

Colossians Week 2 Part 1

1: 15 - 2: 23

This week we are going to look at Paul addressing the false teaching which was coming into the church at Colossae.

First Paul confronts the teaching that all matter was evil, which included the human body. This resulted in saying that Jesus did not have a real body, if he did this would mean Jesus lived in a sinful state. This teaching led to unbridled sin or self-torture, even self-mutilation, today we say self-harm, all these are, self-denial, known as asceticism. If your body is sinful you either enjoy sin or you enslave it.

Paul argues for the pre-eminence of Christ..

V 15 "Jesus is the image of the invisible God". Image means the exact representation and revelation, or the true likeness. Jesus reveals God's nature and character in all its fullness. Jesus said to Phillip "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." John 14: 9

"Jesus is the firstborn over all creation." Firstborn does not mean he was the first to be created as Jesus was the creator. Firstborn refers to status or place; it means of first importance or first rank. V18 "firstborn from among the dead, so that he might have the supremacy." Jesus was not the first person to rise from the dead, he raised Lazarus and the widow of Nain's son. Elijah raised a widow's son to life. Jesus has the status of being the most important, the firstborn, to have been raised to life.

Romans 8: 29 "that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." Psalm 89: 27 Solomon is called the firstborn of David's sons, which he was not, but he was the most important, he had first place when he reigned as king over Israel.

V 16 Starts "For" could be "because", following on from V 15. Because Jesus is the 'firstborn' of first importance, Paul goes on to stress that Jesus is the creator of all things. By this reasoning Paul is arguing that as the creator Jesus was not created. John states this at the start of his Gospel. John 1: 3 "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." These two passages show that Jesus has ultimate authority over all powers whether they are seen or unseen and all are answerable to Him.

All things exist *in Him, for Him and through Him*. He therefore is the one who has to be acknowledged as pre-eminent, or the most important. If everything is made by Him and for Him then nothing can be evil of itself. Satan and his fallen angels rebelled against God and therefore became evil and now oppose God's goodness and purpose in and through creation.

V 17 Everything in the whole of creation has its purpose and is made whole/complete in and through Jesus. As he was before creation, so he continues today bringing meaning and purpose to our lives.

Jesus is head of His church. V 18

Jesus spoke about church Matthew 16: 18. Church is from the Greek word *ekklesia* which means legislative assembly or selected ones. This is not a religious term, but a political and governmental term used often in classical Greek to describe a group of people gathered together to govern the affairs of a city.

The church in the NT is referred to as a body. This body has many parts and each one has a particular role or function to enable the body to work effectively. Without a head the body is dead, limp, lifeless. Therefore, Jesus as the head brings life and direction. Head in Greek meant source or origin as well as leader and ruler.

Paul describes Jesus as the beginning or could be translated the originator, which as the “firstborn” He is the most important, the supreme ruler of the church. We have the responsibility to listen to the head and function as a body working together responding to the head’s direction.

The church had its origin in Him and today has its functioning in Him. When we respond to Jesus’ love and accept Him as Saviour, we also accept Him as Lord. We are filled with Holy Spirit and become part of His body. This is who we are in Jesus, we are not in isolation. See Acts 2: 42-47 As they met together, worshipped and prayed together, “The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

V 19-20 Jesus is not just another prophet or good man, he is not just someone who had God’s favour on him. Jesus had the fullness of God dwelling in him. Fullness is the Greek word *pleroma*, which means “filled or full up or complete”. In this context it means Jesus is completely God. Dwell means more than just to reside; it means “to be at home permanently”. The very nature, character and power of God was alive and revealed in Jesus. Everything of God filled Jesus in every way. This is shown when Jesus the perfect sacrifice opened the way to have a perfect relationship with God again. This sacrifice of Himself on the cross reversed the effect of sin that had created a barrier between us and God. His death satisfied the wrath of God against sin brought about by Satan, “for all who called on the name of the Lord Jesus would be saved” and taken from slavery to sin into a place of peace with God. Romans 10: 13

Enemies to friends V 21-23

Christ resolved the sin problem, once and for all, on the cross. We have been made holy in God's sight, that means we are set apart from everything associated with sin, and God see us without blemish and free from accusation. Satan is the accuser; God says every debt has been paid by Jesus' sacrifice, there is now no accusation which can be made against a child of His. We become His friend when we turn from sin and put our trust in Jesus.

We need to take control of our minds, which have been renewed. Romans 12: 2 "Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." We need to understand that we are now friends with God, we are no longer enemies, at war with Him, or actively hostile, against Him and therefore separated from His all-surrounding presence.

Paul wanted to assure the Colossian church that the gospel that Epaphras had preached to them was the same gospel that Paul was in prison for preaching. It was the same gospel that was being proclaimed throughout the known world. Nothing had been added, nothing had been taken away, Jesus in his death and resurrection had satisfied God's requirement to free us from the curse of Satan and sin, so continue in faith believing this.

Paul explains why he is in prison 1: 24 – 2: 5

Those opposed to Paul tried to undermine his work and teaching by suggesting that if Paul was truly God's representative, speaking the truth of the gospel, he would not be sat in a Roman prison cell.

Instead of being ashamed of his being locked up, Paul was able to rejoice in being able to suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ and the church. V 24. See Philippians 3: 10 "the fellowship of sharing in Christ's sufferings." Also Acts 5: 41 "counted worthy of suffering disgrace for Jesus."

Paul had been changed from someone who persecuted the church to one who suffered for the church. His attitude was, "what can I put into the church to strengthen it and help it to grow?" not "what can I get out of it for my comfort and status?" Paul still was seeking to build up the 'body of Christ' the church whilst a prisoner.

V 27 Paul had been commissioned by God to proclaim the gospel to the gentiles, those who were not Jews. This was why he was in prison. The gospel to the gentiles offended the Jews so much they wanted Paul to be silenced. Paul was able to say, "this is the glorious riches of the gospel, which is Christ in you."

Paul uses the word "mystery". The false teachers used this word to describe the inner secrets of their religions. They used it to mislead their followers. Paul used it to explain that the Holy Spirit had revealed this "sacred secret" so those wanting to believe would have understanding. See Ephesians 3: 1-13

V 29 Being imprisoned for speaking out about Jesus did not stop Paul, instead he continued to "labour, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me."

Paul did not compromise the message of the gospel. If he had he would not have caused such offence to the Jewish leaders, they would have left him alone, but the gospel would have lost its power. Under the law non-Jews who wanted to follow God would have had to become a Jew and follow all the Jewish laws. Now under the new way, both Jews and Gentiles could enter into a relationship with God. See Romans 10: 12-13 "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

2: 1-5 Although Paul was in prison and had never met the church he was writing to, but this did not stop him from 'struggling', praying with fervour and passion, for this church and the church in Laodicea.

Paul wanted every believer to become mature in their faith in Jesus and maintain their oneness in love for each other. He wanted them to have a proper understanding that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was all that was needed to have a relationship with God, and to have the wisdom to apply that knowledge. It is only through wisdom and knowledge that the believers will not be deceived by the other teaching and cultural pressures they were surrounded with.

We are to be led by the Holy Spirit, but this does not mean we just do what we feel led to do. Paul commends the church for having order, this could be disciplined, standing firm in faith, ensuring they are not led astray by good ideas and cultural pressures.