

## Rooted - Part 3

### “Inside Out”

Colossians 1:21–29

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When we get a “lens” for the grace of God, the mercy of God, the love of God and our identity in Christ, we’ll know *who* we are and *Who’s* we are, and we’ll know what to do. It’s amazing how that works. Then we say, *“Why have I never heard this before? Why has no one ever told me that I’m a son, I’m a daughter of God? Why hasn’t anyone ever told me that Romans 8:1 is for me? - that there’s no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus? Why didn’t anyone ever tell me I was the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus? - or that I have the mind of Christ?”*

We think we must be the only one to talk about our identity of Christ based on God's Word. As we look at the scriptures and Colossians and this idea of being “rooted,” we're going to see that everything goes back to “identity.” What does that look like in us concerning what God is doing and wants to do both in us and through us from the *inside out*? The Christian life is not about gritting our teeth and trying harder for Jesus, it’s about Jesus living His life *in us and through us*.

### **From Distant to Deeply Rooted**

Colossians 1:21-22 ESV

*“And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 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...”*

We tend to think that if we'll just try harder to do better, try harder not to sin, and try harder not to mess up or make a mistake, that, at the end of the day, we can live the “Christian life” in our natural self. But, it’s impossible to live the Christian life apart from Jesus, apart from a transformed heart, apart from an understanding of God's Word and the partnership that we have, as the Holy Spirit lives his life *in us* and through us. Because Jesus Christ is *in us*, he lives his life *through* us. This is how the Christian life is lived. When Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount, almost everything he said is impossible to do on our own.

Jesus said if somebody comes at us, we're to *bless them*. If somebody persecutes us, we *pray* for them. If somebody wants a *little bit*, we give them *everything*. If they want us to go a *little way*, we walk a mile with them *and then keep going*. Over and over Jesus flips the script on what it means to live the Christian life, in such a way that, as we read it, the Sermon on the Mount is overwhelming to us. It's almost like reading the Levitical laws. In a sense there's a similar thing happening there where Jesus teaches at such a level to help the people who were listening. To those first disciples and other people on the side of the hill who were listening, Jesus was helping them understand that apart from him, they just couldn't do it.

He was helping them understand that they could not do this on their own. They tried for hundreds of years, even thousands of years, under the old law of Deuteronomy. They tried and failed over and over and over. What that should have done was point us all to heaven and say, "*We can't do it without a savior. We need help. We need rescue.*" Even now, as blood-bought, born again, spirit-filled, devil-tail-kicking Christians, we *still* need help. We can't do it on our own. We need *the Helper*. We need the person of the Holy Spirit to walk with us, talk with us, and partner with us to advance the kingdom in our time. It's all about Jesus living his life in us through us.

Colossians 1:21-23 NLT

*"This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed as God's servant to proclaim it."*

Paul was just laying it out, "*This is who you used to be.*" Notice it's *past* tense. That means it's in the *past*. It's *back there*. We're looking back in the rearview mirror, we who once were alienated and hostile in our mind, doing evil deeds. He says that Jesus has now *reconciled* us in his body. We need to know what that means. He's *reconciled us* in his body of flesh by his death. So, we see what's happening. Jesus laid down his life for *us*. And because he did that, he reconciled us who will say "Yes" to him in order to present us holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

As a result, he has brought us into his own presence. Notice it's past tense. If we are a believer - if we're a follower of Jesus, we've given our heart and life to him, we believed and received the gospel, the good news - then this is now *past tense* for us. Now, here's what happens. If we don't know something, we don't know what we don't know. Our own parents weren't perfect and we were frustrated with them, but later we realized they didn't know what they didn't know. They didn't fully understand what they were doing. They hadn't finished the course. They were just getting started themselves.

It says that as a result, he brought us into his own presence - past tense - we are in the very presence of God *right now*. We don't have to be aware of it to know it, but it's sure nice that we are holy regardless of the bad day we had. The enemy will leverage normal stuff to mess with us, and it's so easy to slip into that when we're not *feeling* very holy. But God's Word says we *are* holy. We can be running a little late and be a hot mess or else things are going great. It doesn't change the truth. The Bible tells us that we *have been* reconciled. Not *going to be*. We *have* been. We're *already* reconciled to Jesus. Whether we're a hot mess or whether things are going great, it doesn't change the truth.

If we are in Christ, he sees us as *holy*! We are *holy* in his sight. This can be so hard to take. Even if it's been going on for ten years, it's sometimes hard to receive that love and that good news. We resist because we're so wired to *transactional* life - "*Well, you know, I didn't do good, so I don't deserve good. Well, I didn't I didn't do it just right, so I don't deserve an "atta-boy." I didn't exactly have a great week, so I can't accept the fact that God sees me as holy.*" Especially if we were *fighting* on the way to church!

Just say it. Declare it - but *not* with gritted teeth - "*I'm holy.*" *I'm blameless.*" That means there's *no* blame. "*But I deserve to be blamed because I made a mistake.*" In God's eyes, though, we are *blameless*. We stand before him without a single fault. We are *faultless*. Some of us cringe at that. This is hard, isn't it? It's hard to re-align our thinking to how God sees us because *we* see ourselves in the mirror and replicate the way *others* see us. So if we have critics, we'll let that take us down - when a thousand people think we're amazing but *one person doesn't*, we just focus and fixate on that one negative situation.

And yet what God says supersedes it all - we are *holy*, we are *blameless*, and we are *without fault*. That's shouting ground! That is who we *are* - not who we're *going* to be - not who we're *becoming*. It's who we are *right now*. Right *here*. We are *faultless*. We are *holy*. We are *blameless*. Why can't we say that with confidence? The *Word* says it with confidence! This isn't even an interpretation. It's so clear.

*"If indeed you continue in the faith... this is how I see you - but you've got to keep going. Don't quit because you don't see yourself as holy. Don't give up because you don't see yourself as blameless. Don't throw in the towel just because you don't think that you're without fault. He sees you that way. And at the end of the day, that's all that matters." That's what matters because that is who we are, not just who we're going to be *someday*. "If indeed you continue in the faith..." That means we keep going - we stay the course stable and steadfast - not shifting from the hope of the gospel.*

Paul was telling us this "good news." That's why the gospel is good news because everything after we get born-again turns out to be in the past. Our growth, our maturity, how he sees us, who we are - all of that is who we are *now*, who we are *past*, and - guess what else it means? who we are in the *future*, too. We "are becoming," we "have become," and we "will become." We're *saved* and we're being saved. We're *healed* and we're being healed. We're *whole* and we're being made whole. We're being perfected and we've been made perfect.

That's hard to take, isn't it? But, imagine if we would just say, "*Lord, my flesh is resisting this, but my spirit is drinking it in. My spirit is receiving the nourishment I need from your Word.*" Our brain is just an organ, and it will respond to what we tell it, regardless of emotions, if we will take this scripture and, every day this week, read it to ourself several times a day, put it on a note card, put it on our phone, whatever, and say, "*In the name of Jesus, according to God's Word, in Colossians 1:22, I have been reconciled. And, as a result, I am in his presence, and I am holy. I am blameless, and I stand before him without a single fault.*"

If we say that several times a day, our brain will receive it as truth *because it is*. Even if we're having a hard time believing this, it is so *life-giving*. Listen to what *reconciled* means. It's a Greek word that literally means "*to restore a broken relationship by removing hostility.*" And, this is exactly what happened. Also, we've been given the "ministry of reconciliation." Why? Because we've *been reconciled*, we now have what it takes to *help others reconcile*. This is relational language first, not merely emotional or legal language. It's relational in scope. God did not decide to overlook the distance. When he said we were distanced, we were *separated and we were cut off*. One translation says that he didn't decide to overlook the distance, he acted to remove it. This is how much we're loved by God.

Another thing we have a hard time receiving is his love unconditionally. The reason we struggle with that is we know how "bad" we are. We know what's going on "up here." Most people think, "*Gosh, if anyone knew what was happening in my head-space, they'd never talk to me again.*" But, if all of us are there, it's a good thing because we're all there together. That means we're not exceptional in that. Everyone struggles with "mind wars."

When Jesus was crucified, he took on all this stuff we're talking about - all the flaws, all the unholiness - everything Paul was talking about *up here*. He took it all on himself. And here's the truth that transforms. Based on this, reconciliation is not *us* moving toward *God*. This isn't gritting our teeth and *trying harder*. It's not us moving toward God. It's God moving toward *us in-Christ*. He is coming to *us*. He's making his way *toward* us. He offers us the *opportunity* to draw near to him, and he'll *reciprocate*. This works *together*. Jesus, when he gave his life on the cross, came near to us. He came *into* our life. We weren't chasing him. He *interrupted* our life. Then, *our* chase began.

The hostility is dealt with *once*, not *repeatedly*. What God does, he does right. He deals with it once, and he finishes what he starts. He is a promise-keeper. We are no longer strangers trying to get close. We're a son or a daughter *already* brought back, not based on our behavior, not based on our temper or our temperament, and not based on our offenses or our ability to offend others. God wants us to learn how to live *un-offendable*. Whatever mind war we have going on, whatever we're getting beat up about from our past, we're *already* holy. We're *already* blameless, and we're *already* without fault in his presence by faith.

We are not rooted in our performance. We are rooted in *Christ's* finished work. Jesus did what he came to do. He said, "*It is finished*" on the cross. The debt has been *paid*. He took every sin we *will* commit or *have* committed. He already took it on the cross for us. It's retroactive. He took it *all* for us, which means we *are* holy, blameless, and without fault - because he took it on *himself*. It's not about *our* performance. It's not about how good *we* are. We have these mind wars going on, "*But but nobody deserves this. I don't deserve it, so nobody else does. Nobody's that good.*"

That's true - we're *not*. We don't have it all figured out. We're all sinners but we're not *identified* as sinners. We're identified as *saints* who *sin*. That's who we are. Also, we don't grow by proving ourself to God, but we try so hard. It's a trap, and the enemy will keep that carrot dangled out in front of us just out of reach. So, we just keep trying harder and harder and harder, and religious trying only gets us tired, discouraged, disappointed, disillusioned, and frustrated.

A lot of people just give up. They don't leave the church mad at God or mad at anybody. They just leave because they feel like they just can't do it. And you know what? They're *right*. They *can't* unless Jesus is on the inside and they understand the truth of who they are because of what *Christ* did for them. We must *by faith* receive the truth of the gospel that we are holy, we are blameless, and we're above reproach. We're without fault *right now* - *not going* to be. If we make a mistake, we don't need a buffer makeup time to pay for it somehow. We don't need to work a little harder or read more scripture or get up earlier and pray more just so we can punish ourself and prove to God how sorry we are. That's a trap of the enemy.

We grow by trusting what Christ has already done. If we could just grab this - it's like a rope that's hanging there. This rescue is there for us, and Jesus is saying, *"All you have to do is grab the rope. I've got you. Just grab the rope as an act of faith. Just grab it and hang on. And when you do, and when you trust Me, you're going to realize, that I already fought the battles you're trying to fight and I won them. I already beat the devil. You're trying to beat him, but I already won. I already did that. I took care of him. I defanged him. I declawed him. I took the poison and the venom out. He's not as powerful as you think he is."*

We grow by trusting what Christ has already finished. Receive that by faith, not by feelings. At the end of the day, feelings don't matter. They're short-lived and they rise and fall with the temperature and the sunshine - with our dopamine and cortisol. There's nothing there that's legitimate. What matters is the truth. And so, by faith, we step into the truth regardless of how we feel. It's like *"if we don't see it again, we've seen it all. If God doesn't do it again, he's already done it all."* We declare that and we trust that God's grace is sufficient. We realize he's already done it. It's *done*. Paid in full. ... *That's what Jesus did for us.*

## **Prayer**

*Father, thank You for the truth that transforms our lives. And thank You for the truth of the gospel - the truth that You have brought us into Your presence - not "going to." We are in Your presence right here, right now. Whether we feel it, whether we recognize it or not, You are here. You are in our midst. And Jesus, by your Holy Spirit, You live in us and You're going to live through us. And you make us what we cannot make ourselves. You make us holy right here, right now - not going to be. You make us blameless. Not going to be - but right here, right now. And you make us without fault. Not going to be, but right here, right now.*

*Lord Jesus, we receive the truth of the good news of who we are in You and who You have made us to be. Not going to be, but already are. We receive that by faith, and we're going to trust You. We're going to say yes to Jesus and we're going to get on the journey and follow You. Father, we honor You in all these things and we thank You that because of Jesus, it's finished. It's done. It's paid in full, and by faith we receive Your grace and we receive the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in Jesus' name we pray. Amen*