

COLOSSIANS 1

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Colossians chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God, and we begin this letter that Paul wrote to the church in Colosse.

Keep in mind that this letter is part of the letters that are known as the prison epistles or letters, which included *Ephesians*, *Philippians*, *Philemon*, and of course, *Colossians*.

Let me share with you just a little background information about the city of Colossae.

This city was located in the region of Phrygia and it was part of a tri-city area that included Laodicea that was about ten miles to the west and Hierapolis which was about thirteen miles northwest of the city.

These three cities were located in the Lycus Valley and at Colossae the Lycus Valley narrowed to a width of about two miles and Mount Cadmus rose some eight thousand feet and towered over the city.

During the time of Paul this city was small and overshadowed by its prosperous neighbors, Laodicea, which we read of in the book of Revelation, one of the letters Jesus wrote to the 7 churches in Asia Minor; and Hierapolis.

The city of Colosse was predominately Gentile but it did have a sizeable Jewish population also.

Now you may be wondering how the church got started in Colossae when Paul never visited this city!

Yes, Paul never visited this city but the church was probably established on Paul's third missionary journey as he spent three years in Ephesus at that time and in Acts 19:10 we are told, "**. . . that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.**"

It is possible that during this time in Ephesus that Epaphras was visiting and he got saved there and returned home to Colosse bringing the Gospel to his people and the church in Colosse was started. (Colossians 1:5-7)

Keep in mind that during Paul's ministry in Ephesus at least two men from Colossae were brought to faith in Jesus Christ: Epaphras, as I have said, and Philemon.

And, like I have said, after he got saved, Epaphras then went back to Colossae and shared the gospel with his friends and family and the result was that many were brought to faith in Christ and a church was born.

He also had a ministry in the cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea (Col. 4:12–13).

Philemon had a church meeting in his home, according to Philemon 1:2. And it is likely that Apphia and Archippus, mentioned in Colossians 4:17 were respectively the wife and son of Philemon, and that Archippus was the pastor of the church (Col. 4:17).

Keep in mind that Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians while he was in prison in Rome for his faith. He spent two years there in prison before he had his day with Nero and then he was released for a short period of time before being re-arrested and finally put to death for his faith.

Paul probably wrote Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon at the same time. The time frame was probably 60 A. D. and then Philippians was written a short time later, probably near the end of 61 A. D.

One of the reasons that Paul wrote this letter to the church in Colossae was to correct some problems that had come into the church.

What was the problem?

Believe it or not, it was heresy, false teaching by false teachers that had come into the church and Paul was going to deal with it.

Today, we want to ignore false teaching and false teachers, and can you imagine where we would be today if Paul did that? It would be bad, very bad!

False teaching and false teachers are like a cancer that destroy the individual and eventually, the body of believers where this is being promoted or maybe not promoted but not dealt with!

This heresy, for the most part, was Gnosticism. Yes, there was some mixture of Greek philosophy and Jewish legalism, but as you read this letter and you see what Paul is saying, it is very clear that he is speaking against Gnosticism that had crept into this church, maybe only some five years old. And being that young, easy to get false teaching into the church!

Let me share with you what this is all about because if you get this down, you will see why Paul said what he said in this letter. We are told about this false teaching,

The problem came from false teachers who were propagating what is called Gnosticism. Gnostics considered themselves to be people of superior knowledge who could help “lesser” Christians attain deeper spirituality. The very word for Gnosticism comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means “to know.”

The Gnostics, “people in the know,” the spiritual elite with all the answers, held as their basic doctrine that matter (anything physical or created) was evil and that only the spirit was good.

They reasoned, therefore, that God could not be involved in creation, because being perfect he could not touch matter which was intrinsically evil. Therefore, the world came into being through a complicated surrogate process as God put forth thousands of emanations (or lesser gods), each of which was a little more distant from him, so that finally there was an emanation (a little god) so distant from God that it could touch matter – and it created the world. Of course, this lesser god of creation was so far removed from the ultimate God that it was evil.

This reasoning led to the belief that Jesus Christ, if he really was the Son of God, could not have taken on a human body because matter is evil.

This delusion spawned the Gnostic romances about Jesus being only a ghost-like phantom. To the Gnostics, Christ was not Creator, the Incarnation was not real, and Christ was not enough!

So the Gnostics built a system by which one could begin with Christ and work one's way up the series of emanations to God.

In Colosse, this system (gnosis) consisted of ascetic disciplines (many of which were borrowed from Jewish legalism, see 2:20-23), secret passwords (borrowed from Eastern mysticism), the esoterica of astrology, and elements of Christianity.

It was all very complex and proudly intellectual. The Gnostics, those “in the know,” looked down upon the simple Colossian believers, browbeat them, and led some astray.

- R. Kent Huges, *Colossians and Philemon – The Supremacy of Christ*, pp. 14-15

Now here is a problem with false teachers and their false teaching. They are smarter than anyone else and thus, the information that they have is correct. And, it doesn't matter what the Scriptures have to say, they are wrong, we don't understand them like they do and the other garbage they will tell you to put you down, just like the Gnostics did!

Are there lesser God's?

No, we are told in Isaiah 44:6, "**... I am the First and I am The Last; Besides Me there is no God.**" I think that is clear!

Was God involved in creation?

Absolutely and we can look at a lot of verses that speak of this, but let's just go back to the beginning, in Genesis 1:1, which says, "**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**" Now you don't have to understand Hebrew to get what is being said here, God created the heavens and the earth, and I believe it was the Triune God who were all involved in creation! And when God created the heavens and the earth, it was very good, not evil!

Now, they also believe that Jesus could not have come in a physical body, that He was spirit because anything physical is evil, according to them.

And yet, what do the Scriptures say?

In John 1:14 we are told, "**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**"

Jesus, the Word, Almighty God became what? He became flesh in the Incarnation!

Not only that but listen to what John tells us in I John 1:1-4 and you tell me if Jesus was just a spirit or some kind of ghost that hovered over the ground, that He was not flesh and blood.

John tells us, **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life - the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us - that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”**

They saw Jesus with their eyes! They looked steadfastly upon Him, examining Him. They touched Him! How can that be if He was just a spirit? It couldn't be and thus, it is really easy to refute this false teaching of Gnosticism.

But like false teaching and false teachers, it is hard to come against them, because they always know better than you and better than what the Scriptures have to say!

Listen to what A. T. Robertson says about this and then I will expound on why it is so important that we understand what Paul is saying in this letter because this garbage is out there today. Yes, packaged a little differently but the same stuff!

We are told,

The Gnostic speculation concerned itself primarily with the origin of the universe and the existence of evil. They assumed that God is good and yet there is evil in existence.

Their theory was that evil is inherent in matter. And yet the good God could not create evil matter. So they postulated a series of emanations, aeons, spirits, angels that came in between God and matter.

The idea was that one aeon came from God, another aeon from this aeon, and so on till there was one far enough away from God for God not to be contaminated by the creation of evil matter and yet close enough to have power to do the work.

- A. T. Robertson

And the reason I am taking our time with this introduction is because what Paul was writing to the Colossians about, we are dealing with today and it is being brought into the church and accepted!

Let me show you what I mean.

Brian Flynn, the director of One Truth Ministries in Minneapolis, wrote the following,

Eleven years ago I walked away from the life of a New Age medium and gave my heart to Jesus Christ. As a medium, I performed psychic readings and, through meditative practices, contacted spirit guides.

At the time, I did not realize these guides were demonic. Now as a Christian, I no longer have to chant, go into altered states of consciousness or perform rituals to find the peace and truth I found through the Lord and His Word.

Three years ago, I read a book called A Time of Departing, which claimed that many Christian leaders were teaching a mantra-meditation technique.

You can imagine my shock when I discovered the New Age had infiltrated Christianity through such a technique, a practice called contemplative prayer.

The technique involves repeating a word or phrase over and over until reaching what is called the silence. Sometimes, instead of a word or phrase, the breath is focused upon, thus the name ‘Breath Prayers’. The goal? Reaching an altered state of consciousness in order to communicate with God . . .”

Contemplating God’s Word is a good thing. But the contemplative prayer I speak of is not. First practiced by monks centuries ago, it died out and did not re-emerge again until the 1960s when Catholic monks, Thomas Keating and Thomas Merton, decided to introduce the practice to mainstream Christianity.

Richard Foster, a supporter of contemplative prayer, writes a curious warning about this practice in his book, *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*:

I also want to give a word of precaution. In the silent contemplation of God we are entering deeply into the spiritual realm, and there is such a thing as a supernatural guidance . . . While the Bible does not give us a lot of information on that, there are various orders of spiritual beings, and some of them are definitely not in cooperation with God and his way! . . . But for now I want to encourage you to learn and practice prayers of protection.’

Then why do it, Mr. Foster? Why would God put me in a position to fend for myself in this unknown spiritual realm surrounded by spiritual beings that are not in cooperation with God and his way? He would not.

The Achilles' heel for Mr. Foster is that there is no scriptural support for contemplative prayer other than this warning, **'And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions, as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore, do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him'** (Matt. 6:7-8).

What would martyrs of the faith who departed from Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism say to us if they could speak of our intermingling Christianity with Eastern mystical practices?

As a former New Age medium, I know the difference between Eastern meditative practices and biblical Christian prayer. Sadly, too many in the Christian community do not.

- Brian Flynn

Also, in his foreword to Ray Yungen's book, *A Time of Departing*, Ron Comer says,

By using Eastern mystical techniques such as the repetition of words (mantras) and the emptying of the mind, professing Christians are testifying to powerful experiences in the spiritual realms. In Christian circles these techniques are being called: the silence, breath prayer, centering prayer, or contemplative prayer.

Through these mystical prayer practices the church today has opened its door to a subtle abandonment of the gospel . . .

Like two rivers merging together, Eastern and Western religious thought are joining together, thus gaining momentum towards a one world religion in which all paths lead to God.

- Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing*

Please understand that this garbage, this false teaching of Christian mysticism and eastern religious practices are flooding into the church. And the church is mostly silent. Praise God not everyone, but when you look at what is being promoted in the church today, we did not listen to what Paul wrote here in Colossians!

Now the division of this book I think is pretty simple. In Colossians chapters 1 and 2 give us doctrine. Then, in Colossians chapters 3 and 4 we will see that they deal with the practical application of that doctrine.

In other words, here is the correct information, now apply it to your walk with the Lord.

And my prayer as we go through this letter that Paul wrote to the church in Colosse is that it would give you the correct perspective of who God is and who we are, how we are to live out our faith. That we would see clearly who Jesus is, as Paul tells us in II Corinthians 3:5, “**Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God.**”

With that said, let’s begin reading in Colossians chapter 1, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word.

COLOSSIANS 1

VERSES 1-2

Who gave Paul the right to be an apostle? Who gave Paul the right to even write this letter?

Paul tells us that it was “**the will of God**” for his life!

That is so important for us to understand. Whatever you do for the Lord, make sure it is God's will for your life and not your own will, your own desires. Make sure it is in line with the Word of God and not outside of the Word of God!

Now Colosse was the smallest city Paul wrote to, which might seem strange, why write to such a small city?

Think of it like this.

Out of all the cities in the Midwest, Paul wrote to the city of Manitowoc, not Chicago or Milwaukee.

That would be shocking to put it mildly, and yet, for Paul, there was an important issue to deal with and this heresy that took place back then is still working today and thus, this letter is very practical and important for us to learn from just as it was for the church in Colosse back then.

And as Paul did with his letters, he starts out with the Siamese Twins of the New Testament, *Grace* and *Peace*.

And as we have seen before, you can't experience the peace *of* God until you first make peace *with* God and that is done through Jesus Christ, the grace He extends to us by faith. In other words, as Paul wrote here, you must be "in Christ."

Paul put it this way in Romans 5:1-2, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

VERSES 3-8

Keep in mind that Paul had never met most of these believers in Colosse, there is no record that he went there. But they were on his prayer list, he prayed from them *ALWAYS!* I like that, a man of prayer.

And look at what Paul is praying for them.

He is praying for the believers in Colosse to grow in the faith, to remain strong in the Lord, and he is also giving thanks to God for their faith in Jesus Christ – that they are saved!

Now when we think of healthy churches today, what comes to mind?

Maybe a ton of programs for you to go to?

Maybe a worship team with a light show and a fog machine to really get you in the mood?

What about a charismatic pastor that makes you laugh and feel good?

And we can go on but that is not what makes a healthy church!

Paul shows us here in these verses that a healthy church, a strong church is one that has *FAITH* that looks up to God.

Paul tells us in Hebrews 11:6, **“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”**

A healthy church is one that is filled with the *LOVE* of God and thus, looks out for people to minister to.

In John 13:34-35 Jesus said, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

And a healthy church is one that is filled with *HOPE* looking forward to the Lord's return. It is knowing that this is the worst it will get for us.

In Psalm 39:7 the Psalmist tells us, "**And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.**"

Notice that this is not a hope in this world but the Lord!

And thus, a healthy church, a strong church is one that has *FAITH, LOVE* and *HOPE!*

It seems like Epaphras visited Paul when he was in prison in Rome, at least 1,000 miles away from Colosse, and brought Paul his concerns of the heresy that was coming into the church there.

This was not gossip, but concern and Paul sent back this powerful letter to correct their error. Too often in the church people don't want to stand against false doctrine because they don't want to offend anyone. Folks, when it comes to heresy, too bad!

You don't allow false doctrine to grow because you might upset someone if you come against it, we are talking about people's lives here and we need to be serious about our faith as Jude admonishes us, "**Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.**" Jude 3-4.

That is why I not only teach you the Word of God, but I also warn you of the dangers that are out there!

That is why we must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by being in the Word of God and allowing the Spirit of God to speak to our hearts and then applying these things to our lives!

VERSES 9-12

In these verses we see Paul's prayer for these Colossian believers. And there are four main points here. They are,

- 1. *That they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will (Colossians 1:9)***
- 2. *That they would have a walk worthy of the Lord (Colossians 1:10)***
- 3. *That they would be fruitful in every good work (Colossians 1:10)***
- 4. *That they would be thankful to the Father (Colossians 1:11)***

First of all, we see Paul pray ***that they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will.***

How important it is for us to know God's will for our lives because as we know God's will it will help us in our walk with the Lord.

Some of the things in the New Testament that speak of God's will for our lives are as follows; ***that you would be saved, that you be Spirit-filled, that you be sanctified, that you be submissive and that you are willing to suffer for His Name.*** This is the will of God for our lives.

But what about His specific will for our lives or His will for the individual believer? That is a little more complicated.

But let me say this, I think we make it more complicated than it really is. You see, if you are walking in the Spirit, if you have put on the mind of Christ and you are praying for His guidance, He will reveal His will for your life on an individual basis.

Listen to what Solomon wrote in Proverbs 3:5-6, “**Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.**”

He is not hiding His will from our lives; the problem many times is we are not looking, or we don't want to look because we won't like what He is going to show us!

Now Paul uses the words “**wisdom**” and “**knowledge**” and understanding in this letter. Why do you think he does that?

Because these are words that the Gnostics used a lot and they had the superior knowledge or so they thought. Paul is showing us and them, they don't!

Think about the point that Paul is making here. He is basically telling them, “*They don't have that superior knowledge, but you can have it through your relationship with Jesus, for in Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*” I like that!

For us today, we must be careful because the devil likes to deceive people with false doctrine by twisting the words that the Bible uses, they make them say something that they are not saying!

And this Greek word that Paul uses for “**knowledge**” is not just GNOSKO, but it is EPIGNOSKO or “*overflowing knowledge.*” That is what God has for us!

And Paul is praying that they may be “**filled**” or controlled by the Holy Spirit with this knowledge and wisdom, which is just the correct application of correct information!

Remember what we were told in John 16:13 about the Holy Spirit, “**However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.**”

He will show us the truths of God found in the Word of God, opening them up to our hearts and minds!

That they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will!

Next, we see Paul pray ***that they would have a walk worthy of the Lord.***

This is an interesting way to put it, kind of a cause and an effect. Knowing the will of God will cause you to walk accordingly!

And this should just make sense. The more you grow in your knowledge of the Lord the stronger you should get in your walk with the Lord.

That they would have a walk worthy of the Lord!

The third thing Paul prayed for these believers is ***that they would be fruitful in every good work.***

Think about that one. Isn't that what we are to be about as Christians, good works? Of course it is! He is ordained our lives to be filled with good works.

This is not the basis for us getting into heaven, but it is the evidence for a person who has been saved by grace. Paul, in Ephesians 2:10, after he spoke of us being saved by grace, wrote, **"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."**

And look at what we see here. First there is wisdom in knowing the will of God for our lives. Which then leads to our walking in the things of God. And that walk results in good works!

That they would be fruitful in every good work!

And the fourth prayer that Paul had for them was ***that they would be thankful to the Father.***

You see, our work does not qualify us, but God has qualified us by grace through faith, by the finished work of Christ! What is our inheritance? It is eternal life with Jesus and all that encompasses. And This is so important for us to understand, that He has made us “**qualified**” or has made us fit, worthy! He has forgiven us of all our sins as they were paid for by Jesus and He has made us fit for heaven! Wow, we should always give thanks to the Father! So, Paul thanks God for this.

That they would be thankful to the Father!

And as we look at our lives, as we look at the wisdom that God has given to us, the knowledge of His will for our lives, we then walk accordingly and produce good works in our lives as we are praising God for all He has done in us and through us!

What a great prayer!

VERSES 13-14

Look at all the doctrine that Paul has laid out in these first fourteen verses of Colossians chapter 1!

And now we see Paul thank God for rescuing us from Satan’s grip upon our lives and taking us into His Kingdom, which only God can do. You see, man cannot accomplish this by his own efforts!

And this word “**delivered**” speaks of being “rescued from danger.” That is perfect and that is what God has done.

And then he speaks that he has “**translated us**” or the idea here is the deportation of a population from one country to another!

He has taken us out of the power of darkness and has moved us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love!

How did He do this?

He tells us that God has redeemed us and the Greek word that Paul uses here, APOLUTROSIS, speaks of a man going into the agora to purchase a slave for the purpose of setting him free totally and completely never to be a slave again!

Think about that! He has purchased us out of slavery never to be a slave to Satan, sin, the world ever again. Praise God for that!

Now, how many of you always understand this fact, that our sins are forgiven, all of them, paid in full?

I am not asking if you believe it by faith, but do you always feel that way?

I doubt it because we let Satan mess with our minds!

One writer put it this way regarding this word, "It thus speaks of the removal of our sins from us, so that they are no longer barriers that separate us from God." (Vaughan)

If you still struggle with this and you put those barriers back up, the ones that God has removed, then listen to what we are told in the Scriptures, "**As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.**" Psalm 103:12.

And in Isaiah 43:25 we are told, "**I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.**"

Thus, may we be thankful to God for all He has done!

Now, those first 14 verses are the introduction you might say, and now Paul's focus is the work of Jesus Christ.

He shows us *His preeminence in creation*, Colossians 1:15-18.

He shows us *His preeminence in redemption*, Colossians 1:19-23.

And he shows us *His preeminence in the Church*, Colossians 1:24-29.

VERSES 15-18

Make no mistake about it, denying the deity of Jesus was one of the heresy's that was spreading through Colosse and it is at the forefront of every cult today, and we even see it in the church!

And yet, apart from believing that Jesus is Almighty God, not just a god, you will die in your sins. Not because I said that, but Jesus did in John 8:24, "**Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am [He], you will die in your sins.**" So this is a very important issue.

The Jehovah Witnesses in their New World Translation of the Scriptures tell us "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn *of* all creation; because by means of Him all [*other*] things were created . . ."

First of all, the word "**other**" is not there in the Greek nor is it implied.

Let's look at these verses because the Jehovah Witnesses try to use them to prove that Jesus is not God when in reality, they prove that He is God!

First of all, Paul tells us that Jesus is "**the image of the invisible God**" and the word "**image**" in the Greek is EIKON, (i-kone') and it speaks of a statue or representation.

In other words, it is as we are told in John 14:8-9, "**Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?'**"

Thus, the invisible God became visible to us in Jesus Christ when He became flesh and blood, when He dwelt among us, “**. . . the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**”

John 1:14. Clearly Paul’s point is that Jesus is God!

Next, we hear the Jehovah Witnesses tell us that Jesus was a created being for the Scriptures tell us that.

They would show you that Paul said that He is “**the firstborn over all creation**” and they would change “**over all**” to “of” to fit their theology, but that is not what the Greek is saying.

But because it says that Jesus was the “**firstborn**” it must mean that He was a created being is their thinking.

The word for “**firstborn**” is the Greek word PROTOTOKOS, (pro-tot-ok’-os) and it has a few different meanings to it. In fact, the Rabbis called YAWHEW the “*Firstborn of the world.*” (Rabbi Bechai).

But let’s look at what this word can mean and see where it leads us.

FIRSTBORN – CHRONOLOGICALLY: In Luke 2:7 we are told, “**And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.**” Jesus was the firstborn of Mary.

FIRSTBORN – FIGURATIVELY: In Exodus 4:22 we are told, “**Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn.’**”

FIRSTBORN – POSITIONAL: In speaking of the Messiah, God the Father says in Psalm 89:27, **“Also I will make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth.”** In other words, Jesus is the highest of all the kings of the earth; He is supreme to all, He rules supremely.

And if you look at verse 18 as Paul says that He is the firstborn of the dead, it has to mean ranking because others have been raised from the dead in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. He was the first to arise from the dead with an immortal body! He is the highest rank of all who have been raised from the dead and all that will be raised from the dead! Thus, He is the image of God, He rules over all creation because He is God!

And please understand that Jesus is not part of creation, He is not a creation, but the Creator and He not only created **ALL** things but by Him all things **“consist”** or are held together by Him.

There is Coulomb’s Law of Electricity that states that like charges repel each other. The atom is made up of protons in its nucleus and they are like charges. Thus, they should repel each other, blow the atom apart, but they don’t, why is that?

Scientists don’t know the answer, they have made many speculations and they do know that something is holding them together, like “atomic glue” but they are not sure what that is.

Listen to this. We are told,

One of the continuing puzzles of science is the question of what holds the universe together. We know that everything is made up of tiny atoms that consist of electrons buzzing around a nucleus.

Why doesn't the centrifugal force of those orbiting electrons cause atoms to fly apart? Scientists talk hopefully of a "grand unified theory" of forces that they hope will someday explain what holds the universe together, but scientists are still a long way from such a theory.

Moreover, as the great physicist-mathematician Stephen Hawking has pointed out, testing such a theory would require a particle accelerating machine "as big as the solar system," and such a machine is "unlikely to be funded in the present economic climate" (Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, 74)

What holds our universe together? Science cannot answer and can only point to unnamed, undiscovered, unknown forces.

- Ray Stedman, *Adventuring Through Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, p. 29

That was the most brilliant mind in the world, he doesn't know and we would need an accelerator as big as the universe, come on, get real, I don't care how much money you have, how in the world would you build it?

But I know the answer of what holds everything together!

Maybe they will give to me the Nobel Prize for science for this, what do you think?

I doubt it because the answer is that Jesus is holding them together and they don't accept Jesus, they don't believe in God and thus, it is atomic glue or whatever imaginary force they can think of for now that is holding everything together!

Let me ask you this. Do you know what is going to happen when Jesus lets go? We don't have to guess because Peter tells us in II Peter 3:10-13, **"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.**

Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” An atomic explosion!

Also, all things were created for Him or as John tells us in Revelation 4:11, and this is from the King James Version, **“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”**

Paul also tells us that Jesus is the beginning of the church, that is the church’s origins began with Jesus and He is the command center for the church, the brains for the church, which is the body of Christ and it is the Lord who then directs us where to go, it is the Lord who empowers us for service!

Alfred Mace put it this way, “Christ cannot be second anywhere. He is “firstborn of every creature,” because He has created everything (Col. 1:15, 16). He is also firstborn from the dead in connection with a redeemed and heavenly family. Thus creation and redemption hand the honors of supremacy to Him because of Who He is and of what He has done; “that in all things He might have the preeminence.” He is first everywhere.”

Now, that word **“beginning”** in verse 18 is the Greek is ARCHE, which can mean “a ruler” or “the origin, source or active cause of something.”

Jesus is both the ruler over creation, and He is the source or creative force behind the creation which is consistent with John 1:3 and Col. 1:16.

As we read on, we will see that in Colossians 1:19-23 Paul shows us *the preeminence of Christ in redemption.*

VERSES 19-23

Let me put verse 19 like this and I think you will see the point Paul is making here. He is telling them, ***“I’m going to save you from a lot of trouble. You don’t have to spend hours and hours and hours learning esoteric Gnostic teachings on how to meditate; chant etc. to reach fullness with God; in Jesus you will have all the fullness you can possibly experience because in Him all fullness dwells.”***

You see, if you want to see the fullness of God, look to Jesus because all that God is, we see manifested in Him, and thus, in the incarnation we have God with us, our Emmanuel!

And Paul tells us that reconciliation is only found in Him, the finished work on Calvary, the shedding of His blood for our sins that has brought peace between God and man.

Many in the church want to deny the blood atonement, but apart from what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary, there is no remission for our sins!

The word that Paul uses for **“reconcile”** is the Greek word APOKATALLASSO, (ap-ok-at-al-las’-so).

Normally the Greek word KATALLASSO is used for **“reconcile”** but Paul adds a preposition to intensify its meaning.

Paul is saying that our reconciliation is complete, it is total, it is thorough, he could not speak any stronger and he is coming against these false teachers that would teach otherwise!

You see, sin has affected all of creation, not only man but one day Jesus Christ will return and take possession of that which He has already purchased with His blood – all of creation!

Paul, in Romans 8:22-23 tells us, **“For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”**

And in the Kingdom age we will see, **“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.”** Isaiah 11:6-9.

And in Colossians 1:21 Paul says that we were **“alienated”** from God and the Greek word APALLOTRIOO, (ap-al-lot-ree-o’-o) literally speaks of being “transferred to another owner.”

Satan owned us and that ownership was manifested in the things we did, how we lived, for self. Our minds and actions reflected who we belonged to.

But God stepped in and took us out of Satan’s hands and now we are children of God. Paul put it this way back in Colossians 1:13-14, and this is from The Amplified Bible, **“[The Father] has delivered and drawn us to Himself out of the control and the dominion of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, In Whom we have our redemption through His blood, [which means] the forgiveness of our sins.”**

Now, in Colossians 1:23, is Paul saying we can lose our salvation if we don’t continue on in the faith?

That is not what the Scriptures teach. You see, not everyone who says he is a Christian is a Christian. Jesus made that point in Matthew 7:22-23 as He said, **“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”**

It isn't that Jesus knew them at one time, at one time they were saved, but they were never saved.

John put it this way in I John 2:19, **“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”**

They were not real branches but Judas branches and thus, their fruit was fake, it was wax you might say because they were never saved.

The words *“if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel”* in the Greek isn't a conditional statement making our salvation contingent upon our faithfulness in continuing in the faith.

You see, the word **“if”** carries with it the idea of “assuming that you continue in the faith.”

That is to say that continuing in the faith isn't a condition for staying saved; it is a characteristic of those who are genuinely saved; they continue in their faith no matter how many times they fall or fail.

We call it perseverance and it is the hallmark of a true saint!

Bruce put it this way, “If the gospel teaches the final perseverance of the saints, it teaches at the same time that the saints are those who finally persevere – in Christ. Continuance is the test of reality.”

In other words, continuing on in the faith just shows that your faith is real!

As we finish up looking at the work of Jesus, we have seen *His preeminence in creation*, *His preeminence in redemption*, and now *His preeminence in the Church* in Colossians 1:24-29.

VERSES 24-29

Paul was not a masochist but he did see how his sufferings in this Roman prison produced fruit in the lives of others, it helped Christians grow in the faith and it helped some come to the faith like the prison guards and some of Nero’s family as we saw in our study in Philippians!

And Paul’s focus was centered upon others, suffering for the edification of the body of Christ, willing to lay His life on the line for the Lord!

And as God blessed Paul, he did not let his position go to his head. He didn’t make anyone kiss his ring, if he had any, or bow before him because he was a servant and the work that he was doing for God was based on the fact that God gave him this stewardship, a grace gift!

Now Paul did use his position to correct error in the church, he had the authority, so don’t get the idea that Paul was some Casper milk toast, not at all. Yes, he was a servant of God and yet God had placed him in a position of authority, but it did not go to his head!

In Colossians 1:26 we see this mystery and the word that is used here is not a riddle but something that was hidden but now has been revealed to us by God’s Spirit.

What is that mystery?

I believe it is that God, through Jesus, would unite both Jew and Gentile together into one body.

Paul, in Ephesians 2:13-16 makes this very point as he tells us, **“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”**

And as Paul continues on in verse 27, he is speaking of the fact that Christ is living in us, and that enables us to be like Him. It is not imitation but impartation! And folks, our hope of glory is not based upon our hard work, our devotion to God but that Jesus abides in us, He is present with us!

And notice the focus of Paul, and this should be our focus; preaching, warning, teaching people the things of God so that they may enter into the kingdom of God, so that they may grow in the faith.

I do not want you to be dependent upon me, that is not allowing you to grow, to mature in the faith. My desire is that you would rest your weight upon the Lord, to grow in Him, to mature in the faith, to look to Him to be the strength of your life!

And look at how he did this in Colossians 1:29, he says **“I also labor”** or KOPIAO in the Greek and it speaks of working to the point of exhaustion.

He then speaks of “**striving**” or AGONIZOMAI in the Greek and we got our English word “agonize” from it. This was a word used of an athletic event – it demands our best effort.

That is where many Christians begin and end their work. Yes, that is our part, to work hard, but there is also the Lord who works in us and strengthens us for the work, empowers us.

Folks, you can’t faithfully serve Jesus without hard work. I can’t find one example in the Scriptures to support a lazy work ethic! Nor can you faithfully serve Jesus without Him!

As I close this evening let me leave you with this version of Colossians 1:28-29, it is from The Phillips’ translation. It reads,

“So, naturally, we proclaim Christ. We warn everyone we meet, and we teach everyone we can, all that we know about Him, so that, if possible, we may bring every man up to his full maturity in Christ. This is what I am working at all the time, with all the strength that God gives me.”

It is as Paul said in Colossians 3:17, “**And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**”

And as we look at our lives, as we look at the wisdom that God has given to us, the knowledge of His will for our lives, we then walk accordingly and produce good works in our lives as we are praising God for all He has done in us and through us!



