

THE SCROLLS

All is Well | Colossians 1:15-23

Life Lesson

Sin didn't just harm our relationship with God; it created a chasm we could never cross. Yet God, in His love, reached out to us through Jesus—fully God and fully man—to do what we couldn't do ourselves. Jesus created us, sustains us, and redeemed us with His own blood. Because of who He is, He alone is worthy to be Savior and Lord. When we grasp the fullness of Christ's identity and the depth of His sacrifice, it transforms how we live. It calls us to trust Him completely, to base our faith on sound doctrine, to reject anything that diminishes His supremacy, and to give Him first place in every part of our lives.

Examine Scripture

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and by him all things hold together. 18 He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile everything to himself,

No Longer Enemies

As we read last week in Isaiah 59, sin causes a separation between God and man. This separation is a chasm that cannot be bridged by any act of man, whether it be religion, good works, or moral efforts. The separation is not just the distance between man and God; it reflects a breakdown of man's intended communion with Him. It is not simply a distortion of a relationship; it is a complete reversal of what God designed. Man was His special creation, formed and fashioned for a relationship with Him. However, when sin entered, not only was there separation and death, but the relationship shifted from friendship with God to enmity against God (Rom. 5:10; James 4:4). In our sin, apart from Christ, there is no peace with God, for we are His enemies: "The mindset of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it is unable to do so. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7-8).

Thus, our Savior enters! What we could not do for ourselves, Jesus accomplished through His incarnation, death, and resurrection. Our text beautifully highlights Jesus' worthiness and power to reconcile us to God. Through Christ, we are no longer enemies. We are even more than friends. We are His children and joint heirs!

This is the meaning of Christmas! God came to us because we could not get to Him (Is. 7:13 and Matt. 1:23). In Paul's Christological hymn, he demonstrates why Jesus alone can save us from our sins and bridge the separation between God and us. Jesus alone can provide us with peace with God, so that we are no longer enemies.

Before we dive into the main message, we first need to understand the context of Paul's letter to the Colossian Church. In this letter, Paul is preparing the Colossians to stand against a heresy that was beginning to infiltrate the church. This heresy blended Christian doctrine with Gnosticism. Gnosticism was a common belief system that affected the early Church. Some of the most typical heretical ideas of Gnosticism included: salvation through "secret knowledge" and mysticism; a dualistic view of the physical and spiritual worlds, in which the physical world was seen as inherently evil; and a denial of Christ's

whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. 21 Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds as expressed in your evil actions. 22 But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him— 23 if indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that you heard. This gospel has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and I, Paul, have become a servant of it.

- Circle “image” in (v. 15). Write (v. 9) above it to show the meaning of “image.”
- Underline each occurrence of “all” in (vs. 15-17).
- Bracket “by Him” and “through Him” in (v. 17).
- Circle “head” and “firstborn” in (v. 18). Draw a line to “first place.”
- Circle “dwell” and write (John 1:14) in the margin.
- Underline “through Him” in (v. 20).
- Circle “peace” in v. 20.
- Box “but” indicating contrast in v. 22.

Personal Notes

deity. Because of this, the heresy viewed the incarnation of Christ as problematic—if Jesus was truly flesh and blood, then He, along with the entire physical creation, was corrupt and evil. Therefore, Gnostics rejected the idea of the incarnation and Christ’s bodily resurrection. They believed Jesus only “appeared” to have a body; He was a spiritual being, not a physical one. Additionally, if the material world were corrupt, then God could not touch matter; thus, God used agents in creation but was not directly involved in the act of creation.

Our text, Paul’s Christological hymn, is not merely a slap in the face of Gnosticism; it is a death blow to this heresy. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul points to Jesus as the image of God, the Creator and Sustainer of all creation, fully God and fully man, preeminent over all things! In other words, Paul not only demonstrates the importance of Jesus but also the importance of sound, biblical theology. Without Jesus being everything as described in Scripture, we have no hope of salvation. We have no hope of peace, and we are left in our sin.

Vs. 15-16

In these verses, we see the power of Jesus. First of all, Jesus is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (v. 15). Jesus embodies the fullness of God’s nature and likeness. He is the very glory of God. As Paul writes earlier in (v. 9): “For the entire fullness of God’s nature dwells bodily in Christ.” The writer of Hebrews states, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature” (Heb. 1:3). In other words, everything that God is, Jesus is. He is fully God; He is coequal and coeternal with God. Also, Jesus is the “firstborn over all creation” (v. 15). This emphasizes Jesus’ supremacy over all creation. It carries the imagery of the firstborn son being the sole heir and representative of his father. Similarly, Jesus is the heir to the kingdom of God and the very representative of the Father. In other words, He is Lord and Master over God’s household.

Secondly, these verses show Jesus’ power, for He created all things, visible and invisible. Again, Paul is directing this toward the Gnostic heresy. Jesus is not just the creator of the spiritual world (the invisible world), but also of the physical world (the visible world), and until the corruption brought about by Adam’s sin, both were good. Jesus is the Creator of all things. John reminds us of this in (John 1:1-13): “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.” Notice what Paul writes in (v. 16): “all things have been created through him and for him.” Perhaps this is why Jesus is so compassionate and determined to save us; we are His special creation! He knows the purpose for which we were created. He sees the beauty beyond the ugliness of sin. He sees the light in the midst of darkness.

Personal Notes

We are rightfully His both in creation and in redemption. He created us and redeemed us.

Vs. 17-18

These verses emphasize the supremacy of Jesus. He is above all and must have first place in everything. First, Jesus is “before all things and by him all things hold together” (v. 17). He is not only the One who holds everything together, but He is also the reason they are held together. He is the Sustainer, the universal glue that keeps everything in its place. As one commentator writes, “He keeps the cosmos from becoming a chaos.” Yet, He is also the purpose—the very reason for all things. He is before all things because there is nothing more important or deserving of our full attention than He is. This is why it is entirely rational and right for Jesus to declare: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, and even his own life—he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). Using a Hebrew idiom (a common literal form of comparison), Jesus is speaking comparatively, saying, “Compared to your immense love for Me, your love for others looks like hate in comparison.” Only one who has preeminence and priority can make such a demand.

Paul continues to show Jesus’ preeminence by stating that Jesus is “the head of the body, the church” (v. 18). Christ is the head, the authority of the Church. The Church has no authority apart from Christ; He must guide everything the Church, universal and local, does. Why? Paul gives the reasons: “he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead” (v. 18). Jesus was the first to experience full, complete resurrection. One commentator writes, “He rose from the dead in order that his preeminence might become universal, extending both to the old creation and to the new.” He is the head of the Church because He was the first to be bodily resurrected and glorified. Again, this is in rebuttal to Gnosticism, which denies physical, bodily resurrection.

If it was not clear that Jesus has preeminence over all things, including us, Paul writes, “so that he might come to have first place in everything” (v. 18). In other words, He is Lord because He is first, or above, all things. We owe everything to Jesus, especially our creation and salvation. He created us, and he purchased us with His own blood (Rev. 5:9). Therefore, we are twice His!

Vs. 19-20

Again, Paul is demonstrating the error of the Gnostic belief that Jesus was not fully God. Paul writes, “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (Jesus)” (v. 19). As we have already noted, Jesus is fully God and fully man. He lacks no divine nature or attributes. Everything that God is, Jesus is!

Personal Reflection

1. In what parts of my life do I still feel the effects of separation from God, and how does Christ's work of reconciliation address those areas?
2. How does recognizing Jesus as both fully God and fully man deepen my appreciation for the incarnation and the true meaning of Christmas?
3. If Jesus genuinely has preeminence over all things, what areas of my life have I not fully surrendered to His lordship?
4. In what ways do I need to grow in sound, biblical theology so that I can better recognize and resist false beliefs or subtle distortions of the Gospel?
5. How does knowing that Christ created me, sustains me, and redeemed me influence how I view my purpose, identity, and daily walk with Him?

Commentaries

Believer's Bible Commentary by William MacDonald

Expositor's Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): New Testament edited by Kenneth Barker

NIV Application Commentary: Colossians by David Garland

Mt. Zion's Mission

*Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to **MAKE, MATURE, and MULTIPLY** disciples of Jesus Christ.*

The keyword Paul uses is “dwell.” Paul uses the Greek word “katoikeō,” which means to settle or inhabit permanently. It carries the idea of God dwelling in the temple, always present for worshippers. Interestingly, in contrast, John uses a different word in (John 1:14): “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” John chose to use the word “skēnoō,” which means to “pitch a tent or to tabernacle.” This refers to Jesus’ temporary dwelling or living among us, just as the Tabernacle was a temporary dwelling for God. Yet, Paul uses a more permanent word to refer to the fullness of God dwelling in Jesus.” In other words, this was not just a temporary imparting of divine powers. It was the very nature of God fully dwelling in Jesus, permanently, in the eternal past, present, and future. The fullness of deity dwells in Him not only because Jesus possesses divine attributes, but because He is God. Paul is powerfully demonstrating the deity of Jesus.

This is important for Paul’s next point: our reconciliation through the blood of Jesus. Again, in direct opposition to the heresy of Gnosticism, Paul highlights our salvation as a result of Jesus’ blood shed on the cross. Don’t miss this! This is the core purpose of the Incarnation, which we celebrate at Christmas. As stated in (Heb. 9:22): “According to the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” In His pre-incarnate state, Jesus lacked the essential requirement for the once-for-all sacrifice: blood. So, He set aside His regal garments of glory and constricted Himself to the measure of a womb, clothing Himself in flesh. Flesh that would be beaten with whips during scourging and pierced by nails during crucifixion. Flesh that would shed blood down the rough wood of the cross; blood that was pure, holy, and free from sin. Blood that would satisfy God’s wrath and grant us salvation. Therefore, Jesus, “by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross,” (v. 20) reconciled us and bridged the gap between God and man. Jesus was born to die. He took on flesh, shed His blood to redeem and save us.

Vs. 21-23

So, what did Jesus accomplish on the cross? Look again at (vs. 21-22): “Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds as expressed in your evil actions. But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him.” One commentary defines reconciliation as restoring “to a right relationship or standard, or to make peace where formerly there was enmity.” The result of His incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection? Forgiveness. Salvation. Redemption. Peace. We are no longer without hope! We are no longer lost in darkness! We are no longer enemies of God! This is hope! This is peace! This is the Gospel! This is Christmas!