

This morning we'll be studying Colossians Chapter 1 starting in verse 15.

In the context of the book this passage is almost out of place. Paul had been marveling at the gospel and what God was doing in the church at Colossae, we see this in verses 13+14

Colossians 1:13-14

- (13) He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,
- (14) in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

But once he mentions Jesus he chases a rabbit trail and has to expound on how incredible Jesus is. This is our passage for this morning.

Colossians 1:15-23

- (15) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
- (16) For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.
- (17) And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
- (18) And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.
- (19) For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
- (20) and through him 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) 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,
- (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.

What we think about Jesus is of critical importance. This is obvious for our salvation, if Jesus is just a man, His sacrifice was meaningless.

As believers though we must be careful to let scripture define who Jesus is. It is so easy to reduce Jesus to be in our image. We reduce His glory and power and invent a Jesus in our minds that is easier to interact with.

This is why Paul breaks his flow of thought to give all of these incredible statements of who Jesus is. Paul wants to make sure that everyone is on the same page with who he is talking about.

Paul is giving the Colossian believers an accurate picture of who Jesus is. Seeing Jesus for who He really is will change our thinking and in turn change our lives.

In verse 15 we find our first attribute:

Colossians 1:15

(15) He is the **image** of the **invisible** God,

This seems like a contradiction

He is an image of a God who is invisible, these two words don't go together.

But we have to understand how Paul is using the word image here. Paul is saying that Jesus is the full representation, manifestation, exact replica of God.

Jesus is 100% fully God. This is a foundation, and cornerstone of Christianity. John makes this very clear at the start of His gospel.

John 1:1-2

(1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**.

(2) He was in the beginning with God.

John 1:14

(14) And **the Word became flesh** and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus was not created, but is God, He was there in the beginning. This claim shocked the Jewish world at the time. They saw Christ's claims as heresy.

John 8:56-59

(56) Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."

(57) So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"

(58) Jesus said to them, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.**"

(59) So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

The Jews understood what Christ meant by saying "before Abraham was, I am" He was claiming to be God. You can tell this by their reaction, they wanted to stone Him.

These claims of Christ divinity cannot be missed. If Jesus is not fully God then His sacrifice on the cross would not have been able to pay for our sins. He would have had His own sin to pay for.

This is not a minor theological point or a debate about the trinity. When we think about Christ we must view Him as God. Fully eternal. It is so easy to look on His humanity and forget that He is God, Himself.

Verse 15 continues with another attribute about who Christ is:

Colossians 1:15

(15) He is the image of the invisible God, **the firstborn of all creation.**

Again, we have a seeming contradiction.

If Christ is fully God and had no beginning then how can He be described as the first born?

Paul is not using the term firstborn here to mean Christ had a beginning or creation but that He is the one to be praised, to receive honor and to receive the inheritance.

In the Jewish culture the firstborn son received the blessing and a double portion of the inheritance.

Paul is using the term as a title, not a description of birth order.

We have an example of this when Esau sells Jacob His birth right. Esau was selling the title, the rank and position. This is how Paul is using it here in verse 15.

Another example of firstborn being used as a title can be seen in Psalm 89:26-28, the passage is describing King David.

Psalm 89:26-28

(26) He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.'

(27) And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.

(28) My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him.

In this passage God declares that he will make David the firstborn. Remember David was the youngest of **8** brothers. God is declaring that David would receive the honor that was due to the firstborn.

Jesus is God and deserves all honor, power, rank, and inheritance. You can feel confident when someone shows up to your door and tries to tell you that this verse proves Jesus was born, that this verse is in fact declaring Jesus as God. Paul continues to describe Jesus in verse 16.

Colossians 1:16

(16) For by him **all things were created**, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things were created through him and for him.

Jesus created all things, John echoes this fact in John 1:3

John 1:3

(3) All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Often we think about God the father as being the creator. And we wouldn't be wrong Paul does in Romans 11:33-36

Romans 11:33-36

(33) Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

(34) "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"

(35) "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"

(36) For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Paul uses the same language to describe the Father as He uses to describe the Son.

But this verse in Colossians is clear that all things were created through Jesus. And this proves Paul's point that Jesus is God. Jesus created all things because God created all things.

Isaiah is clear that God was alone in creation.

Isaiah 44:24

(24) Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who made all things, **who alone** stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself,

Jesus is God. He has all the power as God does. Awesome statement on the trinity

Do we realize that He has this kind of power? He is the ultimate creator of everything in the universe.

We can often think of Christ as timid, soft spoken, and if we are not careful almost weak. He is the powerful creator.

Not only did He create all things, all things were created for Him!

Colossians 1:16

(16) For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things were created through him **and for him**.

If you have ever wondered what your purpose is, here is your answer. All things in heaven and on earth have been created for the glory of Jesus.

Philippians 2:10-11

(10) so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

(11) and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

All of creation is not about us! But so often we act like it is. We act like the focus of the world should be on humanity, and even more selfishly me.

We must look up and realize everything that exists is for Him! It is all for His glory.

In Colossians Paul continues to declare Christ's glory in verse 17

Colossians 1:17

(17) And he is before all things, and **in him all things hold together**.

Christ is the sustainer. Not only did he create all things, not only are all things for Him, He holds all things together.

Science does a great job of describing how the world functions and works. If you've ever taken a physics class you know that on earth there is a constant gravitational pull. Have you ever wondered what causes that pull? Why is it constant?

Have you ever considered how a cloud works? Water, floats in the air until it is above the right area and then trickles down. The weight of that water is massive and it just floats there:

One inch of rain on a square foot of land weighs 5.20 pounds.
One inch of rain on one acre of land weighs 113.31 tons.

(<http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/archive/dickinso/research/2004/range04c.htm>)

Christ is holding all things together.

Hebrews 1:1-3 NP

Hebrews 1:1-3

- (1) Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,
- (2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, **through whom also he created the world.**
- (3) He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, **and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.** After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Christ is upholding the universe with the power of His word. These are all descriptions that we normally would think about God the father.

Scripture is clear that this is the type of power that Jesus has.

This makes Christ's sacrifice all the more amazing. He lowered Himself from this kind of power to suffer as a sinner on the cross.

Philippians 2:5-8

- (5) Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,
- (6) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God **a thing to be grasped**, (held onto)
- (7) but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.
- (8) And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

If Christ wasn't as exalted His humility and sacrifice would not have been as great but He is God and became a servant.

Through Christ sacrifice He purchased the Church.

Act 20:28

- (28) Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Because of Christ sacrifice the Church is possible. **There is no Church without His sacrifice.** This is why He is the head of the church in verse 18.

Colossians 1:18

- (18) **And he is the head of the body, the church.** He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Christ's death and resurrection made the Church possible, and made Him to be the preeminent one. He is the one to receive all glory. It is all about Jesus, not us. We are not the focus. He is the preeminent one, it is about His glory.

All that we do as a church must be focused on the head, Jesus.

All that we do in our lives must be focused on the preeminent one. He should be before us and our focus in all things.

Colossians 1:19-20

(19) For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

Not just part God, He is fully God

(20) and **through him to reconcile to himself all things**, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Christ will reconcile all things to himself through His blood.

This is the picture we see in Revelation. At the start when all things are going to be set right, no one is found who is able to open the scroll and set all things right.

Revelation 5:1-4

(1) Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

(2) And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "**Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?**"

(3) And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,

(4) and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

This is where Christ comes in because of His tremendous power, and His tremendous sacrifice.

He is able, and worthy to make all things new.

Revelation 5:9-12

(9) And they sang a new song, saying, "**Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals**, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,

(10) and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

(11) Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,

(12) saying with a loud voice, "**Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!**"

He is the only one who is worthy. He is the only one who is able. He will reconcile all things.

It is this Jesus that reconciled us!

Colossians 1:21-23

(21) And you, who once were alienated and **hostile** in mind, doing evil deeds,

This was you and me. Separated from God, but more than that we were hostile.

Colossians 1:22

(22) he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

We have been reconciled to God through Jesus.

We went from hostile to holy.

It can be easy to see the World at times as hostile towards God but we must realize this described all of our hearts at one time.

1Corinthians 6:9-11

(9) Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,

(10) nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

(11) **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

The more we come to realize how sinful our hearts were before Christ the more thankful we will be for salvation.

If I was a step from heaven on my own then salvation didn't do too much for me. But if I was one of these, hostile and alienated...

Colossians 1:23

(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.

The if to start this verse can be very confusing at first glance.

It can seem like we can lose our salvation, but there are two answers to this.

The first is think about the context of everything we have just looked at.

All of these incredible statements of Christ's power, His sustaining hand over all of creation

If this verse meant that we are the ones responsible to hold on to our salvation it would mean that Christ can sustain the entire universe with His word but He is not powerful enough to sustain your salvation.

The second answer is understanding the if, in the greek. This is a **first class condition statement** which means it is better translated as since. It is a statement that is viewed as a fact or that it is a forgone conclusion.

(23) if indeed (since) 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.

In this passage Paul points out that Jesus is God, Jesus is the creator, and sustainer all things were made for Him. He is the preeminent one, He bought the Church with His blood and is able to reconcile all things because of His sacrifice. This is the Jesus we follow.

He is not timid He is not weak. He is all powerful creator. He sustains all things and He was willing to die for our sins. He is the only one who was able to do that. Trust in Christ. Believe that He is God and that He died in your place. These truths should change everything about us. **If this is who Jesus truly is, then our entire lives should be focused on giving Him the glory.** He deserves it not us. We are not the focus. This world, the Bible, it is not about us, it is about this Jesus that Paul has been describing. **When we minimize Jesus something will become larger.**

Romans 1:21-23

(21) For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

(22) Claiming to be wise, they became fools,

(23) and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Usually ourselves we become self-focused. We must think about Jesus based on these truths. The creator, sustainer, preeminent one, who is worthy to reconcile us to God. **We must ask God to widen our view of Christ. We must ask Him to show us how large, and incredible Jesus is. It is only then that our lives will be focused on glorifying Him and not ourselves.**