

“A Seriously Big Deal...”

Colossians 1:15-29

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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Colossians 1:15-29 *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in*

Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased [the Father that] in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister. 24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. 29 To this [end] I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.



1:15

Our text begins with a description of Christ saying He is “the image of the invisible God.” Jesus told Philip in John 14: 9, “**He who has seen Me has seen the Father...**” Jesus was and is more than just a *likeness*...more than a *similarity*. Christ is the **visible image of the invisible God**. “Image” here means “the exact reproduction.” He was, *and is*, the perfect manifestation or revelation of God.

While we in our day tend to struggle and debate this issue...to the division between whole religions and even churches in the evangelical movement, the ambiguity is on us. For the Jews of His time understood clearly. They certainly “got it.” John 5:18 says “*So the Jewish leaders tried all the harder to find a way to kill him. For he not only broke the Sabbath, he called God his Father, thereby making himself equal with God.*”

He was and is ‘all God’ and yet ‘all man’ at the same time. He encompassed all the attributes of deity while possessing all of the qualities and attributes of a man, short of an innate sin nature. How can this be? While such a concept can indeed be *accepted* it will likely forever be beyond our full comprehension. Isaiah 55:8-9 says “*For My thoughts [are] not your thoughts, Nor [are] your ways My ways,*” says the LORD. “*For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.*”

However, this issue will often determine one’s true Christian position, separating the “sheep from the goats” spiritually speaking. **Who and what Jesus is** establishes or negates our Christian authenticity. It is one of

defining aspects of our faith reality...just who is truly “Christian,” and who is a false religion or cult. (Ex. Mormon, Jehovah Witness’, etc.)

Mormons believe that the Trinity consists not of three persons in one God but rather of three distinct gods. According to Mormonism, there are potentially many thousands of gods besides these. They believe that humans, like God the Father, can go through a process of exaltation to godhood, and thus one day possibly inhabit a new planet. (IE – Adam and Eve) Mormons believe that Jesus Christ was the firstborn spirit-child of the heavenly Father and a heavenly Mother...He then progressed to deity in the spirit world...and He was later physically conceived in Mary’s womb, as the literal “only begotten” Son of God the Father in the flesh.

Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Jesus was created by Jehovah as the archangel Michael before the physical world existed, and is a lesser, though mighty, god. They do not believe in the Trinity...that Jesus is one with God, which means that they do not place faith in Christ as their Savior and Lord. They believe that when Jesus was born on earth, he was a mere human and not God in human flesh and He was resurrected spiritually from the dead, but not physically.

The list of such religions are long and sordid, thus knowing where you stand on this issue is crucial. It’s kind of a big deal!

We spoke last week about how the false faith “gnostics” had infiltrated the Colossi church. The Gnostic’s and their modern incarnations, claimed...*and claim*, that God made and affected the world through a series of “emanations” from Himself and that Christ was one of these emanations. Paul asserts that Christ is not an emanation from God, but God Himself! Not one of many, but the **only** begotten...

“first-born” does not simply mean he was born first...rather, it emphasizes priority and sovereignty. How do we know this? Jacob was called the “first-born” despite the fact that Esau was born first in birth order.

1:16-17

Verse 16 tells us that, “*all things are created by Him,*” which again scripturally supports the principle that He is one with Jehovah God. (Note John 1:1-3) Obviously He could not have ‘been created’ if all things were created **by** Him. Nothing exists without His express permission, and that also profoundly affects how we see, understand, and interact, with the world around us. For this includes governments, institutions and individuals.

Verse 17 says “all things consist” which means(gr) all things “held together.” This includes the very atomic structure of the natural world. It includes the very molecules of those who beat Him and crucified Him. Apart from Him, the universe would explode. What holds the universe together? They used to call it “atomic glue” because science really doesn’t know. But I know...

One day it appears that He will simply “let go” of it all. 2Peter 3:10-11 says “...*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...*”

1:18

What is **our** part in the Christian walk, and **what is God’s**? Understanding the answer to this question is crucial to successful and consistent Christian living. What can I expect from Him and what has He promised to me, His child? And then in turn, what is He expecting from me?

The church in Colossi was struggling in both of these areas. Because of false teachers creeping into the church and teaching false concepts, the believers there were getting confused. You might be surprised at the clarity and emphatic nature of the answer to both of those questions presented here in these next few verses. For as usual, it is not the lack of information that prevents us from receiving God's direction, more often it is our refusal to hear the truth.

Christ is our head, as we are the "body" of Christ. We are "the church." Much more than a building or an organization. As the physical body cannot function without its head, the Body of Christ cannot function without Jesus Christ.

"the firstborn" (Gr) meaning "priority, first in importance!" **"from the dead"**... we too, shall experience this **"from the dead."** Two things must occur to "regenerate" a person. Firstly, there must be forgiveness of sin. But if this was all that occurred, then we would still be lost. This would be similar to removing a bullet from a dead man; the cause of death would be removed, but the man would still be dead! In addition, there must be a giving of new life...spiritual life. This is where we so often stumble. This is the complete gospel. He returned from the dead, that we might also conquer death, and experience new and abundant life.

Note **"in all things!"** All things whether we acknowledge such or live in light of such. **It's all His. Everything.** We are allowed to borrow and use, but never own and hoard. He is the boss, the landlord, the king. Do we *place Him...allow Him*, in that position of our lives, or does He just get the leftovers of our time, money, heart, and actions? Many of us have lives that are compartmentalized like a TV dinner; compartments for each area of our lives. This is a failed model and will result in our fall.

1:19

"all the fullness"...or **"filled with all"** of God. **"Fullness"** literally means the sum total of the divine powers and attributes of God. These are the power and attributes that are affected upon us with the filling of the Holy Spirit...the third manifest of "God," one capable and willing to literally possess us. If we are feeling empty, perhaps it's because we don't live close enough to Christ and are unwilling to surrender all, thinking that some things are actually ours to hold on to!

1:20

We describe this **"making peace"** with the term **"reconciliation."** This occurred by Jesus Christ shedding His blood upon the cross. For without this blood being shed, we still "owe." We will still be debtors...lost, and unforgiven! Hebrews 9:22 says "... according to the law of Moses, nearly everything was purified with blood. For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness."

We have to know that there is nothing innately in us that motivated Christ to do such a thing. There was no inherent qualities or attributes that made us so deserving! Romans 5:8 tells us instead that **"God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."** And because of that sacrifice we have been "reconciled" to God. "...since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation." Romans 5:9-10. Since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son *while we were still his enemies*, we stand redeemed in our new love and life of the Son!

We are reconciled to God through Christ's death and we are saved by Christ's life. Paul has left no room for any other view than this: Jesus is God in flesh, the only path to redemption, the only road to eternal life, and the only sufficient power to deal with this world and this life. That rules out adding anyone or anything to Christ...the law, mother Mary, church attendance, extra-biblical rules, anything!

1:21-22

NOTE: **He has reconciled...**

HE reconciled, or He made us...

Holy: “pure and set apart”

Blameless: “faultlessness, without blemish”

Above reproach: “free from accusation”

God has reconciled those who were naturally separated from Him because of sin and were by nature His enemies. Paul was not inferring that now we have universal “every-one-is-in” salvation without personal action. He is addressing believers, those who truly believe and receive the truth that the blood shed by Jesus Christ has made us right with God. **Our** part is still coming, and encompasses that acknowledgment of His redemption “door” *and* (and this part is crucial) the surrender of our lives and living unto that reality.

1:23

“If”...? This verse seems to lean heavy into the arminianistic position that you can lose your salvation. This is another huge division in the greater church today, and is driven by our need to embrace an extreme position instead of accepting what is written. Can one actually *lose* his or her salvation once it is acquired? No...one would have to negate a plethora of scriptures to take that black and white position. But if one was never truly born again...never truly surrendered his or her life and living, then you absolutely can “fall away” because you were never “inside” to begin with. I admit it is a fine line at times. The Greek here can equally be translated “since” instead of “if.” And that adds a great deal of clarity.

Scripture is clear: one is not saved by continuing in the faith, rather he continues in the faith because he is saved. Our continuing in the faith is not a means of salvation, but proof OF salvation. To believe otherwise, would void all that Paul has said in this letter thus far (and for that matter, ALL of scripture.) We would then shoulder our standing before the Father ourselves rather than depending on Christ and the cross.

(1John 5:11-12, John 1:12, 3:36, 5:24)

The question, as always; **ARE you saved to begin with?** If a person HAS been saved, there WILL be change in behavior, a reflection of the power of God present in one’s life, a forward movement in discipleship even as we stumble through our imperfection. If we do depart, then we were never saved to begin with. Just because someone can “walk onto the field” doesn’t make him or her a “player.” So despite the fact that the strict arminianistic position approaches the issue from the wrong direction and with flawed theology, the end result is the same, and thus becomes a bit of a moot subject. In the end, you are still lost. It is not something that one should be stressed about...for that would negate the fact that **God** is holding our salvation, not us. But it is something one should be sure about, consistently testing ourselves as scripture calls for, to establish evidence that we have indeed been transformed. If that is happening, you are on safe ground, because you cannot “transform” yourself, or Jesus died for nothing. And moreover, just because you fell down doesn’t mean you are going to or have to stay down. Get up. If you don’t, *you are lost.*

1:24

Paul now says he rejoices in his own sufferings, for it is all for them, for Christ, for the kingdom, for the gospel, that he is imprisoned. Paul clearly considered it an honor and a normal part of being a disciple to suffer for the furthering of the kingdom. How different today’s believer thinks! Phil 3:9-11 “*Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;*

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

While such “heat” from outside can be uncomfortable, the reality is that if Satan is not working against you, then you apparently are causing him no concern! The apostles understood that truth, and rejoiced that they were attacked and slandered as Christ Himself was!

1:25

“**minister**”...is not a professional, a boss, or a chief. It is not a vocation, but rather a calling. The word means literally, “**servant.**” And Paul was a servant. The word minister in its original means “one who executes the commands. of a master or a king.”

1:26-27

“**mystery**”...or “something that was previously not known.” What mystery is Paul referring to here? Perhaps that salvation would be provided for them also as Gentiles. But even more likely, that Jew and Gentile alike would be united into one body of Christ. The Gentiles too could be “complete in Him.” Perhaps it’s the mystery of why God would ever love us, and further, live in us...(vs 27)

“**riches**” (Gr) means “abundance.” And what is this abundance, these riches? Christ in us, the life we live in Him here and now as well as the coming life with Him in heaven!

1:28

“**preach**” or “**announce.**” That’s a call for and to us all, not just the pastors and evangelists. It is a genuine part of a Christians living.

“**warning**”; many people have trouble with this one, not wanting to humble themselves to receive warning or to be bold enough to declare one! If danger exists, *and indeed we know it does*, then I would be failing you if warning were not given.

“**teaching**”; has to do with the maturing of the believer. The church today usually gets a lot of preaching and very little teaching. Preaching is “proclaiming,” while “teaching” is “explaining.”

“**Perfect**” (Gr) means “complete and mature”

1:29

“**labor**”? Yes, despite the lazy and passive attitude so pervasive in the greater church today, there is actually work involved in this lifestyle. This is some of our part of the Christ relationship. But not work under our own power, but like all things in Christ, it is HIM working IN us, that provides the direction, motivation, energy, and purpose for our work in Him. *Are you ‘laboring’ for the Lord today?*