

Reconnected to the Power Supply

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 September 2020

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] Verses 21 and 22 in particular. Colossians 1, verse 21, You who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body or flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

You know how frustrating it is when you're busy doing something with an electrical implement of some kind, and you pull the plug out of the wall when you're halfway or just started on something. Especially if it's outside, you're working and you've got a long flex through the window or something, you're cutting hedge, cutting grass, whatever, and inadvertently you actually pull the plug out of the wall.

So frustrating, you've got to go back because as soon as the plug comes out of the wall, the whole thing, of course, goes dead instantly. And when you look at the way in which the Bible speaks about our spiritual connection with God, our fall, you could say, was the unplugging of us from the power supply that God himself is.

Because as he created us, as you know, he created us in perfect fellowship with himself, drawing our life from him. And that was brought suddenly to an end, instantly to an end, in our fall in Adam.

[1 : 25] After that, there is no life until God restores it. We've become disconnected from the source of life who is God himself. Ephesians chapter 2 mentions that very clearly at the beginning.

You who were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked. There's a lot of activity in us as sinners, but there is no spiritual life.

We're absolutely and utterly cut off from the source of life, who is God. And here in chapter, verse 21 of the chapter, speaks here about being once alienated and hostile in mind.

He has now reconciled in the body of his flesh. It's speaking about, as we'll see, in Christ. But being alienated really ultimately ends up with the same condition, with the same situation as you find in being dead in trespasses and sins.

Because being alienated means being at a distance from God, being cut off from the source of life, reconciliation being not just the establishment of friendship again, but the reconnection with God that brings again life flowing into our lives.

[2 : 41] The life that God has made available to us and has created for us in Christ. So God has not left us, as you know, in that alienated state.

He has not left us in that state of deadness. He's not left us unplugged from the source of life. He's created life for us in Jesus and given us in Christ the means by which that life is re-established.

And the reconnection that you can say is involved in that, well, good, you just focus on it as a reconnection, just changing the word a little bit, but following the same analogy or the same symbolism of being reconnected, having been unplugged from the source of life.

Reconnection is, first of all, through or by the creation of God. Verse 21, it's very clear that it is God who has taken the initiative.

He's saying, you who are once alienated, he has now reconciled. And here it appears to be Christ who is in view because it goes on to speak of in his body of flesh, whereas most of the time in Paul's letters, the reconciliation is initiated by the Father and comes to be established through the Son.

[3 : 55] But this reminds us that Jesus himself, the Son of God, is also directly involved and active in the reestablishing of the connection.

He's not just a passive agent through whom the Father or the Spirit works. He is himself active in the reconnecting process, if you like, through reconciliation that brings us back to be connected to God.

So the initiative is with God. we don't have the capacity of the power because we are dead, because we are alienated, estranged. We don't have in that condition anything in ourselves by which we can reestablish the connection.

And in chapter 2 and from verse 13, you can see there how it's actually speaking of the same sort of idea, but with the different imagery.

you who are dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together or in union with him having forgiven us all our trespasses.

[5 : 00] So in actual fact, you can see that reconciliation deals with our relationship with God, whereas regeneration or being made alive deals with the deadness that belongs to us.

And the two things are always together. You don't find us reconciled without regeneration also connected with that. Not is there regeneration without us being reconciled to God.

So the reconnection is involving both of these and it is God who has set about achieving this for us and bringing us into that connection again that brings life where there was deadness, that brings friendship where there was animosity, or enmity, hostile in mind is how verse 21 puts it, alienated and hostile.

It's not, again, as if this separation, this separation from life, from God is something in which we are neutral towards him and indeed in which he's neutral toward us.

He's reminding us here that the alienation involves our hostility, our hostility in mind, the mind of the flesh, as Romans 8 puts it. So it's always important to go back to the basics.

[6 : 19] One of the basics is that our reconnection is something that God himself has initiated, brought about, and created for us. The second thing is that it's obvious from these verses too that our reconnection with God is through Christ.

And go back to verse 19. You can see the way that Paul Leach says, for in him, that's in Jesus, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

Or you could say, for in him, for all it pleased, and God really is the one who's in view, the Father, it pleased him that all fullness should dwell in Christ, the fullness of the Godhead.

But let's just keep it the way it is. For in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things. In other words, it's saying really that God the Father was pleased to make that fullness dwell in his Son as our mediator.

And the purpose for that is that we would be reconciled to him. In other words, the fullness that is in Christ, the fullness of the Godhead, that fullness, that plenitude of grace and of power is there specifically here connected with the purpose of God to reconcile to himself all things, making peace by the blood of the cross.

[7 : 46] In other words, the reconciliation is ended not just by God taking the initiative, but by his making peace. The ending of the alienation is the way in which God has brought about this reconnection with Christ, reconciliation, which is connected, as we said, also with regeneration or being made alive.

Now you can see here the centrality of Christ's death in all of this. Verse 22 here makes it obvious he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless. Find the same at the end of verse 20, reconcile, making peace by the blood of his cross. And there's something quite amazing there, isn't there?

Because the reconnection, if you like, that we're following that concept of being reconnected, our being reconnected to God took place through the disconnection that was true in the relationship between the Son and the Father.

When you go back to the cross described in the Gospels and the cry from the cross, that great cry, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[9 : 10] There is the cut-off point. It's a thing we don't dare go into in trying to explain everything about it because we cannot. But it does mean he died our death, he took our curse, it came to the point where he expressed being forsaken by God the Father and to that extent and in that sense you can speak of that disconnection that took place in the experience of God's Son.

Why was it so? Well, it was so that we might be reconnected to the power source that is God. You find Ephesians 2 and verse 14 because they're very similar passages where you find there Paul saying, for he himself is our peace who has made us both one.

This is Jew and Gentile brought to be reconciled together as well as to God. He himself is our peace and that does remind us too that we mustn't think of the death of Christ as if it's over there

and the person of Jesus as if that's entirely a separate issue.

He is our peace. He died. The Son of God himself is the one who through the centrality of his death is the means of our being reconciled, the means of our being coming to be reconnected.

When you look at the great pylons that exist throughout the country and different parts of the world that carry these massive cables from the power source, from the, wherever it is the power is generated by whatever means but then it's transmitted through these cables but you don't have that cable coming directly into your house.

[10:56] You couldn't actually have your kettle tied up to these cables. The voltage is massive. It would kill you instantly if you touched it or if it came into contact with anything in your house directly.

It would simply disintegrate or blow them up. So you need a transformer in order to step down the power of that cable to make it possible to use the power that it brings in your house to boil your kettle, to work your food, or whatever it is electrically needs to be connected to the mains.

And you could say in a sense that I don't just at all speak disrespectfully but Christ really is our transformer.

He is our spiritual transformer by means of which God ensures that his power doesn't kill us. We don't meet the almighty power of God and all its naked force without a mediator, without a transformer that is Christ himself coming to be the means by which we are reconnected with God without being destroyed.

And that itself really is a great point in the way the apostle speaks of being reconciled. It's a reconciliation by which the connection ensures the flow of life into our persons, into our souls through Jesus himself.

[12:26] The centrality of his death and of his person in that is the way by which this connection is reestablished. But there's also the instrumentality of faith in the way in which this connection is through Christ.

And when you go back to verse 4, you can see how Paul is thanking God there for the Colossian Christians since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus.

And he goes on to speak of love and also of hope. But he speaks there of faith in Christ Jesus. And that's so often the way that Paul puts it.

Our faith comes to be deposited to rest upon Christ, his faith in him. John chapter 1, you remember, has that same emphasis.

Christ came to his own. His own didn't receive him. But to as many as did receive him, to them he gave power, authority to become the children of God, sons of God, even to as many as believe in his name or on his name.

[13:35] So you find the two things there, receiving Jesus and believing in Jesus or in the name, in the person of Jesus.

both of these, the receiving and the believing come together and are central to being reconnected with Jesus. That's why the gospel is proclaimed by us the way we proclaim it, the way we try in presenting the message of the gospel.

It's all towards that God would reconnect people to himself, that God would take up lives that have been cut off as we all are, as we saw, and bring about this connection again so that through Christ, through faith in Christ, they come to have the power of God and the power of his grace coursing again through their lives.

That's the whole business of presenting the gospel to those who are still lost, as well, of course, as hoping to build up those who are also in Christ already in their faith.

And you remember the words of the catechism in question 31 and the answer to do with effectual calling where it goes on to speak about the various things that are mentioned there, but as to the end that he persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ as he's offered in the gospel.

[15:02] And it's always wonderful to think of both these, persuading and enabling us to embrace him. The enabling doesn't come without the persuading and logically the persuading actually comes first, so they're both within that one great issue of our effectual calling.

How does God bring us to be reconnected? Well, he brings us to be persuaded, persuaded of our need of Christ, persuaded of the suitability of Christ, persuaded that he is the great transformer, the mediator, the person we need, and then being persuaded connects without being enabled.

We come to be enabled to believe the grace of God, the work of God's Spirit, bringing us to life, persuading us, enabling us to embrace Jesus Christ as he is freely offered in the gospel.

The offer of the gospel is here is Jesus and here is Jesus, the one God has presented to us and is presenting to us as the means by which we reconnect with him.

So when you receive and when you believe in Christ, when you're persuaded and enabled to embrace him, you're plugged into the source of life, you're reconnected, you come personally in your experience to know of that wonderful reconnection with life.

[16 : 37] Again, you find the same going back to Ephesians 2 again, we're just flitting back and forth from that passage, verses 8 to 10 of chapter 2, where Paul reminds us it's by grace you have been saved through faith.

Initiation is with grace and enabling that faith and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not as a result of work so that no one may boast for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.

So the reconnection is there through Christ and the centrality of his death but also the instrumentality of faith which he enables us to exercise.

He doesn't believe for us. It's not Jesus who believes, it's not God who believes, it's we who must believe, but the grace of God is such a wonderful thing that enables us to believe, to place our trust in Christ.

But you notice here how in verse 23 there's something else. If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel.

[17 : 50] Now that carries on obviously from the previous verse. in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him if indeed you continue in the faith.

So there is a conditional element in that although God himself sovereignly is in charge of the whole thing. Now the faith there could be, some commentators would say that faith there is the gospel, the faith, that's how the translators here I think have gone for it, but others say that it's more to do with the faith that we exercise, the faith that the Colossians were exercising as they're believing.

And that makes perfect sense too because it says if you continue in faith, if you leave out the word the, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel.

In other words you continue to persevere in faith as a believer, continue to believe. But you see, whichever one of these you choose really makes little difference as far as this is concerned because what is really making obvious is that we need to maintain or keep or sustain that connection that we have with Jesus in order that we have that continuation of life given to us by God.

We need to persevere in our Christian life. That's what's required of us by God. but we do so through God's power.

[19 : 25] Through God's power as that has reached us to our conversion or regeneration, reconciliation, being reestablished in fellowship with God, but it's something that we also have to look at as a need to maintain that or to sustain that.

God's power as God's power as God. And in verse 11, you find what he's saying, may you be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy. You see what he's saying, may you be strengthened with all power, the power of God, because it's power according to his glorious might. the power that brought us reconciliation in the first place, the power that reestablished the connection in the first place.

This is the power that's running into your life as a Christian. It's according to his glorious might. And to what purpose? Well, practically, it's for all endurance and patience with joy.

That you may go on living your life as a Christian, as God himself has actually begun that life in you. So you go on actually living that life.

[20 : 46] Go back to chapter 2 again, where he says, therefore, in verse 6, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, just as you were taught abounding in thanksgiving.

In other words, he's saying, as you received Christ, so walk in him. How did you receive him? As you received him, you received him by grace, you received him in dependence upon God, and so he says, now walk in him.

Continue to walk in that way of faith, that dependence, because, although God never cuts off the supply of life, the supply of power, once we are reconnected with Jesus, that supply is never again going to be lost.

God is going to be cut off by God, but we need to keep asking God to keep the power on, to keep the power going that sustains life spiritually within us.

And the two things are not at enmity. We know for certain God is never going to cut off that power supply again. We're never going to be lost again once we are reconciled, once we are brought back from deadness to life, once we are re-established in a spiritual living connection with God, it's never again going to be cut off.

[22 : 14] But God reminds us that there are certain things we need to keep doing in order that we will know that power continuing to work through in our lives as we advance in the things of God.

So the reconnection is created by God, it's reconnection through Christ where his death is central, where faith is an instrument on our part by God's grace enabling us to trust, to place our trust in God.

And there's that conditional element. If you indeed continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel.

And so our prayer is that God will enable us to know strengthening through this connection during this time when we've got so many things to think about over and above the usual, when we've got other people to think about as well.

But we also want to keep praying that God will establish further connections, people to be brought to connect savingly with himself in Christ, that we will find the gospel continuing to bless people's lives, so that whatever age they're at and whatever background they're from, and however many years they may have gone unconnected with God, that God will still say to them, it's not too late for you to be reconnected.

[23 : 47] The source of power is here for you. It's open to you. It's there for your likes. And once you're connected, you're never again disconnected from this wonderful saving power of God in Christ.

Let's pray. Lord, our God and our gracious Father, we thank you for the provision that you have made for us through your Son. And we give thanks, O Lord, to you for the way in which you have come into this world and given your life and died the death that we deserve.

We give thanks for your Holy Spirit, by which we are enabled, O Lord, to believe, by which we are brought alive, and by which you continue to feed life into our souls.

We thank you, O Lord, for your word, because we know that through your word you edify your people, you enable us thereby to grow in knowledge and further assurance and comfort that you are our God, that you will maintain that connection, that we pray, O Lord, we will be more and more aware of in our lives from day to day.

Hear the prayers of your people, Lord, here and elsewhere as we have called out to you this evening and bless those that we have presented before you. May it please you, Lord, to do exceeding abundantly more than we are able to ask or even think.

[25 : 14] Hear us now, we pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen.