**Lessons from a Lockdown**

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**Day 20**

**Colossians 1:21-23**

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation — if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

***Questions for Personal Reflection:***

1. What was my life like before I became a Christian? Is there a past sin that still haunts me?
2. How does my pre-Christian life compare to my Christian life now?
3. How have I shown my gratitude to God for what I have now because of Jesus?
4. What does “alienated from God” and “enemies in your mind” mean?
5. How do I complete this sentence? I once was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ before I became a Christian, but now \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

***Insight:***

Paul reminded them what they *once* were. Sometimes it is good to remember what we were before we became Christians to remind ourselves of the value of what we have now. We have a tendency to forget how much God has done for us. We can be like the Israelites who were rescued by God from slavery in Egypt and yet they often complained about the difficulties they encountered during their journey to the promised land. They seemed to forget the ten plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea and the other miracles God did among them. Sometimes when we become focused on what we don’t have, we become blind to the blessings we do have. What are the amazing things God has done in your life?

Paul reminded them that they used to be *alienated from God*. The NLT translates this as “far away from God.” The same Greek word is translated as “separate” or “separated” (see Eph 2:12; 4:18). To be alienated is like not wanting to talk to or see someone because of a disagreement or conflict. To be alienated from God is to not feel close to him at all. Do we remember being that way with God? Paul also reminded them that they used to be enemies of God in their minds. Being an enemy is to be hostile. This implies hate. Some of us might think that we were never this bad. But we have to remember that friendship with the world is hatred to toward God (Jas 4:4). So each time we were worldly, we displayed hatred towards God. As Christians we need to recognize that before we became Christians we were in a horrible condition. Despite all the good he did, Paul certainly did not forget that he was” the worst of sinners.” Neither should we.

Notice that Paul said that they became alienated from God and were God’s enemies *because* of their evil behavior. In other words, they placed themselves in that horrible position because of how they chose to live. Their conflict with God was a result of their actions. But they were reconciled to God because of Jesus’ death. It’s the same with us. *We* caused the problem because of our behavior but *God* provided the solution. He made the effort to reconcile with us even if he was innocent and we were the guilty party. The one who was hurt and offended was the one who made the first step. We should do the same in our human conflicts. Even if we think we are the innocent party or at least the less guilty one, we should make the effort to reconcile.

Because of Jesus’ death, we are holy in God’s sight, without blemish and free from accusation. The record of our sins has been eased. It is as if we have never sinned. We have a clean slate. This happened when we were baptized. But what happens from that point onwards. What if we sin again? Do we remain clean? Yes, if we continue in our faith, established and firm, and not move from the hope held out in the gospel. A strong faith is what we need to remain holy in God’s sight. Faith is an absolute requirement for our salvation, a non-negotiable requirement in remaining blameless in his sight. Therefore, our priority must be to protect and grow in our faith. Ultimately, the strength of our faith depends on us. We choose whether our faith becomes as strong as a fortress by how much we invest in growing our faith. What are we doing to strengthen our faith? If our faith was a house we are building, what kind of house is it now?

How strong is our faith today? How has the pandemic or the lockdown affected our faith? While the virus is deadly, a strong immune system can overcome it. In the same way, sin can kill us, but a strong faith can resist any sin.

Let us use the opportunities we have during the lockdown to strengthen our faith.