

NOTES FROM STEVEN DRIVER'S SERMON 14th May am Series in Colossians "Rooted and built up in Christ" Pt 2 "The beauty of Christ's reconciliation"

Text: Colossians 1 verses 15-23

Scripture references from the ESV

Colossians 1:15-23 ¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by^[f] 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^[a] under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

There are many strands that go to make up church, but what defines us as God's people is our relationship with Christ. Paul is addressing the Colossians about their connection with Jesus, and that connection is the theme of this passage. Our connection with Jesus is so important, and although many other voices try to influence us, Paul tells us that we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and must not listen to anything else (**v23**). Like the Colossians, who were being swayed by pagan influences and other false philosophies, we live in a world where people try to add to or take away from God's word, or indeed disregard it completely. We must keep our connection with, and dependency on, Christ. It is the power cord to an effective Christian life. If you pull the plug out and try another way, you will lose the power of God in your ministry. The enemy is real, the battle is furious and Satan will try to make you ineffective by distracting your attention, as he did in the Colossian church.

- Who is this Jesus who demands our attention? This Jesus is God!

Jesus is the invisible made visible; the unknowable made knowable. He is God who took on flesh, and became man. He walked with us and everything about him was perfect.

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. (John 14:8-11)

Yet, in the great mystery of God, no eye has ever seen him, as though he had some kind of form. It is God's Son, the great revelation of God himself, who speaks and reveals himself in his word – both through the Old and New Testaments and by the Holy Spirit by the Holy Spirit. When our eyes are opened to behold him, God reveals himself to our understanding and shows us himself through his grace.

- He has revealed himself to us in tangible ways by his creation, by his nature and ultimately, by his mediation and salvation.

He is the one true God who has opened up our eyes to behold glorious things.

Paul goes on to speak of his position as the highest of the high (v15), the one who has always been there, with no beginning or end. He is from everlasting to everlasting. Everything was created by him, all that is seen and unseen.

We stand before God in awe and wonder.

Earthly kings and queens, rulers and dictators alike are all put in place for God's purposes and to his glory (v16), and he has the power to remove them when he chooses. **He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; (Daniel 2:21).**

Jesus is the reigning heir over everything, above all kings and angels. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He was not created from dust – he was there in the beginning, and all things were made through him. **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. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1:1-3).

How amazing it would be if we could pull up a chair and watch the God of the universe create everything with a word!

Jesus created all things. You are the work of his hands, uniquely made, and Jesus stands as the great protector over your life. He knows everything about you. He knew you from before time began, and he knows the number of your days and the purpose of those days. No part of his creation can escape his dominion.

He is the unbreakable bond that holds everything together (v17 above). Jesus never goes back on his word or makes a mistake. He is never surprised by our failure.

We can be absolutely confident that Jesus' hold on us is an unbreakable bond.

When we consider some of the miracles in the Old Testament – the burning bush that was never consumed, the waters that were held back so that the Israelites could escape – we see that God is in control of everything. The earth spins at his command, and the stars and galaxies stay in their places because he sustains them.

- However, none of these miracles come close to what Jesus did for us at Calvary. Paul wants us to see how connected we are to Jesus in every way, so that we sit or fall before our God in awe of his great love for us.

He is Lord of every believer, wherever they are in the world (v18 above). If you are a believer, you come under the authority of the divine Shepherd who loves his flock at such great cost to himself.

- He is the head of the church. That church is not bricks and mortar, but a perfect body that bears the marks of Christ's purification. The church is a people whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, a people who are made fit for eternity.
- He is the one who death could not hold. He rose from the grave, the immortal one who chose to give his life so that we can know everlasting life with him. Because of Jesus, death has no hold on his children.

Jesus is above all creation, Lord over this planet and all that is seen and unseen. He is head of the church.

Jesus has the full extent of God's nature (v19). He is fully holy, loving, omnipotent and omniscient. God's full nature dwells in Jesus and their relationship is perfect. Paul wanted his readers to see the sovereignty of the nature of the Godhead, so that they would understand that God can be fully trusted, and that nothing should be added or subtracted from what they knew and had been taught.

- Take time this week to meditate on this passage and bask in the nature of Jesus. The God of the universe, in his perfect nature, is nothing like us with our fallen nature. Even our good works are like filthy rags. There is no other way of being with Jesus than to come to him and ask for our fallen nature to be covered in the blood that was shed on the cross (v20). As Paul speaks of reconciling all things, it is a reminder of the perfect relationship that Adam and Eve had with God, and the perfect condition of the world, before sin entered it.

Because of our sin, we, like the Colossians, were once alienated from God (v21). We were hostile to Christ, but Jesus came in to save us.

- You are one of the most blessed people on earth if you can proclaim that Jesus is your Lord and Saviour, and your best friend.

At one time, we all had no time for Jesus, thinking that sin was 'fun' and indulging ourselves in godlessness.

Then Jesus stepped into our lives and our whole life was turned the right way up!

The Colossians were like this too, but Paul calls them to consider what they have become. (v22). We should consider this too. Paul has put all his energy into showing us this amazing Jesus who has saved us.

- He, the God of the universe, now stands in your place and welcomes you into his glorious presence without fault.
- How amazing that you can be found blameless because Jesus' blood was shed for you, and you have received his reconciliation.
- His perfect death has brought you eternal joy in him.

Why would we want to move away from the work of Jesus in saving us by adding other influences?

All we need is in his word, which we have in our hands. Do not depart from it, add to it or take away from it.

His word is life, hope and certainty. This hope of the gospel does not sink but stands as a bond of Christ's love for us, and welcomes us into his glory.

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. Colossians 1:15-20

What can we now do but fall before our Jesus in wonder, with hearts that sing of his
love for us?