

Colossians 1:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. After cosmic reconciliation (v. 20), Paul personalizes: "and you." The Colossians were *apēllotriōmenous* (ἀπηλλοτριωμένους, "alienated"), estranged from God like foreigners barred from citizenship. "Enemies in your mind" (*echthrous tē dianoia*, ἐχθροὺς τῇ διανοίᾳ) indicates not merely neutral distance but active hostility originating in rebellious thinking.

"By wicked works" (*en tois ergois tois ponērois*, ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς πονηροῖς) shows sin's fruit: hostile minds produce evil deeds. The Gentile Colossians once lived in typical pagan immorality described elsewhere (3:5-7). This stark portrait of pre-conversion condition prevents any illusion of human merit or natural goodness. We were God's enemies, not innocent seekers.

"Yet now hath he reconciled" (*nyni de apokatēllaxen*, νυνὶ δὲ ἀποκατήλλαξεν) presents stunning reversal. The aorist tense indicates completed action—reconciliation accomplished at Calvary. God didn't wait for enemies to become friends; He reconciled us while hostile (Romans 5:8-10). This is grace: unilateral divine initiative overcoming human rebellion.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman society divided humanity into civilized Greeks/Romans and barbarians. Judaism divided into Jews and Gentiles. Both systems assumed inherent superiority of the privileged group. Paul demolishes such pride: all—Jew and Gentile, civilized and barbarian—were equally God's enemies, equally needing reconciliation. The gospel levels human distinctions before addressing them as reconciled equals in Christ.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Do you remember your pre-conversion alienation from God, or have you sanitized your past into something less offensive?
2. How does recognizing yourself as God's former enemy deepen appreciation for Christ's reconciling work?
3. Where do you still operate with hostile thinking toward God—doubting His goodness, resisting His will, questioning His wisdom?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ὕμᾱς	ποτε	ὄντας	ἀπηλλοτριωμένους	καὶ	ἐχθροὺς
And	you	sometime	that were	alienated	And	enemies
G2532	G5209	G4218	G5607	G526	G2532	G2190

τῇ	διανοίᾳ	ἐν	τοῖς	ἔργοις	τοῖς	πονηροῖς	νυνί	δέ
G3588	in your mind	by	G3588	works	G3588	wicked	now	yet
	G1271	G1722		G2041		G4190	G3570	G1161

ἀποκατήλλαξεν
hath he reconciled
G604

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 2:12 (Parallel theme): That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

Ephesians 4:18 (Parallel theme): Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

Ephesians 2:19 (Parallel theme): Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Romans 1:30 (Evil): Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,