

Rebels, Reconciled, Resolute

3 Specifics of Salvation

Colossians 1:21-23

Aaron Lee | Youth Worship | October 22, 2023



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Context	1
Sermon Preview	1
1. Rebels	2
“Respectable Sins”	3
2. Reconciled	3
Accepted and Approved	4
3. Resolute	5
Seek Out the Good Soil	5
The Gospel	6
Big Idea	7
Conclusion	7
Prayer Poem.....	8
References	8

Introduction

What does it mean to be saved? How do you define your salvation? This might seem like a basic (and maybe boring) question – but it’s incredibly important. For Christians, being saved is an indicator of our identity. And it’s a starting point for our purpose in life.

We place our identities in many things. I do it. I’m a preacher. I’m a teacher. You do it, too. You’re students, athletes, musicians, gamers, influencers. We have these identities, and they impact how we spend our time. They dictate what we do.

But being saved should supersede all of our identities. And Christ our King, our Savior, should be the one who shapes our lives, our minds, and hearts. So what does it mean — exactly, pointedly, definitively — to be saved?

Context

As Paul wrote to the small church in Colossae, “a dangerous teaching was threatening the church... one that lessened Christ’s role and undermined the new identity of believers ‘in Christ.’” (ESV Study Bible) This was an important issue in the early years of the church because they didn’t want to lose what they had just learned from the Lord, and it is still essential for us today so that we do not depart from the fundamentals of the faith. We must be clear about who Jesus is and what he has done for us. This is absolutely crucial for being a Christian.

Sermon Preview

Colossians was written by Paul to the church, and proclaims that Christ is Lord. Our Savior has redeemed his people, uniting them to him. We’re going to examine exactly what it means to be saved. We’re going to discover how Paul details our deliverance. They are facts about our faith. They define our identity. I call them 3 specifics of salvation:

1. Rebels (1:21)
2. Reconciled (1:22)
3. Resolute (1:23)



These words have a distinct flavor of God ruling and reigning over his creation. I'm going to be using the language of kings and kingdoms in our sermon today, because our passage means to show Jesus as supreme and sovereign. It's his surpassing superiority. His preeminence. After our three points, I will present to you the Gospel. I will give you the big idea, and we will end with our conclusion. What makes this sermon special is that I will squeeze every bit out of this passage, all the way until the very end. My goals are for you to clearly see the 3 specifics of salvation, that you would believe in King Jesus Christ to be saved, and that you would be moved to worship God with gladness. These truths will change your life if you believe them. Let's get started.

1. Rebels

The first specific of salvation is that you were rebels. This is the past. This is what you were before. You were rebels. This is not cool or romantic. This is treason. This is violence.

*And you, who once were **alienated** and **hostile** in mind, doing **evil** deeds...
(Colossians 1:21)*

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. He created man. And what God created was good. Man was to live in fellowship with God, obey, and enjoy him. But man had sinned. Our relationship with God was broken. We became estranged, excluded – alienated as our text says. We became hostile in mind, no longer friends but enemies of God. By doing evil deeds, we disrespect and commit hateful crimes against a holy King.

Ephesians 2 elaborates further. You are damned, dead in trespasses and sins, and followers of Satan (Eph 2:1-2). You are sons of disobedience (Eph 2:1-2). Being separated from Christ and strangers to God's word - you have no hope and live without God in the world (Eph 2:12). Your sinful rebellion against God earns you an eternity in the prison and punishment of Hell.

You need to know what God has done for you. You need to recognize your spiritual reality without Christ. This really is as bad as it sounds. What you need to hear is that this is what you were before. Our text says, "you who once were." This is the past. This is not now. For believers, the application becomes an exhortation: Don't go back to the past. Don't return to when you were not right with God. Your days of evil deeds must be dealt and done away with.



“Respectable Sins”

So, will you reject all evil deeds? A book that helped me take my sin seriously was *Respectable Sins* by Jerry Bridges. This book challenged my more subtle sins – sins that we deem to be more “acceptable,” and sins that we tend to tolerate in ourselves, such as jealousy, anger, being judgmental, selfish, and prideful. These are sins that maybe you can’t see from our outward actions, but they have made a home in our heart. These respectable sins are still evil. They are of the Evil One. They are of Satan. We must be serious about killing our sin. If you get angry – if you have a destructive attitude that wants to attack others – Jesus equates that with murder. When you look lustfully at others – Jesus says that you’ve committed adultery in your heart. These sins that hide in our hearts will eat us alive. Don’t be like the Pharisees and false teachers: “They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.” (Titus 1:16) Let’s put away all of our evil deeds, resolving never to go back to our life before we knew Christ. Walk in the light.

The first specific of salvation is that you were rebels. Being saved means you know you were rebels. So reject all evil deeds, even your respectable sins.

2. Reconciled

The second specific of salvation is that you are reconciled.

*...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...*
(Colossians 1:22)

Reconciled means to be reunited, to be restored. Our relationship with God is made right. Your rebellion has been forgiven. And observe when this reconciliation has occurred. He “has now.” Jesus Christ *has* died on the cross for your sins, and by grace you are saved through faith *now*. Theologian John Murray calls this redemption: accomplished and applied. Jesus *has* accomplished your redemption decisively on the cross, and it is *now* applied to you today. There is both a past and present aspect to being reconciled.

Paul provides us some clarity regarding reconciliation in his letter to the Romans. He says that you also have died to the law through the body of Christ (Romans 7:4). This isn’t a physical death, but a spiritual death — by means of

the body of Christ. This is what it means to believe that Jesus died for your sins. You are joined with him in his death and resurrection. Your reconciliation is directly related to and joined together with the life of Jesus Christ.

Accepted and Approved

Let's just focus on the second part of the verse for application. There is also a present and future aspect of reconciliation. Notice the purpose, the point of this reconciliation: in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. This is an encouragement. Like the sacrificial animals in the Old Testament, and like Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross, our lives are presented as a living sacrifice to God. I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (Romans 12:1). Jesus plans to present you before God - and he will be proud of you. You do not have to worry if you are good enough to be with God — Christ's work of reconciliation is reliable. Your salvation is secure. Your identity is intact. You are truly, really known and loved as a friend of God and as a member of his family because of Christ's reconciliation.

So, will you rejoice in your reconciliation? Your worth is not tied to your accomplishments and accolades. You can be glad in what God alone has done for you and who he deems you to be. This resonates with me as an Asian American. The model minority myth is real to me. Being Asian American comes with the expectations of being studious, successful, and smart. (USC Pacific Asia Museum) And this hangs over your head for your entire life. You can sense the weight and pressure. You feel anxious and depressed. (USC Pacific Asia Museum) Jesus sets you free from the stereotypes. He says that these traits don't mean much - but what really matters in heaven is if your heart is made holy. You don't have to live up to some imagined or man-made standard - but you get accepted and approved by God. You are bought by the blood of Christ, and this brings me great joy - to know that I am accepted and approved by God. You are loved by the Lord.

Technology has made it easy for us to take a look at the lives of others and compare. When you find yourself jealous of others, know that God himself is even more jealous to have your heart. Christians, you don't have to be perfect because God looks at you in perfect love. And his perfect love casts out any fear that you might have of personal rejection. Rejoice in your reconciliation. Jude 24 tells us: "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy..." We don't rejoice



because we're better than others. Jesus doesn't rejoice because the people he saved are special in and of themselves. We rejoice along with Jesus because he has made us blameless before him. Christ makes his bride beautiful. We will be holy and happy and together in Heaven.

The second specific of salvation is that you are reconciled. Rejoice in your reconciliation, knowing that you are accepted and approved by God.

3. Resolute

The third specific of salvation is that you remain resolute:

*...if indeed you continue in the faith, **stable and steadfast**, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard... (Colossians 1:23)*

Those who are truly saved remain resolute. Remaining resolute means to be fixed in your faith and firm as you live your life. There is a future orientation to being resolute. It means to be unshakeable as a Christian and unswerving in your course. Sure and steady. Grounded and growing. Our text says to be stable and steadfast, not shifting — while continuing in Christ. This idea of being resolute appears in Colossians 2:7 which says we are “*rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*” You don't just “accept” Christ and that's it. No — you must surrender everything to him, and then you must stay with him. You cling to him as you carry on. You hold fast until you finally reach our Heavenly home.

Seek Out the Good Soil

So, will you remain resolute in the Gospel? The parable of the sower is a familiar story. The gospel is spread like seeds, and it lands on different soils. Some land on rocky soil. Some land in shallow soil. But the seeds that land in good soil are the ones who hear and understand God's Word and grow. For sure, you hear and understand God's Word in your quiet times and by coming to church. But let's take a closer look. Think about the soils where you are planted. Think about the soils you spend your time in. Think about the places where you are planted. Are there places where you can remain resolute? Are there people who help you stay grounded and grow in the Gospel? Do they cause you to stay sure and steady in your salvation?

I had two groups of friends in high school. I had my school friends, and I had my church friends. To be fair, my church friends were far from perfect. The church is full of sinners, too, of course. But they at least pointed me in the

right direction. We could at least talk a little bit about God. And the summers I spent serving or away at retreats was infinitely better than anything I did after hours with my school friends. We don't get to choose our family, but we do get to choose our friends. We would be wise to remember that friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4). Find friends that can encourage you in your faith. Seek out the good soil.

Remaining resolute means that you will persevere. It means that you will endure. Jesus uses another word in John 15:4: "Abide 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." This is how we get to Heaven. To be clear, it is Christ who keeps us. We believe in the perseverance of the saints – that Jesus preserves our souls. Our text today is a soft warning to make sure we remain on the road of righteousness. Stay faithful and fruitful in our walk with God.

The third specific of salvation is that you remain resolute. Seek out the good soil that keeps you grounded and growing as you hear and understand God's Word.

The Gospel

These three specifics of salvation, being rebels, reconciled, and resolute – it's a great way to explain the Gospel. The Gospel is the Good News of Jesus Christ. And this is not secret knowledge. Christianity is not an exclusive club. Salvation is offered to anyone who would believe. The story of Jesus Christ and his message of salvation is meant to be declared:

*...which has been proclaimed in **all creation under heaven**... (Colossians 1:23)*

This phrase is specifically referring to Jews and Gentiles having access to God. Jesus is not just for the Jews – the Good News is for the nations. I talked about identity, and you can find true rest with your identity in Christ. You are adopted sons and daughters of God. You are children of the King, heirs to the kingdom. And the church is the Bride of Christ, his beloved. Admit that you are a sinner, a rebel against God. Believe that Jesus is the Son of God who has died for your sins. And confess him as the resurrected King, who you will follow faithfully. He is your Lord, and he has your allegiance. Give him your heart. He will be with you here and bring you to Heaven.

If you are already a Christian, your mission is to continue proclaiming this Gospel message. The Savior is to be shared. Christ must be championed. This is a global Gospel. Don't be ashamed of it, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes (Romans 1:16).



Big Idea

The first specific of salvation is that you were rebels. Being saved means you know you were rebels. Reject all evil deeds, even your respectable sins. The second specific of salvation is that you are reconciled. Rejoice in your reconciliation, knowing that you are accepted and approved by God. The third specific of salvation is that you remain resolute. Seek out the good soil that keeps you grounded and growing as you hear and understand God's Word.

Here is our big idea for today: King Jesus saves rebels by reconciling them back to God and having them remain resolute in him.

Conclusion

Let's go back to the beginning again for our conclusion. I asked you: What does it mean to be saved? I gave you a definition. But definitions can come off as dry. They can leave you cold. I'm aiming for your heart, so let's examine the mention of Paul in our passage. Remember, Paul was a prideful Pharisee. He persecuted believers. He put them in prison. In his own words, he was breathing threats and murder against the disciples. He was a proud persecutor and killer of Christians. And on the Damascus road, he was blinded by the glory of God in Jesus. And here in Colossians, he claims a different identity:

*...and of which I, Paul, **became a minister.** (Colossians 1:23)*

The prideful Paul was humbled. To be a minister means to be a servant. This self-righteous man, possibly the greatest leader among the Pharisees, became a respectful servant of the true King. He was saved from his life of sin, now counting his own righteousness as rubbish. He received a new heart, resulting in a changed life. The Gospel is not theoretical or abstract. It is practical and concrete. The Good News is not dead and dry. It is powerful and personal. It is incredible and intimate. Being saved means that you become a new creation.

We place our identity in many things. But Christians have a new identity and purpose. We are people who have been saved. It was true for Paul, it's the same for me, and I pray that it is for you, too – that you would be able to see the 3 specifics of salvation: rebels, reconciled, resolute – and that it would result in a changed life that truly loves God and is moved to love others.



Prayer Poem

Rebels, undeserving
Of your love and grace
You bind up all our broken hearts
You're strong and kind to save
Reconciled, mended
Redeemed to praise your name
You make your home in humble hearts
Adopting, unashamed
Resolute, remaining
Persevering faith
You sanctify our thankful hearts
Our lives, forever changed

References

“Debunking the Model Minority Myth” article by USC Pacific Asia Museum
The ESV Study Bible by Crossway
The Gospel Coalition Bible Commentary on Colossians by Alistair I. Wilson
Look at the Book: Colossians by John Piper

Special thanks: Hanley Liu, Kevin Quan, and Jessica Lee