encouraged by something that happened downtown last week on the way to work. It had eternal significance, even though it probably didn't make the evening news. A group from California was in the Loop proclaiming the gospel, with signs and tracts and preaching near Union Station where thousands of commuters walk by on their way to work. They had bright yellow signs with Bible verses in big black letters – you could read the signs from a block away! People were holding the signs on all four corners at Adams and Wacker; it was impossible to pass through that area and miss the message.

As they held up their signs, passed out tracts, and preached, I wondered what my fellow commuters were thinking. Were they pretending not to see? I pictured a moment in the future, before the great white throne of judgment, (Revelation 20:11) when that morning would be replayed hundreds – or thousands – of times as people would be confronted with the truth they saw and heard and yet rejected. Proclamation happened that morning; accountability happened that morning.

The next morning I thought about it again, when the streets were quiet; the group had moved on to another location. I had the chilling thought that, and in a sense, that opportunity to hear and see the gospel in the Loop was gone. For someone, that may have been their last opportunity to see and hear the truth. What about you? Are you thinking that you will have another opportunity to hear the gospel and respond? Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts! (Psalm 95:7,8, Hebrews 3:7, 8)

As the apostle Paul said, “We plead on Christ’s behalf, ‘Be reconciled to God’” (2 Corinthians 5:20) and from our passage we know that our Lord Jesus Christ reconciled us to Himself in His body of flesh by His death. We who have been redeemed are to continue in the faith, but you can’t continue what you haven’t started. Is today your day to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ? Repent of your rebellion and self-rule and believe the gospel.

The apostle Paul ends this section with a transition to the next part of the letter: the gospel “which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which, I, Paul, became a minister.” He is a diakonos, a deacon of the gospel. Lord willing, another Sunday morning we will look into the Apostle Paul’s ministry explained in the remainder of the chapter.

Conclusion

The reality of the gospel and the requirement of the gospel remind us that our sole priority is the gospel. The reality of the gospel reminds us that we had nothing to offer God and no way to be rescued from His wrath, and yet He reconciled us to Himself. My life is rightfully His because He bought me. His goal was not simply to gain a slave but to make me a son and a fellow heir with my Savior, who will present me holy and blameless and above reproach before the Father. This purifying hope should affect every day of my life.

We receive all of the glorious realities of the gospel in its past, present and future aspects if we continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that we heard; not wandering off into some other vain hope outside the gospel. The requirement of the gospel is a sobering reminder of the expectation that is on us to live in a way that is consistent with our redemption.

I hope that your testimony is that, though you were once alienated and hostile in mind toward God, doing evil deeds, you can say with assurance that now Jesus Christ reconciled you in His body of flesh by His death and that your intention, by the Holy Spirit's enablement, is to continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel.

In all our busy-ness, we need one another to help us to realize when we have become more caught up in the mechanics of life than the means of life, which is through our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps, while considering the grandeur of God's accomplishment and the ministry that He has entrusted to us, you have had a "Martha moment" today - realizing that you haven't chosen the best part. We are worried and bothered about so many things, but only one thing is necessary. If you continue in the faith, you will be presented in perfect righteousness before the Father, glorifying and enjoying Him forever. What else really matters?