



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Redeemed Rebels

Preeminent. Christ's Place in the World | Part 5

Tim Badal | January 11, 2015 | Colossians 1:21-23



Last week we learned about Jesus' preeminence in all things because He's created all things, He claims ownership over all things and He controls all things—from the largest star to the smallest particle. As we continue in this series, we will examine another aspect of His preeminence: His death, burial and resurrection. Jesus sacrificed that we might have an abundant life on earth and an eternal life in the world to come. We cannot secure this by our own efforts. The sacrifice that Jesus gave was perfect and the key to man's reconciliation with God. This gift of grace is the centerpiece of the gospel and the reason why we have hope in Jesus Christ. As we open our text, we see that Paul is concerned about the Colossians' understanding of this crucial aspect of faith. They had made the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ a secondary issue. They were bored with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some of you today may find yourselves in the same predicament. You might be bored with the things of God. You have heard it over and over again from numerous preachers as they have opened the Word of God and proclaimed its truths. You may sit there thinking, "Been there, done that." The Colossian church was no different. They had become enamored, not with the truths of Scripture, but with human wisdom.

The Colossians were enticed by the Greeks. Aristotle and Platonic thought ran rampant through the church. They preferred something flashy—the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. They grew tired of the flesh-and-blood gospel and sought to plumb the depths of the esoteric spiritual world. Their level of spirituality was based in that world. Because of this, their view of Jesus was distorted. Christianity became more about their minds than about the work and atoning death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In our passage, Paul reminds us of what Christianity is all about. If Christ is truly preeminent, He must be preeminent in the gospel that saves us from our sins. Paul points back to Jesus repeatedly throughout the entire book. Today we are going to look at Colossians 1:19-23:

For in [Jesus] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,²⁰ and through [Jesus] to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² [Jesus] has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Well, he had a lot of names. He was called: "The Hit Man," "The Hatchet Man," "The Godfather." He was the mastermind of all dirty tricks. You never wanted to cross him because he would be your greatest and worst enemy. He had a history of making mincemeat out of anyone who got in his way. He was so hellbent on getting his way that he would run his own grandmother over if she tried to interfere. Yet, he was so slick, so slimy, that no accusation could ever be pinned on him. Who was he? For those who are younger than forty, the name Chuck Colson may be a new name for you. Those who watched the Nixon presidency collapse in the mid 70's will remember the name Chuck Colson because he was the special counsel to President Nixon during the Watergate crisis.

Chuck Colson had a day of reckoning when Watergate became public. Numerous hearings took place against Chuck and others who would unveil private conversations. Chuck was revealed as the mastermind behind the scandal. Tapes shared in the news media revealed him speaking vile words of anger and revenge, words of hatred, words of death against his opponents. This landed him in prison. Chuck Colson would pay the penalty for his crimes, but he would never be able to pay the penalty of his sins.

While in prison, this hardened man, this man who looked out only for himself would be given two books by a stranger: the Holy Bible and *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis. These two books, and the Holy Spirit, took that filthy rotten, power-hungry man and transformed him. Many who knew him before didn't think he was the same person. He went from being a man who sought to use his power against people he hated to a man after God's own heart, a man who would devote himself to God's purposes and plans. In his former life, people were always considered pawns in his grand scheme. He was always looking for important and prominent individuals. But then God worked in his heart during his days in prison and gave him the vision and the heart to reach prisoners and orphans, those who had no power or prominence. Colson would start ministries like Prison Fellowship, which helped reform our society. Up until his death in 2012, Chuck Colson was viewed as one of the most influential evangelicals and Americans of the century.

When asked who most impacted his life, Chuck Colson answered, "It was the Apostle Paul." He knew that Paul was a man just like him, a man with a vile reputation who encountered Jesus Christ. Christ took a rebel at heart and redeemed Paul through and through. Chuck Colson said, "If He could do that for the Apostle Paul, if He can do it for Chuck Colson, then He can do it for anybody."

When we examine Paul's words, I want you to remember Chuck Colson. I also want you to remember that we too are rebellious in our very nature. We too have tapes against us. Every word we have spoken is before the ears of God. The thoughts that we think no one knows about are heard by an omniscient God. God knows our angry thoughts. God knows our lustful desires. If we reject Him, God considers us rebels against Christ and His goodness.

Paul also reminds us of the love of Jesus Christ Who was willing to come and redeem all of us rebels and transform us by His grace. Why would Paul write this? Some of the Colossian people had gotten too big for their spiritual britches. They had begun to teach that to be holy you had to have some secret knowledge only given to a select few. They taught that if you really wanted to be holy, then you needed to adhere to a particular set of man-made traditions. These false teachers lorded their false holiness over the Colossians. They told the Colossians that apart from these man-made standards, they were incomplete and not totally redeemed. Paul says, "Don't buy into this garbage. Trust Jesus. Bask in His grace and forgiveness. No matter how rebellious you have been, there is redemption found at the foot of the cross."

Paul wants to address this issue in Colossae. He does so under three headings:

1. The Rebellion of Humanity

Colossians 1:21, "*And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds...*" In our text last week, Paul examined Jesus Christ and pronounced Him preeminent in all things. Paul looked at all the things that Jesus had done and said, "Jesus is number one. He's the most powerful, the most magnificent, the most awe-inspiring Creator-God, equal with the Father in heaven. He must be worshiped and praised." Paul now turns from Jesus Christ and focuses on humanity. In a similar examination, Paul looks at humanity—their actions, thoughts and relationships—and concludes that people are not preeminent, but are pitiful and rebellious.

These words are welcome neither in our society, nor in the church. When we consider ourselves and our "evolution", we think we are getting better, not worse. However, I am dumbfounded at some of the events that happen week after week. This past week, the press asked the most stupid questions after two brothers ran around Paris killing people in the name of a false god. They asked, "Why would someone do this?" They brought in psychologists and criminologists who know the hearts and minds of criminals. They say that it's a bad upbringing. Or maybe they watched bad cartoons growing up. Perhaps they weren't given opportunities. We look at newspapers and wonder why moms kill their babies. Why do husbands cheat on their wives? Why do children rebel against their parents? Our news is full of crimes. We could say that these incidents are the isolated works of a few bad eggs, or you can understand what Paul is saying. Instead of looking at a bad upbringing or societal influences, Paul says that our sin—why we wage war against others—isn't a problem with ourselves; it is a problem with our relationship with God.

We have failed God. We have sinned against God. When you go against the One Who created you, your world will never be right. Your life will never be lived the way that it was intended. We have rebelled against God and our lives are filled with pain and agony. Where did this come from? From birth we traded the truth of God, the Preeminent One, for a lie. We've sought to please self instead of the Savior. What happens?

We were alienated from God

After addressing the total unity of the Son with the Father, Paul then moves to the other end of the spectrum. On one end is Jesus, Who is equal with the Father and has complete fellowship with Him. Paul creates a contrast. As close as Jesus is to the Father, we are just as far from Him. We are as far away as we could ever be. There's no separation between the Father and the Son in Their essence and in Their fellowship. But Paul says that we are alienated, nowhere near God in any way, shape or form. The word "alienated" means to be estranged from, foreign, not belonging to the same country, not allied, but averse to. This word is only used three times in the New Testament. The other times it is literally translated, "excluded from God."

Growing up, most of us remember being grounded—those times when we broke a rule and our parents would send us to our room and keep us from the things that brought us joy and satisfaction. Put that into the spiritual sense and that is a glimpse of what Paul is talking about. Here's the problem: this alienation doesn't happen for a short period. This is lifetime grounding, a lifetime ban.

Baseball fans might remember the story of Pete Rose, who managed a professional baseball team and gambled on his own games. As a result he was banned, alienated, estranged from baseball for life. He was denied induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame, as well as ever participating in baseball again. He was alienated from the sport he loved. This is what Paul is talking about. We have been alienated from God. We'll never get close to God on our own because of our sin.

Both Adam and Even experienced this. When they sinned and God judged them, what did He do? He alienated them from the Garden of Eden. They could never go back. Even if they wanted to, the gates were closed. An angel guarded the entrance. That is what it means. This is the reason why our society is the way it is. Why do men fight against women? Why do children fight against their parents? Why do nations war against one another? Because we are alienated from our God. When we are alienated from our God, we will fight against one another. Left to our own devices, we are going to do all that we can to make something of this life, but it will never come to fruition.

We were against God and His ways

Paul says we are alienated, separated from God. Paul goes on to say that we are "*hostile in mind*" (Colossians 1:21). Not only are we separated, but we are also angry with Him. We are enemies of God. When we are hostile, we are antagonistic toward God, seeking to injure the Name and reputation of God, to overthrow God, to confound Him. We are people who seek to take Him off His throne and place ourselves upon it.

Amanda and I were visiting the city of Charleston, South Carolina. While we were there we toured the Citadel, which is a military academy. While we were in the bookstore I walked through asking myself the question, "What are our future generals reading? Is it different from what I'm reading? I want to know what these bright men and women are reading and how they will lead the armies of the next generation." One of the books I saw was, *How to be a Strong Military Leader*, which was a big, thick book. I thought, "That is the kind of book that should be in a military bookstore." Right next to it was the book, *How to Stage a Successful Coup*, about taking out the leader of your country. That's kind of scary, isn't it? It made me think of people who might ask, "How can I stage a coup against God? How can I get Him out of my life so that I can do what I want to do?"

The word that is translated "hostile" is used almost three dozen times in Scripture. Elsewhere it is related to the word "enemy." The being that this word describes is usually the devil. The same word that describes God's adversary, the devil, is used to describe us when we are "hostile in mind." In other passages of Scripture, Paul tells the Romans and the Ephesians the same truth: we were enemies of God. However, Paul paints a picture of where the Colossian church had come from. Paul says they were "*hostile in mind*" (Colossians 1:21). They were enemies of God in their minds. That word "mind" refers to the use of higher reasoning regarding important truths.

The group known as the Gnostics may have infiltrated the Colossians. If you ever watch a Discovery channel series on the Bible you will hear about "Gnostic Gospels." These are books that were written by people who were influenced by Greek thought. They created a syncretism between Greek philosophy and Biblical truth, constructing their own thoughts about Jesus. These people led others astray through persuasive and intellectual arguments.

Paul says those who have put their faith and trust in their minds need to beware because your mind is not as pure as you think. In fact, your mind is what is against God and the things of God. It is tragic to see men who are created in the image of God use their minds actively against Him. If you are now a believer, this was your state before God; you were alienated from God. You didn't have any use for God. He was not a part of your thought life or a factor in your plans. You didn't consider Him important.

You started and ended each day without a single thought about Him. You went about your own plans, doing what you felt like doing, never desiring to ask God what He might think about your life. If you did think of Him, you regarded Him as some remote being, but you never expected anything from Him. You cut Him out of your thinking, even though He was the very sustenance of your life. Do you remember how that felt? Do you remember how you used to make decisions that way? The way you avoided God? The way you thought He might interfere with your plans, that He was some kind of cosmic killjoy out to make your life uneventful and unhappy.

Some of you, while professing faith in Jesus Christ, look at God in the same way. "Stay out of my way. Get off my back. I went to church, now I'm going to do my own thing."

We were active in sin

What will this lead to? Paul says that it will lead to active sin. The text says, "*doing evil deeds*" (Colossians 1:21). This sin is accompanied by the verb "doing." These words are important. In our sinful state, we were characterized by living lives of sin. Because we were alienated from and hostile toward God, we would do the only thing that came naturally to us: sin. Literally in the text, we were characterized by evil. Evil was the air we breathed. Evil was the only thing that mattered in our lives and work. All of our thoughts, words and deeds were marinated in the sauce of evil. What an ugly picture.

Let me paint with a broader brushstroke. In the first chapter of Colossians, Paul has shared that Jesus is preeminent. Yet, in our sinful state we yelled with one unified voice, "Hogwash! Even if it is true, it will be a cold day in hell before I ever bow the knee to Him." That is where we were before Christ pursued us. Does that describe you today?

Paul is very pointed when he addresses this subject. He doesn't say, "Some of you used to think this way. There were always a couple of bad eggs in the batch. Maybe a couple of you acted this way." No. He points with his proverbial, apostolic finger and says, "you." And he points to all people. If you think Paul is doing this with a "holier than thou" attitude, like Chuck Colson, he was a redeemed rebel. He said that he was the worst of all sinners. Paul recognizes that when he writes these words, they apply to himself as well. These words described Saul of Tarsus before his Damascus Road encounter with Jesus.

You may say, "That may be true of me sometimes, but not always." Paul makes it clear, in the context of what we've seen that there is no in-between regarding alienation from God. Either Jesus is preeminent in your life or He doesn't control any part of you. There's no in-between. You cannot say that Jesus is preeminent on Sunday, but not on Monday. He either has all of you or none of you.

What will God do if we don't make Christ preeminent? The just answer is that we would have to pay the full penalty for our sins. That's not what Paul says. Instead of giving us what we deserve, Jesus shows His preeminence in His response to rebels like us.

2. The Reconciliation Jesus Brings

Paul reminds us that though we were hostile to God, instead of judgment, Jesus brings reconciliation. Colossians 1:20, "*...through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*" Paul says that Jesus came not to judge the world, or condemn the world, but to bring reconciliation. This reconciliation is seen in both the visible realm and the invisible realm. The idea here is that Jesus is on a perpetual peace mission, bringing restoration back to the cosmos that has been overwhelmed by disorder because of sin.

More specifically, in Colossians 1:22, Jesus has taken us, totally estranged from God, and brought peace to that relationship. "*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.*" Jesus is reconciling us for a couple of different reasons:

1. This makes Jesus Preeminent. If Jesus is the Creator and Sustainer of all things seen and unseen, then He has bigger things to worry about than us. However, because of His love, He has taken notice of us. Amidst His great task of seeing that the stars are held in place and that the cosmos does not collapse, He noticed lowly people. He noticed us, not because we had something valuable to offer, but because He saw us in our frailty and sinfulness. "*Who is man that you are mindful of him?*" the Psalmist asks (Psalm 8:4). Jesus holds the universe together. He is so powerful and strong that He can turn away from that and put His attention on us, looking at us in our sin and saying, "I need to do something for them." He does this while we are hostile toward Him in every way. What's the reason for this?
2. The love of God. Before you think that we met God halfway in our redemption, that He saw a spark of our love and that's why Jesus was sent to die for us, notice that we were completely alienated from God. We weren't taking steps

toward God. We were taking steps away from God. In the midst of all of that Jesus said, "I am going to seek and save that which was lost." So Jesus came after us and redeemed us from our sinful state.

The songwriter said it this way:

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell
It goes beyond the highest star
And reaches to the lowest hell

The guilty pair, bowed down with care
God gave His Son to win
His erring child, He reconciled
And pardoned from his sin

Oh love of God how rich and pure
How measureless and strong
It shall forevermore endure
The saints' and angels' song

(The Love of God by Frederick M. Lehman)

Have you experienced the love of God? The love of God that comes and reconciles you, an enemy of God, so that you can be part of the family of God? How do you understand this? Paul answers these questions for you.

The way He reconciles us

Colossians 1:22. How does Christ make sinners clean? How does He bring peace to our war with God? How does He make enemies into family members? The text says that he does it by His body of flesh through His death, making peace by His blood. To a casual reader, you might run right by this, making no sense of the context. For the Colossian Christians, however, this is huge. Paul is saying amidst a group of false teachers who emphasize the spirit and the esoteric ideas of the mind that the implications of our redemption are found in the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. It is a reminder that Jesus Christ loved us so much that He came to earth to live among us and relate to us.

Jesus did not do this for the angels that fell from heaven. Before creation, when the rebellion in heaven took place, Jesus did not look at them in their helpless state and say, "I will go and become an angel, be one of them so that I can redeem them back for Myself." Jesus doesn't do that. You must wonder what the angels were thinking when Adam and Eve were in the Garden; they were having a relationship that the angels once experienced themselves. They see Adam and Eve talking and walking with God. Then, as the angels did before them, Adam and Eve rebelled against God. I wonder if the angels said, "Wait a minute. They're in trouble. Remember what happened when a third of the angels followed Lucifer and rebelled? They were consigned to hell and judgment, living in torment and bondage."

God does the unthinkable. Instead of doing what He did to the angels, He takes an animal and He crushes it. It takes its skin and covers the man and woman so that their shame would not be seen. He covers their sin. Then He announces to the world that there would be One Who would come and crush the devil's head and redeem a people unto Himself (Genesis 3:15). Have you ever thought that angels think about your redemption? They aren't sitting there saying, "Why in the world would God redeem that person and not one of our own? What grace!"

How did God do it? He became one of us so that we could see Him from our level. So we could experience Him and see that He is a Man Who endured all sorts of temptations and turmoil, yet He lived without sin. Paul explains that there is another implication. When he says all of this about flesh, it reminds us that blood had to be shed. We were the ones who were estranged from God. It should be our blood, but Jesus decided, because of His love for us, that it would be Him Who would go to the cross. He would pay our penalty for sin and death even though we were the ones who were alienated from God. Jesus, Who had total fellowship with the Father, went to the cross and saw His Father turn away as He poured out His anger on His one and only Son.

Paul references flesh and blood for a few reasons. Why? The false teachers had brought into question Jesus' humanity. There were some who detracted from Jesus' essence: whether He was the same essence as the Father. Others taught that Jesus had not come in the flesh. He had not come to be human like us. This thought was popular in the early church. Second John helps give an idea of the heresies that had also infiltrated the Colossian church. Second John 7-8 says *"For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch*

yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward." There were those who taught that Jesus had not come in the flesh.

These heresies may have been Docetism, Adoptionism or Nestorianism. These heretics would say, "Jesus was a first-century man, appointed by God because of His faithfulness to fill Him at some point." When did the Christ "fill" the man "Jesus"? They think it happened at Jesus' baptism. Remember where Jesus comes out of the water and the Father says, "*This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased*"? According to heresies like Docetism, Adoptionism and Nestorianism, that's when the deity of Christ entered into "Jesus," the man. So Jesus wasn't the "God-Man." They dismissed that idea. Jesus was "enlightened," filled with wisdom from God that no one else had and that we should seek to emulate. When He went to the cross, the spirit of the Christ left Him. From where do they get this idea? From the verse that says that before He took His last breath He committed His spirit into the hands of the Father (Luke 23:46). Docetism says that the same spirit that entered Jesus at His baptism left Him before He died. So they believe that when Jesus died on the cross, it was the carcass of the man Jesus, not the God-Man, therefore God did not die in the flesh for us. As a result they have a physical man who died on our behalf, not the one and only Son of God.

You might say, "Why don't they address this in the Bible if it was such a big thing?" Here are some passages to look at in response to these heresies:

- 1 John 1:1-3, "*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*" The Apostle John says, "We touched Him. We saw Him die on the cross. I was there. I saw Him afterwards, when He came into the upper room. He showed us His hands. He showed us His feet. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and only crucified, dead, buried and resurrected Son of God."
- 1 Peter 3:18 reminds us of this truth. Peter, another apostle of Jesus Christ says, "*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.*" We have redemption through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Why does this matter? Jesus was put to death in the flesh so that we, with all of our sins in the flesh, might be redeemed. The Second Person of the Trinity, fully God, went to the cross and covered our spiritual need. It isn't merely a flesh problem that we have; it's a spiritual problem. Through the physical death of the God-Man Jesus, we can rest assured that whatever sins we have committed in the flesh and the spirit have been covered by the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. We can confidently say that what the Son has set free is free indeed (John 8:36).

Why He reconciles us

Why does He do it? All of this is done for a reason. In Colossians 1:22 it is done "*in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.*" That word "present" describes the idea of us standing before our Father in heaven. There is a day that Paul talks about in 1 and 2 Corinthians when all people will stand before the righteous Judge, our Heavenly Father. The word "present" is a military term where a soldier would present himself or herself to a superior officer. That officer would scrutinize the soldier, looking for any stain or wrinkle or crease, using white gloves to search for even the smallest trace of dirt. He wants those in his regiment to be spotless. While drill sergeants are hard to please, they can be fooled.

Our presentation, however, will be before the omniscient God of the universe, Who knows everything about you, everything that you've done, all of it. You don't have a chance of passing that inspection apart from Christ. Because of Him and with Him, we can stand before the omniscient God. God will look us over and look for sin, thinking about the multitude of sins that we have committed in thought, deed and word. He will look and say, "I have examined you and you are clean. You are righteous. You are above reproach." God will not bring an accusation against us because of the Person and work of Jesus Christ. This is why John Newton proclaimed, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me."

These are the words that pierced the Apostle Paul to the core. They pierced the heart of Chuck Colson, too. What do these words do to you? Do you recognize your rebellion? Do you recognize that you need reconciliation? How do you know if you've received this reconciliation?

3. The Responsibility of All Redeemed Rebels

The answer is found in the response of redeemed rebels. One who truly understands what he or she has gained in Christ will seek to live for Christ. Paul says that believers have a responsibility. Colossians 1:23, *"if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister."* You cannot take the promises of reconciliation and continue in sin. You cannot say in one breath that Jesus is first in your life, and then use the next breath to live for yourself. You cannot allow part of your life to die to sin while the other parts revel in it. All of it has to die.

Paul addresses this in Colossians 3:5-10. Put to death everything that is tainted by your earthly nature. A person who is redeemed puts on the things of Christ. In order for this to happen, people who are redeemed must be loyal. What is our loyalty toward? The Preeminent One. Our responsibility involves our loyalty to the:

1. **Death of Christ.** How do you become loyal to the death of Christ? It means understanding that just as Christ died so others may live, you too must lay down your life for Christ. This might not be on a physical cross; however, your life must be characterized by suffering to the glory of God. It seeks to serve others as you serve Christ. It means denying yourself and taking up your cross daily. Put to death anything that tries to compete with God: possessions, people, pleasure or prestige. Christ must be Preeminent in all that you do.
2. **Demands of Christ.** Christ has faithfully fulfilled the demands of His ministry and work. Now Christ demands that we do the same. What does this look like? It begins by continuing in the faith (Colossians 1:23). What faith? The faith that you have in Christ. His death is the only payment for your sin. You cannot do it without Him. Don't be shaken from that. Don't become unstable. Remain steadfast, remembering that Jesus is all that He says He is and has done what He said He has done, despite popular opinion or your circumstances.
3. **Doctrines of Christ.** Paul has spent the previous verses strengthening our understanding of Who Jesus is and why He is preeminent. He has cautioned us to be careful of false teachers and pursue the true knowledge found in Jesus Christ. Therefore we must seek to know with full assurance that we believe the right things. Notice the definite article attached to each of these things. *"Continue in the faith, not shifting from the hope of the gospel."* It's not any hope. It's not any gospel. It's not any faith. It is one definite faith: the faith in Jesus Christ, Who is equal with God, Who is God Himself, Who came and put on flesh, made His dwelling among us and lived a perfect life that He might redeem rebels through His death, burial and resurrection in the flesh.

This is the gospel. This is what saves sinners. Not supernatural or esoteric thoughts; not doing the right things. We don't have a chance on our own. We are alienated from God and we need a Savior. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save those who were lost.

Upon the death of Chuck Colson, there were many people who were skeptical of his conversion. That's what we do, don't we? When someone really, really bad says that they've come to know Jesus? People thought it was all a crock. Yet, upon his death in 2012, Russell Moore penned these words in *Christianity Today*. It's a great way for us to close this message.

Colson had every reason to be ashamed. Virtually every word he spoke in the Nixon White House was recorded and transcribed, and laid open for everyone from the House Judiciary Committee to his next-door neighbors to see. His own words proved him to be ruthless, manipulative and, at times, craven. But all of our words are transcribed, the Bible tells us. They are embedded in a conscience that points us toward a Judgment Day in which every idle word and thought is revealed, and all is laid bare (Romans 2:15-16). Like Nixon and his cronies, we want to obstruct that justice. If only we could erase the "tapes," and sear over our consciences, we reason, everything will be okay. In trying to win the campaign of our own attempts at self-justification, we've rebelled against a higher authority than the United States Constitution. We've broken into temples more sacred than the Watergate Hotel.