

What we have learned from the book of Colossians, already, is that the means by which we are reconciled to God and the means by which we grow and change are the same: the gospel of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. It is by hearing, knowing, and believing in Him, in His sinless life, His death for us, and His resurrection to glory, that we are transferred into His Kingdom and changed into His image. He alone, the person, is the only mediator between God and Man, Paul wrote Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:5, and which Jesus Himself is quoted as telling his disciples, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. Nobody comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6). He alone claims to know the Father because He has always existed in relationship to the Father, having preexisted anything that was created.

Yet, walking like this is not as easy as it sounds, is it? For thousands of years Christians have found ways to add things to this good news as a means of encountering God in a more qualitative way, or gaining some manifestation of God outside of the gospel that will really make us better, make our lives more full. It is a pressure in our lives to add something to Christ Jesus as a means for fulfillment.

The danger in Colossae was a false teaching that elevated a secret wisdom through the means of something *in addition to* Jesus. There were some who were teaching that you must have visions in order to really live abundantly; that Jesus may have got you access, but you must go and mine the gold of God. Others taught that you must fast from foods to gain wisdom or knowledge of God, to really experience His presence. Others taught that you must avoid certain feasts or celebrate certain feasts, etc. All of these are really the presentation that you must find something beyond Christ, some other mediation,

some other power, some other experience by which you can gain more of life, some experiential knowledge of God, some wisdom. Sometimes we add relational success (good romantic life, successful kids, great friendships), or career success (well-respected, well-paying, socially significant), or social success (respect, being a ‘history-maker’, doing great things, etc.) as the means to finding fulfillment, to living abundantly.

But why is it wrong to add such things to our hope? Why shouldn’t we simply add good things from wherever we might find them, if we gain wisdom from them and if they make others’ lives better? Paul, in this passage, exposes something surprising: the Wisdom of God, the means of living well, is not an experience to be gained or a method to be followed, but a person to be known. The reason that Christianity is not just something that we add to life is because of the greatness of Jesus. He alone is suitable to reveal God. You don’t need to reach your dreams...you need to know Christ Jesus. You don’t need to find your destiny...you need to know Christ Jesus as the Scriptures have revealed Him.

Therefore, **Paul sets out to show us Jesus**, and in the following passage he summarizes he and Timothy’s ministry as “we proclaim Him.” Remember from vv13-14, the great work of God is a transfer of our lives from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the Son whom He loves. Why is Jesus enough? Because He is greater than anything else, and Paul wants to awaken us to the beauty, the depth, and the drama of Jesus and His story in order to fix our eyes on the supremacy and the sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

He is the image of God. The Icon. Notice that Paul doesn’t say that God’s Son is *in* the image of God. No, Adam and Eve were made *in* the image of God. All humans are

made *in* the image of God. No, he says that God's Son *is* the image of God. All that God is and does, the Son is and does and makes visible to us. He, then, is infinite AND viewable. Contemplate that for a moment. You cannot sound such depths, but let's swim as deeply as we can before our limited thoughts must come up for air.

The Son of God is boundless, without edges. If I could speed through the silent soundings of space, I know that the Universe, as immense as it is, still has edges. Yet, even its limited vastness cannot be fathomed by us, who can barely see across the street. Our limits are clear, though we often deny them. Trillions of galaxies. Trillions! I can't even fathom what a trillion is, let alone a trillion galaxies, each made up of billions of stars. And each of those a diversity of stars of varying sizes and intensities powered by continuous atomic fusion trillions of times over. Stars whose density sometimes becomes so great they implode and explode into supernovas of such vast power that we have seen them in full daylight over distances so great that even light takes tens of thousands of years to travel. If I were to travel to the ends of this vast expanse, to reach the edges of the Universe, I would not reach the edge of the Son of God. He runs beyond the finite. These thoughts are too small, and yet in them are endless mysteries in the brushstrokes of the Son on the canvas of creation.

This passage of Colossians is one of the clearest expressions of the preexistence of the Son of God. That is, He, as the fullness of Deity (2:9), was existing before anything that has ever been or will be made was made. **He is outside of Creation**, because all of Creation was made by Him, through Him, He was the instrument by which God created all that has been created.

He is the firstborn *over* all creation. Firstborn, does not mean the first in order, but rather the first in rank. For example, he is also called “the firstborn of the dead.” Yet, he was not the first to die, nor the first in time to be raised up again. And Paul does not call him the firstborn of the resurrected or glorified, but of the dead ones. It is about rank, authority, rights, and honor, not timing. Some have tried to use this phrase to indicate that the Son of God is a part of creation, that he was the first created being which God made, and then made everything through Him. Yet, that is not what *firstborn* necessarily means. It is a title of inheritance and honor – the one to whom the family name is conferred and who receives the blessing and honor of the Father. In Jeremiah 38:9, the Lord calls Ephraim his firstborn of Israel, even though Israel’s (Jacob’s) firstborn son in order was Manasseh. And the LORD said of David, in foreshadowing Jesus, in Psalm 89, “I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.” David wasn’t the first in order, but in rank, and the Messiah was an even greater Son of David who received the eternal kingdom, the greatest rank over the kings of the earth.

Paul bases such a rank on the fact that ALL that has been made was made through Him. Thus, by logical necessity, He preexisted ALL that has been made. He does not say “all else” which has been made. For Paul, a pious Jew, to assert the creative acts of God were performed and accomplished by the Son is about as clear as one could be that Jesus is God without confusing the distinction between the Father and the Son. The Father speaks, the Word (in the language of John from John chapter 1) creates. There is such agreement between John and Paul on these points of the nature of the Son of God, the Word preexisting, the Wisdom of God which is a person, that one knows that

they speak the same story of the same Son of God, fully God, preexisting all that has been made, revealing the Father, and the divine agent of creation.

Now, this idea of the divine agent of creation was commonly understood by Jews to be the “**Wisdom**” of God. The book of Proverbs speaks this way. Yet, what Paul is doing here is transforming this idea of a “master-workman” of God from a proverbial figure of speech into a personal being in relationship to God as Son to Father. He is emphasizing the Son of God’s supremacy over all other claimants to the knowledge of God. In fact, Jesus made this claim Himself when stated, “All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and whomever to whom the Son decides to reveal Him.” (Matthew 11:27) Thus, Jesus is claiming divine knowledge of the Father and the Father of Him on equal terms, that everything attributed to God is found in Jesus, and even creative agency of all that exists is attributed to Christ. In the words of Martin Hengel, “The exalted Jesus is not only pre-existent, but also shares in the *opus proprium Dei* [the work belongs to God], creation...No revelation, no speech, and no action of God can take place without him or beside Him.”

All things which have been created were created by the Christ, the eternally existing Son of God, whether they were created in the heavens or in the earth. They were created by Him.

And He rules over it all. He has all authority over all that exists. By sheer fiat sub-atomic particles appeared from nowhere...and from nothing. At His word they snap-to and assemble into atoms. Molecules bond and arrange themselves into foundational elements. With His song they dance, stretch and spin, leap and clash in perfect poetry,

weak forces and strong forces oscillate until every heavenly body burst forth in a wash of luminous splendor...at His word, who is the Son. Every atom awaits its cue in fervent expectation and at His word it plays its part in His symphony. The Son is the firstborn over all, because He made all things and rules all things.

And these are only the things we can see. He rules over the unseen, invisible things, the things which we often neglect in our arrogance or worship in our foolishness, but He rules the powers behind the powers. He rules the energies underneath the energy because they were all made by him. No spirit is outside His control, not Satan, not the angels, not any invisible force, not the will of any man. He waits for nobody and nothing to execute His purpose, because He is over them all. No other power is required by Him, or can add to Him. If you have Him, you need no other. This One rules over all things and by his word they are being held together.

He maintains EVERYTHING. All things consist, and are composed, because He alone wills it to be. God did not die on the cross, for if He did the very cross on which Christ hung would have vaporized into non-existence, the earth popped like a bubble into nothingness, the Universe come undone into the void. No, in the mystery of the cross, God did not die, but the God-Man did, while continuing to maintain, to hold together, to preserve all things, for all things are held together through Him.

The Son is not passive in this world, but always and ever active in all things. Your heart beats and neurons fire and thoughts are wandering now because HE. He decides. He chooses. He acts. He speaks. The only thing keeping you from flying apart into the vastness of the spaces between the particles is the Son of God working the will of His Father. He is *involved*. He is *near*. He is not dispassionate or distant. Your very next

breath is evidence of His mercy and His affection for you. Do you think Him harsh? He is upholding you right now, though he does not need to. He *wants* to. He *wills* to. He *delights* to. His mercies towards your ever-darkened thoughts have been renewed this very morning.

And all things were made *for* Him. **He is the reason creation was created.** He is the goal of all that has being. This story of creation, from the first explosive sound, is moved along as His Word created the very soundwaves on which His voice would travel, generating particles from nothing and drawing them together in the perfect harmony of his song, all for the glory of the Son who glorifies the Father by the very breath of God. The unique one. Uncreated. Infinite. Self-existent. Who does not have life, but IS life. Every life made and maintained through Him who holds all things together and for whom it was all made. There is no more important figure, seen or unseen. There is no greater power, seen or unseen. There is no higher purpose, seen or unseen, than the one eternal God: Father, Son, and Spirit.

The Son is the Head of the church, just as He made all of Creation, so He creates and rules the New Creation, the Church. He is its shaper. It's commander. Its thinker. Its creator and director. He is its wisdom, its lord of all sight and sound. The church does not see. The Son sees and explains to her. The Church does not hear. The Son hears and interprets to her. The Church does not speak of its own authority, but only what the Head proclaims. We are ambassadors, He is the King. He is preeminent over all things. Incredibly, because He is infinite, even over those who have died, for He knows death intimately, from experience, having slain it from the inside. He is death's master,

the captain of the river Styx and the light which illuminates its darkest halls. We do not fear death, not because death is powerless, but because Jesus is greater than it, and death must submit to His curse-breaking authority.

It was deemed good by God, from eternity, **for all this fullness of infinite deity to dwell** in the infant son of Nazareth. Jesus Christ is not merely a part of the divine, a portion of Godness, or an avatar of God. He is the wholeness of Godness, the fullness of Deity, a word which is categorically only applied to God Himself. All the power of infinity was birthed between the knees of a teenage girl. **Why? Why this way?** Why this audacious move by the One who spoke all things...ALL THINGS...into being and in whom all things...ALL THINGS...consist and are held together?

To reconcile them! They need to be reconciled, for they have been cursed. The broken things, the what-is-wrong things need to be repaired back to God. To restore the harmony which we brought to dissonance in our arrogant dissension to Him. To cast the shadow of mercy upon the walls of the Universe and declare the glory of the Maker through the most humiliating act of power through weakness. Making peace through the blood of His cross.

Through the eternal Son of God's cross, by the God-Man's bleeding death, He purchased peace. He reconciled Creation from the animosity of Man to the righteousness of the Holy God. Why the need for peace and reconciliation?

The blood is necessary because we deserve death for waging war against the most worthy and valuable being and for abusing the Creation which He made. We were, by nature, children of wrath, God's enemies upon whom His just and righteous wrath was

deservedly set to be poured out. We like to think of ourselves as neutral observers, impatient children, or ignorant learners with flawed but good intentions, but never as *enemies*. I mean, we were *passively* lost, but not *actively* evil. But God reveals Humanity as terrorists of Creation, wreaking acts of suicidal warfare upon God's handiwork because we hate God and want to hurt and destroy Him because He rules over us. *We suppressed the truth in unrighteousness*, Paul told the Romans. The act of suppression is an active deed, not a passive one. It is a violent work of stifling, silencing, and deception, both self-centered and other-directed. We lie to ourselves and to each other because we hated the truth. We despised God's rule and sovereignty and rights and demanded that He consider us first, love us most, honor us first, and grant to us all delights *on our terms and according to our wisdom*. We deemed it wrong that He would claim such sovereign power over our will, over our loves, over our bodies, and over our treasures. He deemed it right to send the Son to redeem such foolish, ungrateful, vandals of His world. How did we suppress the truth of God's eternal power and sovereignty and rights? In unrighteousness. That is, injustice. We unleashed injustice upon His world in an effort to subjugate Him and His creation to the caliphate of ME. So God "handed us over" to this injustice, both within us and without us, and we suffer the slings and arrows of an enemy too weak to damage God and too arrogant to put down these weapons, thus they are taken and used against ourselves in this battle, the insanity of moral suicide, exacerbating our suffering with the very weapons which we brandished. We are both perpetrators of great evil and also victims of great evil. But, God was never bruised by our petulance, only rightly incensed against wickedness. This bad news is truly bad for us. In fact, it is this fact of

the gospel which most people find repulsive today. We were God's enemies, not mere seekers, not merely ignorant, not merely wandering, but with animosity in our hearts, hatred of the good which God revealed, and terrorists against His rule. So bad, so perverse, so suppressive, and so dead, that the Eternal Son of God *had to come* and rescue us through the blood of His cross!

And this Eternal Son did...and **we executed the Author of Life because** we didn't want to be ruled *by Him*. Alienated from God in our hatred, hostile towards God in our mind, we crucified the Song of Life. But He, the Eternal Creative Word, deemed it good to die like a man, so that through His fleshly death He might hand us over to the Father as holy, unblemished, and blameless. This great King gave His life to ransom such as this, with a purpose to present you to His Father as holy, unblemished, and with nothing left to answer for because He answered every accusation against you with the blood of His cross. The good news is really good. God loves you so greatly that the Eternal Son of God *did come and die in your place so that He may present you without anything left to answer for before the Father!*

Do not move away from this hope, from this One who redeems, who purchases, reconciles, who presents you to the Father of Eternity as holy, complete, perfect, without blame! You who have entrusted yourself to Christ Jesus have been established by Him, settled, so do not move away from the hope of this gospel which you have heard, for it is your only hope! To leave it would be to turn away to a feeble fake, a soundless song, a mindless head which cannot and will not reconcile you to the One who made you.

Because this eternal Son of God is the One who is summing up all things to Himself, who alone reconciles all that is broken and weary and frustrated and impotent.

Whatever else can be asked of God, as to why He does things the way that He does or why He allows sin and suffering and sorrow into this Universe which He spoke, one cannot claim that He is indifferent or uninvolved, because He entered into this world to experience it, to absorb it, to bear it up *for us*, to reconcile us back to God so that God is both righteous in his hatred of evil (as He should be), and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus and are transferred into His kingdom (so He is merciful at the same time). This is only possible because of the blood of His cross.

This is the significance of Jesus of Nazareth: Eternal Son of God, Divine Word, Maker of the heavens and the earth and all that is contained in the realms of existence save Himself, the Sustainer of all things, upholding them by the power of His word, very God of very God, King of God's love who condescended to enter the very world which He made in order to reconcile enemies who betrayed Him, who sought to manipulate and use Him, and who finally acted to murder Him, very man of very man.

He came to war against injustice, but He did not loose the dogs, but was rather born with them and was consumed by them. Eternity birthed in the dung of the muck, and not with the war-cry of the Lion, but with the whimper of the child foretelling the bleating of a lamb. The Eternal One so entered into the totality of our suffering, into our complete mess, into the entirety of our toil and turmoil as to take up the very nature of our weakness, our finitude, our sorrows and sufferings in order to reconcile us *completely*. His humility went all the way down to the dregs of dependence, the futile thrashing of a newborn powerless to feed, warm, or clean himself. The one who moves

stars by His word willed himself to be unable to move his thumb into his mouth. This same humble will would one day restrain the very fists which poured the seas from unleashing Hell on earth when He was being unjustly tortured.

Who is this One in whom are contained all the wisdom and knowledge of God? He is the keeper of the stars, the heart-knower, and the one who turns the will of man like a channel moves the flow of the river. He is the sovereign power upholding all that exists and He came to die like a man to reconcile us by pouring out upon the ground the very blood which he poured into the frame of man. He lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died, so that we may share in the inheritance that he deserves.

This one we remember with reverence. This one we worship with wonder. He is all that we need, and He, alone, is sufficient for our sorrows, abundant for our ailments, plenty for our pardon, and lavish for our life.

He has gone to such great lengths to reconcile us to Himself, how far will He go to hold onto us, if we continue to entrust ourselves to Him who is Grace personified, the God-Man who died that sinners, failures, and enemies might be declared to be children of God. This is the Christ, our King and triumphant victor over every sin which defeats us and every spirit who taunts us and every power who prevails over us, and He can be trusted.

Turn away from pursuing anything else to give you life, to fill you up, to make you abundant. All other pursuit will fail you because they are not capable. All other attempts will disappoint you, for they were made, but not for that. He alone is the

unmade one, the Eternal one for whom you are made, and who gave Himself so freely and graciously and extravagantly to those who sought to silence Him with violence. He alone is worthy of our greatest pursuit, the abundance of our time spent in thought, in contemplation, our worship! To know Him and Him alone is the greatest need of our lives.

So... Whom, then, shall I pursue to know today?