

Christ the Peacemaker

Colossians 1:21-23

Christians owe their new standing with God solely to Jesus; therefore, it is right for their lives to be Christ-centered.

Introduction

It is Right for Your Life to Be Christ-Centered, because He is the Reason for Your Present Standing with God (21-22a).

It is Right for Your Life to Be Christ-Centered, because that was the Goal of Christ's Reconciling Work (22b).

It is Right for Your Life to Be Christ-Centered, because His Gospel is the Only Gospel (23).

Conclusion

Colossians 1:21-23 – Discussion Questions

Christians owe their new standing with God solely to Jesus; therefore, it is right for their lives to be Christ-centered.

1. Do you think often about how you were once an enemy of God? How might doing this be helpful for your spiritual growth? How could this become a regular habit?
2. Read Col 1:15-20. Do you regularly think of Christ in this way? What attribute from this list is most worshipful to you? How does that attribute relate to verses 21-23?
3. How is your life Christ-centered? What competes with this focus in your life?
4. What areas of your life need to be more Christ-centered? School? Work? Marriage? Recreation?
5. Have you ever considered how the goal of being conformed into the image of Christ, highly exalts Christ?
6. Are you trying to be conformed to any other image than Christ? How does Hollywood tempt us to be conformed to some other image than Christ?
7. Can the believer lose their salvation? Can the believer doubt their salvation? How would you encourage someone towards assurance of their salvation?
8. Where are you tempted to misplace your joy? Think of the last time you were sad or anxious? Were you looking for joy in the wrong place?

Christ the Peacemaker

Colossians 1:21-23

Read

- **Well, good morning!**
 - Pastor Dan and his family are getting some well-deserved R and R, and so please keep them in your prayers.
 - Dan will pick back up in Nehemiah for next Sunday.
 - The text we'll be looking at here, though, is Colossians 1:21-23 and can be found on page:___ of the bible in front of you if you would like to turn there.
- Col 1:21 says "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister."

Pray

Introduction

- **The History Channel** writes, "*Revered the world* over for his nonviolent philosophy of passive resistance, Mohandas Gandhi was known to his many followers as Mahatma, or "the great-souled one." He began his activism as an Indian immigrant in South Africa in the early 1900s, and in the years following World War I became the leading figure in India's struggle to gain independence from Great Britain. Known for his ascetic lifestyle...and devout Hindu faith, Gandhi was imprisoned several times during his pursuit of non-cooperation, and undertook a number of hunger strikes to protest the oppression of India's poorest classes, among other injustices. After Partition in 1947, he continued to work *toward peace* between Hindus and Muslims. Gandhi was shot to death in Delhi in January 1948 by a Hindu fundamentalist..."
- **And it seems Gandhi is revered the world over.** *The Better India* writes, "In 2009...(former president) Barack Obama was...asked. "If you could have dinner with anyone, dead or alive, who would it be?" Obama ... answered: "...I think that it might be Gandhi, who is a real hero of mine."
- *Nelson Mandela*...often cited Gandhi as one of his greatest teachers..."
- In 1997, *Steve Jobs*, founder of Apple, spoke to a large audience all the while standing in front of this giant portrait of *Gandhi* and famously said: "Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers...because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do." It is believed that *Gandhi* inspired those words."
- **So, Gandhi is revered and worshipped the world over.**
 - He has a *huge* following.
 - As I just read, people model their *lives* and their *thinking* after *Ghandi*.
 - They seek to live *Ghandi-principled* lives; *Ghandi is their guru*...
- **And, that's because people want peace. At least that is what they say.**
 - But it's been more than *70 years* since Gandhi was *gunned down* and we are *no closer* to reaching "*world peace*" as the secularists define it.
 - And there is *no peace*, because there is *no peace with God*.
 - The *lack of world peace* is simply a fruit of **our lack of peace with God**...

Need

- **So, we do need peace, but Gandhi could not deliver.**
 - And *Gandhi* could not deliver, because his death *did not make peace with God*.
 - There is only one *true peacemaker*, and that is *Jesus Christ*.

- And as a faithful preacher once said, “We all...stand in need of Christ as our **peace-maker**, because we are the *slaves of sin*, and where sin is, *there is enmity* between God and men...” (John Calvin)
- We desperately need **peace**: peace with **God** first and foremost, but also peace with **each other**.
 - And **Christ’s death on the cross** brought about that peace.
 - The **true gospel** (*the one we find in the Bible*), then, is something that *we* must cling to.
- We owe our new standing with God (peace w/God) **solely to Jesus Christ**; therefore, it is **right** for our lives to be **Christ-centered**.
 - It is **right** for us to live **Christ-principled**, cross-centered lives...

Context

- Now, our text this morning is really **application of the glory of Christ** see in **Colossians 1:15-20**.
 - Paul’s hymn of praise **highly exalts Jesus Christ**, but Christ’s true glory is beyond our **imagination**.
 - “He is the image of the invisible God...**all things** were created through him and for Him (to include our very lives)...in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell...” and so on.
 - We will spend **eternity** discovering more and more of Christ and **reveling** in all we learn.
 - So, **whatever** you think of Jesus – know He is higher than you can ever **imagine**...
- But it’s this **high Christ**, this very same person, who is **responsible** for the believer’s **peace**.
 - **No other person**, philosophy, politician, supposed prophet, or being **deserves our loyalties**...

Preview

- And so, our text this morning **interprets and applies the glory of Christ**.
 - And it does this by drawing a stark contrast between what the believer was **before Christ** and **after Christ** –
 - it shows the results of **Christ’s person and work** as it pertains to the Colossian believers.
 - And Paul does this, in light of the overall purpose of the book, to continue to **drive home** to these believers **where their true loyalties lie**
 - and where their **focus** should be if they are to grow and mature in their faith.
 - This loyalty was **being challenged**.
 - **False teachers** (see ch. 2) were encouraging Christ plus someone or something else...they were challenging the **exclusivity** of worshipping Christ.
 - Essentially teaching that these believers were on the wrong track with their “**Christ**” worship
 - But Paul explains here that is **right** for them to live **Christ-centered, Christ-saturated** lives...
- And so, we’re going to look at **three main points** this morning as a way to guide us through this wonderful text:
 - *It is Right for Your Life to Be Christ-Centered: 1)because He is the **Reason** for Your Present Standing with God, 2)because a Christ-Centered life was the **Goal** of Christ’s Reconciling Work, and then 3)because His Gospel is the **Only** Gospel...*

Your Life Should Be Christ-Centered, because He is the Reason for Your Present Standing with God (21-22a).

Explanation

- So, let’s **first** look at how: **It is Right for Your Life to be Christ-Centered because He is the Reason for Your Present Standing with God**.
 - Verse 21 says, “And although you were formerly **alienated and hostile in mind**, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now **reconciled** you in His fleshly body through death...”
- Notice that Paul switches from the **third personal pronoun**, in speaking about Christ, to the **second personal pronoun** “**you**.”
 - He makes this **personal**.

- Christ's glory – *this high Christology*, is not something “*out there*” to study at a distance and so has no relational reference.
- It is not like learning of some ancient king and his exploits that has *zero bearing* on the here and now.
- Christ's glory – His exploits, are *intensely* relevant and personal...*today*.
- **Apart from Christ, you were “estranged” – alienated from God.**
 - This happened the moment *Adam* sinned in the garden, and then was maintained (so to speak) ever since in lives of *unholiness*.
 - This is not a *passive* situation.
 - Every *unbeliever* is *actively* a “*God-hater*.”
 - Literally, here, “*an enemy in mind*.”
 - In the LXX this word for “*mind*” speaks to “understanding,” but is also used to describe the “*heart*.”
 - And remember, the *biblical heart* is speaking of a person's *center of being: their thoughts, beliefs and desires*.
 - The *unbeliever*, at their core – is *fundamentally* a God-hater...
- **And, as Jesus taught, out of the heart comes “evil deeds.”**
 - The *fruit* from the heart of a God-hater is “*evil deeds*.”
 - Wrong *thinking and believing* about God, are the *root* of *every* manifestation of wickedness.
 - DA Garland writes, “Those who become enemies of God become *Sin's lackeys*, and Sin inflicts only *ruin* on them as their lives spiral out of control.”
 - Not only are they sinners in Adam, but they *volitionally* do those things that God's considers as “evil” or “wicked.”
 - They are *actively* God's enemies.
 - Paul described the former situation this way in *Ephesians 2:1*, “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind...”
- **And I think of John Newton here (the author of the famous hymn *Amazing Grace*).**
 - Before he came to Christ he was a total *blasphemer*.
 - He *mocked* the Scriptures.
 - In one of his biographies, *Servant of Slaves*, its recorded that he told a fellow sailor, “Once I was blind – like you – now I see. When I was a child I thought as a child – like you. Now that I have become a man, I have put away childish things (meaning belief in the Scriptures). You haven't. Why be afraid to mock what you call the Scriptures if they are no truer than the Koran (147)...?”
 - *Now*, not everyone has said these exact words, *but everyone*, before they came to Christ – *blasphemed* God in their heart.
 - Their refusal to *acknowledge His Lordship* over their life speaks louder than these former words of John Newton.
 - *Titus 1:16* says of the unbeliever, “They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.”
 - *Every person*, before Christ, “followed the prince of the power of the air” and was a “*God-hater*” of some kind...
- **But Paul brings up these believers *past situation* here, simply in order to *highlight* and draw attention to their *glorious present standing* before God.**
 - And in the Greek text, there is a *strong contrast* being made between the two situations.
 - “But now...he has reconciled (you) in his body of flesh by his death...”
 - So, the flow is something similar to the “but God” statement in *Ephesians 2:4*, “But God, being rich in mercy...made us alive together with Christ...”

- Their *past situation* is to act like a **black velvet cloth** that highlights the *beauty of a diamond*.
 - They were once *enemies of God*; without hope, *but now...* they are *reconciled*.
 - They are no longer *alienated* from their creator God...
- And God did this – *not them*.
 - They didn't reconcile *themselves* – God did it.
 - And He did it, “through the body of flesh by (Christ's) death.”
 - God is the *acting agent of the reconciliation* here, carried over from the “fullness of God” statement in verse 19,
 - and so, Jesus' death is *highlighted here* as *the means* by which this reconciliation – *this peace* – was accomplished...
- So, **Jesus Christ** – the one who is the *image of the invisible God*, who created all things and is the *goal of all things, the head of the church* – this *highly exalted person* now intersects with lowly sinners.
 - His work on the cross is not some *disassociated, cosmic fairy tale event* that has no bearing on the present...
- And His death on the cross was *also not* some sort of **mirage**; Paul drives home the point that His death was a *very real death*.
 - His choice of words is *redundant/emphatic*, “In his *body* of *flesh* by his *death*.”
 - Jesus is *God*, but also *fully human*.
 - Christ's *real death* on the cross at a specific time in *human history* is the reason why the Colossian believers *now enjoy* this peace with God.
 - There is no other *cause* of their reconciliation.
 - God orchestrated it through the *physical death* – *the real sacrifice* – of His beloved Son (v.14) – the *firstborn* of all creation...
- This is an *objective reality that must be believed, and the result is our reconciliation*.
 - *Justification* speaks to the reality of the believers *restored legal standing* before God.
 - *This reconciliation*, however, speaks to the *restored fellowship* with God.
 - And one of the wonderful benefits of this *restored fellowship* is *peace with God* (and then peace with others)... (George Ladd).
- And so, as **Ephesians 2:4** explains, “being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us...”
 - God sent His beloved Son, with whom He was well pleased, *in flesh and bones*, to die on the cross *for us*.
- For those who embrace this work of Christ through faith, *the ruptured relationship* with God that began in Genesis 3 is now *mended/healed*...

Application

- Therefore, we owe **Christ** our life, and no other.
 - As **First John 4:19** explains, “We love because he first loved us.”
 - The Christian life is one that is lived in *joyful gratitude* for God's work of reconciliation through *Christ*.
 - Over 500 years ago, *one famous pastor* had this to say in response to so great a salvation, “The general doctrine which (Paul) had set forth he now applies particularly to (the Colossians), that they may feel that they are guilty of very great ingratitude, if they allow themselves to be drawn away from Christ to new inventions.”
 - We owe *Christ* our life – not any other person, place or thing – no other religion, we owe no loyalty to popular philosophies or certain religious practices – *we owe our allegiance to the Jesus Christ of the Bible alone...*!
- And so, our lives ought to be *distinctively Christ-centered/cross-centered*.
 - What this means is that we are never to *move on* from Christ and His gospel.

- Christ and His gospel is not some sort of *fad or trend* that will be *outdated* in a few years.
- This is not a *philosophy* that will lead you astray and then years from now you'll come to your senses.
- It will never be "*debunked*" – there is no "*evolving*" beyond the gospel.
- Christ work on the cross *is complete, final, finished, and it's enough*.
- *Saturate* your mind *in Christ*.
- Ensure your *life goals* have Christ as the *end (purpose)*.
- Raise your kids to *love Christ* and *to live for Christ*.
- Handle your finances in such a way that they *exalt Christ* and *show His value*.
- *Never move on from Christ...*
- **Marriages that are centered on Christ, and so celebrate this wonderful reconciliation, are marked by peace.**
 - Believing couples have peace with God *vertically*, which then should result in peace with each other *horizontally*.
 - Marriages that never move on from Christ *revolve* around *Him*.
 - They are *guided and directed* by those things that *please Him* – *His goals and His ways are the tie-breaker*.
 - And so, they reflect a compelling, *other-worldly* harmony...
- **Do you lack joy? Are you despondent?**
 - Know that there is *no lasting joy* apart from this reconciliation.
 - *True and lasting joy* is only found in *this peace*.
 - Paul tells us in *Philippians 4:4* to "rejoice (in Christ) always..." because we regularly need reminded of where our joy is *located*.
 - Our joy is not in *things or circumstances*.
 - Our joy is not located in the *pleasures of this world*.
 - *Brothers and sisters*, if you think your joy comes from romance, or exciting careers, or world travel, or power, or fat bank accounts, or autonomy or accolades – *you'll be sorely mistaken*.
 - If you *seek* your joy in these things you will find that your *despondency* remains – because you are still the same.
 - The *common denominator* in all of these joyless situations is you – *your heart*.
 - You *need* Christ. We regularly *need* reminded that *Christ is enough*.
 - A *Christ-centered* life is a *joy-filled life*.
 - *He is sufficient. Now, and forever...*
- **Christ is the focal point of our joy and He is deserving of this position because He is the only one who died on the cross...for us.**
 - *So, It is Right for Your Life to be Christ-Centered because He is the Reason for Your Present Standing with God...*

~~Your Life Should Be Christ-Centered, because that was the Goal of Christ's Reconciling Work (22b).~~
 Explanation

- **Secondly, It is Right for Your Life to be Christ-Centered, because that was the Goal of Christ's Reconciling Work.** Again, verse 21 says, "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach..."
- **This work of reconciliation has a goal – a very clear purpose.**
 - Christ's death on the cross *happened* "for the purpose of – in order to – present you holy and blameless and above reproach in His (the Father's) presence."
- **The terms "*holy and blameless*" are what theologians call "*cultic*" terms.**
 - And by that they mean these are terms used in the OT to describe the *Temple and its sacrifices*.
 - "*Blameless*" can be translated as "without blemish."

- The OT sacrifices were to be “holy” and “*without blemish*” if they were to be *accepted* by God.
- Christ death was to achieve this *end* for the believer – it was necessary in order that His people might be reckoned “holy” and “*without blemish*” so that they would be *accepted by God*.
- So that God would now *approve* of what He formerly had *rejected*...
- **And the word “above reproach” or “irreproachable” is a legal or judicial term.**
 - Paul is fond of *mixing metaphors*, and it seems he does this here.
 - He starts out with a *cultic theme*, but then ties it to a *legal theme*.
 - Christ’s death on the cross had as its *goal/purpose* that the believer might be presented before God as *legally* “irreproachable” or “*without fault*.”
 - Previously, the Colossians stood *accused* before God – they were *His enemies* – *actively hating Him* –
 - *but because of Christ’s death* – now they are presented before God as “without fault – *guiltless*” before Him.
 - *First Corinthians 1:8* says that God “will sustain you to the end, *guiltless* (or irreproachable – same word) in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ..”
- **Christ’s death appropriated to the believer renders them acceptable to God and not guilty in the courts of heaven** – they are no longer God’s *enemies* because their *positional standing* with God has *changed*.
 - The *hostility* in mind and the *evil* deeds are no longer the basis by which God judges the Christian – they are now judged by *Christ’s person*.
 - His death on the cross was in *our place*.
 - And so, *by believing this*, we are now *clothed* in His righteousness (God looks at us as having lived Christ’s life).
 - And one day, when Christ returns, because of His death on the cross for us, the believer will be presented before the Father as *practically righteous* –
 - they will be in *essence* what they already are now in *position*, “holy and blameless and above reproach.”
 - Christ’s death had this as its goal – *its aim*...
- **The Colossian believers needed to understand this.**
 - They needed to know that *Christ’s death for them* had as its *aim* their *righteousness*.
 - They are *to become in real time* what they have already been *declared to be in Christ*.
 - Their ultimate destination is *righteousness*.
 - And so, Paul puts it this way in *Philippians 1:6*, “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”
 - *Holy and blameless* is the Christians *identity* – it is who they *are now* and *it is also their goal*...

Application

- **And so, we need to act like it.**
 - What I mean by that is this: as believers, *our goals in life have already been chosen for us*.
 - *Our goal* is to be holy and blameless.
 - Our goal is righteousness: *conformity* to the image of Christ.
 - We are not trying to become *like the world*.
 - We are not trying to *conform* to a certain *philosophy*.
 - We are not to turn on the TV and conform to what *Hollywood* says we should be – *we are to be like Christ...!*
- **Again, Christ is the big deal.**
 - We have *lost everything* if we think we are to conform to any other person, place or thing.
 - We are not trying to be like *Ghandi* – or anyone else: mother Teresa, *mother Mary*, or whoever...
- **People are searching and searching for *who they should be*.**
 - They are trying to *find* themselves.

- They want to know what **image** they should project.
- *Should I project the “hypster” image? Or the athlete image? Maybe I should project the “Who cares image?” Or, maybe, I should project the Charles Spurgeon ‘reformed’ image?*
- **Christ** is the one we should be conforming to, *because He died for this purpose...*
- **We talk a lot about conforming to Christ, but sometimes I think we miss the importance or extremeness/radical nature of that statement.**
 - That statement **screams** Christ’s **supremacy**.
 - It proclaims His **utter importance and value**.
 - **He is above all – He is the goal of all.**
 - **He alone** is our guide – **our pattern** for what a human being is to be.
 - And so, conforming to Christ is not only **ethical**, but the **desire** itself is an **act of worship – that pursuit highly exalts Jesus Christ...**
- **It is Right for Your Life to be Christ-Centered, because that was the Goal of Christ’s Reconciling Work...**

~~Your Life Should Be Christ-Centered, because His Gospel is the Only Gospel (23).~~

Explanation

- **Lastly, It is Right for Your Life to be Christ-Centered, because His Gospel is the Only Gospel.**
 - Verse 23 warns, “...if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister...”
- **Paul intended this statement to be a warning.**
 - This reconciliation and improved standing before God **is only** for those who “**continue**” or “**remain**” in the faith...
- **In John 15:4 Jesus said to the disciples, “Abide (or remain) in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.”**
 - Paul’s aim is **to encourage** the saints to grow in their faith and bear much fruit – *but he knows this cannot happen apart from remaining in Christ...*
- **The believer must continue or remain or abide in the faith – firmly established (stable) and steadfast.**
 - These terms are **construction** terms.
 - If a **building** is going to withstand the elements, its **foundation** must be “**strong**” and “**firm**.”
 - Or as Jesus put it – it must be built **on the rock**, not on the sand...
- **And then Paul defines what “in the faith” means, “not moving/shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed (or preached) in all creation under heaven.”**
 - Paul spoke of the gospel this way earlier in chapter one verse 5, “because of the **hope** laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have **heard** before in the word of truth, **the gospel**, which has come to you, as indeed in the **whole world** it is bearing fruit and growing – as it also does among you, since the day you **heard** it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you **learned it from Epaphras** our beloved fellow servant...”
- **What Paul is saying here is that there is no other “gospel” than the one they heard from Epaphras, which is the same gospel Paul preaches and serves.**
 - This **gospel** that they “heard” is the **true gospel**.
 - So, if someone comes along and tries to sell some other so-called “good news,” **go after it at your own peril**.
 - There is only **one** source of hope – *this gospel of Jesus Christ (the one proclaimed by Paul).*
 - There is only **one man** who ever died *so that you could be blameless and holy before God...*
- **We can’t shift from this – we must believe this gospel.**
 - *It is the only source of hope.*
 - Again, some people outside the Colossian church were challenging the **exclusivity** of this gospel.
 - They were saying that the Colossian believers were on the **wrong path**.

- If they were *really spiritual people*, then they would _____ fill in the blank (worship angels, keep the sabbath, adhere to aesthetic practices).
- But Paul warns them, *if you do this* – then you will not be presented *holy and blameless and above reproach before God*.
- And you will be condemned as an *enemy* of God...
- **There are so many things, even today, that tempt folks to stray from the exclusivity of the gospel.**
 - Even some good things – some moral things, good causes.
 - But often times those things *confuse the fruit with the root*.
 - Take abortion. It's heinous. But being against it isn't the *root* of faith, it is the *fruit of faith*.
 - If we make it *the root* (for example, if you don't fight against abortion like me or to the degree I do, then maybe you aren't a believer), then we've drifted from the exclusivity of the gospel...
- **Now, some Greek scholars say the phrase here “if indeed you continue in the faith” is better translated “provided that you continue in the faith” and so they say it doesn't express doubt.**
 - And Paul is confident that the Colossian believers as a whole are *firm in the faith*.
 - But we don't need *Greek scholars* to figure this out.
 - Throughout chapter one Paul thanks God for the *genuine faith* of the Colossian believers...
- **But again, this is essentially the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.**
 - True faith, *genuine salvation*, is evidenced by perseverance – *by continuance in the faith*.
 - And our *assurance* comes from this perseverance as well.
 - When we see that we *continue* to believe in this gospel, then our salvation is *confirmed*.
 - But when people *rebel*, even if they are true believers, that *assurance* is shaken...
- **And at the same time, though, this is a real warning.**
 - If someone in the hearing of this letter is *wavering on the gospel* – if they are listening to *outside noise* – if they are flirting with *competing worldviews* – if they are not yet a true believer – *then to reject this exclusive gospel would be absolutely devastating*.
 - There is only *one path to life*, and it's the path that Epaphras *previously told them* and it's the one Paul is *now* telling them.
 - Only one person died for their *reconciliation*.
 - The Christian faith is *exclusive* and the Christian faith is for *all of creation*.
 - There is only *one gospel* and it does not discriminate.
 - And it's *this gospel* that Paul *serves*.
 - *Paul's job*, so to speak, is to *proclaim/preach* this *exclusive gospel*...
- **I think *this* summary of our text is helpful:**
 - “Paul knows that *true Christian faith* is the beginning of a life which, given by God, will be brought to completion by him (Phil. 1:6). He also knows that *genuine faith* is seen in *patient and steadfast* day-to-day Christian living, *while counterfeit faith*, so hard in its early stages to distinguish from the real thing, *withers and dies*. From God's point of view, genuine faith is assured of continuing to the end. From the human point of view, Christians discover whether their faith is of the genuine sort only by *patient perseverance*, encouraged (cf. Rom. 5:1–5) by the *Christian hope*...” (NT Wright)

Application

- **Genuine faith perseveres, but nonetheless, it is a perseverance that must be lived out.**
 - And, again, *Christ* is the big deal here.
 - He is the *only* peacemaker.
 - *There is no other gospel, there is no other Savior, there is no other way*.
 - Our society says that *many paths* lead to the same place.
 - Even some so-called *Christian denominations* teach that all paths lead to salvation.
 - It doesn't matter if you believe in *Allah or Buddha* or whatever – they are all speaking of the same thing.

- *But this text **destroys that notion** – only **one person** ever died for your positive standing before God, and that person is **Jesus Christ of the Bible** (ie, not the one of your own imagination).*
- *Therefore, **cling to this true gospel that has His death on your behalf at the center...***
- Get up in the morning **reminding yourself** of the lengths God went to in putting **Jesus Christ**, His only Son, on the cross, **in your stead**.
 - Pray that you would abound in love: **love for Jesus Christ and love for this exclusive gospel**.
 - **Study to understand** and discern more and more **your need** of this gospel and the glory of your Savior who died for you.
 - **Regularly** feed on God's word so that you are **reminded** of your only hope in Christ.
 - Start each and every day with **thanksgiving** for all **He** accomplished for you on the cross.
 - **Live to make His name famous**.
 - Walk in His footsteps. *Mimic Christ. **Love what He loves; hate what He hates**.*
 - Do whatever it takes to **center your mind on this gospel**: memorize Scripture, listen to gospel-centered/Christ exalting music, preach Christ to yourself daily, meditate on His glory, lift His name high in song, read Christ-exalting books – study the gospels.
 - Seek out other believers on a **daily basis** so that you are encouraged to cling to this gospel...**and so cling!!!**
 - **It is Right for Your Life to be Christ-Centered, because Christ's Gospel is the Only Gospel...**

Conclusion

- **Well, Ghandi's death didn't bring peace, no other so-called prophet today, yesterday or in the future will ever bring peace.**
 - *But Christ's death did.*
 - And so far as the heavens are higher than the earth, **so is Christ *higher* than Ghandi – or any other person, place, thing, pseudoprophet, or philosophy...**
 - Jesus Christ is our *guru*.
 - Jesus Christ is our **life!**
- **Brothers and sisters, if you want peace, if you to grow in Christian maturity, if you want to be happy in the faith, then cling to Christ, hold fast to Him – center your life on Jesus Christ and no other, and do this in increasing measure...**
- **Say along with David Brainerd, the great missionary to the native Americans in the 1700s, "O my sweet Savior! Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.' If I had had a thousand lives, my soul would gladly have laid them all down at once to have been...with CHRIST!"**

Pray