



¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. (Colossians 1:15-18,

NKJV).

Last Sunday morning, we looked at what it meant to walk "worthy of our calling." That means we're to walk in a way that lines up with what we say we believe. Another way to express that would be to say that we are to "walk the talk." When we do so, we walk in a manner that is "worthy of our calling."

v.15-19 On Wednesday evening, we centered on two truths: (1) Jesus is the image/*ikon* (personal manifestation) of Deity, and (2) He is the "firstborn" (at the supreme position) of all of creation. We looked at verse 16, which tells us that Jesus was the Divine architect Who designed it all, created it all, and sustains it all. It was all made for Him.

It was He who created all that we see and cannot see. He was before everything, and we know from this and other scriptures, such as John 1:1, that He was there "in the beginning." Since Jesus lived, died, and rose again, people have come along who have tried to attack both the Deity of Christ and His humanness. The Gnostics claimed He was only a spirit. Others have claimed He was only a man. **Jesus was all God and all man.** Most cults we are familiar with today deny one or the other. I define cults as "a religious group that denies one or more of the fundamentals of biblical truth." A cult holds views that are unorthodox and spurious. It claims to be part of a particular religion yet denies essential truths of that religion.¹ This would include Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses.

False teachers use verse 15 (especially in the KJV) to teach that the Lord Jesus was a mere created being. They are saying He was not God. They go down that rabbit trail because the KJV doesn't use the word OVER but instead says that "he [was the] firstborn **of** every creature:" I don't want to give a Greek grammar lesson, but the Greek says neither "over" nor "of," but uses a genitive case ending denoting possession. But the sense of the word usage is that Jesus was and is supreme **over all that is created.** Any misuse of the word is clarified in the comments that follow. This language makes the Deity of Christ unequivocal. Don't fall for any cult ideas that suggest anything different than that. Jesus was not created, and He didn't just make a few things. He was the divine architect that designed and built it ALL.

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Mormonism-cult.html>

We ended Wednesday night's discussion with a question. Is Jesus preeminent in your life? Does He have first place in all of your thinking? Author C. S. Lewis says that we all must decide who Jesus is.

YOU MUST MAKE YOUR CHOICE: EITHER THIS MAN WAS,
AND IS, THE SON OF GOD, OR ELSE A MADMAN OR
SOMETHING WORSE. YOU CAN SHUT HIM UP FOR A FOOL,
YOU CAN SPIT AT HIM AND KILL HIM AS A DEMON; OR YOU
CAN FALL AT HIS FEET AND CALL HIM LORD AND GOD. BUT
LET US NOT COME WITH ANY PATRONIZING NONSENSE
ABOUT HIS BEING A GREAT HUMAN TEACHER. HE HAS NOT
LEFT THAT OPEN TO US. HE DID NOT INTEND TO.

- C. S. LEWIS -

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Let's now continue with verse 19.

¹⁹ For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell ²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. ²¹ And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister. (Colossians 1:19-23, NKJV).

Paul then speaks to the reconciliation we each experience through God in Jesus. We were once "alienated," apart, and distant from God. In Jesus' death, we were sanctified and brought close to the Father. Paul says that in Him we are presented "holy, and blameless, and above reproach." For me, the great takeaway concerning reconciliation is that you and I can live a life that is not at war with the things of God. Instead, we can walk in step with God and walk willfully in His plan for our lives. This is what will keep us grounded and steadfast, keeping the faith and keeping hope in our lives.

Paul then speaks words that can be confusing when we first read them. This will not be a very popular exposition on the Word because many today preach only a gospel of comfort and ease.

Sacrificial Service for Christ

²⁴ I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the Church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, ²⁶ the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. ²⁷ To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. (Colossians 1:24-29, NKJV).

I want to examine what Paul is trying to communicate to the Church in Colossae. This is some of that scripture that is complicated and interwoven and a little hard to understand. I will start by saying Paul is not saying that we have to complete the work that Jesus did on the cross. Remember Jesus said, "It is finished." So what Paul is saying is that the world is continuing to reject Christ, and the world is still causing the people of God to endure suffering. God sees it all and makes account of it all.

Paul's words center around how a believer is to experience and approach suffering they might have to endure for the Lord. We can endure it with pure joy. We have already seen suffering for Him right here in our society. I remember how the media shamed Dr. Ben Carson for being a creationist. They mocked him and assassinated his belief system and his character for having any kind of religious beliefs. They said he was a naïve cretin. He wasn't naïve at all. He was an accomplished brain surgeon who believed in what the Bible had to say about creation. They also mock and attack us, and say we are filled with hate when we merely believe and state that God made just two sexes. The Bible tells us, "male and female created He them" (Genesis 5:2). This is an objective reality that the world does not want to hear in these times.

Paul says he rejoices in his sufferings for their sake. Remember that Paul wrote this from a Roman prison. Paul had experienced a lot of suffering, and he is relating to us how he sees suffering for the Lord in the life of a believer. The Church is not too interested in hearing about suffering. We forget that suffering has been part of the Christian experience since this began. You might remember a verse I put on the screen a couple of weeks ago.

*⁴⁰ And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ So they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame (dishonor) for His name.** ⁴² And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. (Acts 5:40-42, NKJV).*

Remember the incident. Healings had occurred, and the Sanhedrin wasn't happy. They called for the disciples to be beaten for merely proclaiming the name of Jesus. The text tells us that these disciples COUNTED IT WORTHY TO SUFFER DISHONOR FOR HIS NAME. We're quickly approaching a society that sees us as the problem instead of people who offer a solution.

What is this "shame," this "dishonor" of which the scripture speaks? It is when we are canceled and persecuted socially. Remember that Jesus said this was going to come.

¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.¹¹ Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:10-12, NKJV).

We must maintain an understanding of God's perspective and His priorities. Jesus is saying that there is a reward in heaven for those who make it through this kind of suffering. There is a payoff at the end. Dr. Ben Carson will be vindicated AND REWARDED for the things he said that resulted in his grief. That explains the disciples' response when they departed, rejoicing after their beating.

Paul speaks to the fact that as joint heirs of Jesus, we too will suffer.

¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. ¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Romans 8:16-18, NKJV).

We must understand that when we suffer for His sake, there is a positive outcome in the end. If we suffer with Him, we will be glorified with Him. This will be counted to us as glory.

When the world causes believers to suffer, they cause Jesus to suffer. When Paul was on the Road to Damascus, in his vision, we hear Jesus' words, "*Saul, Saul, **why are you persecuting Me?***" (Acts 9:4b, NKJV). When Paul was persecuting the Church, He was persecuting Jesus Himself. That is the unity Jesus talks about between us and Him. When we hurt, He hurts. The body of Christ is connected with the head of the Church, and that head is Jesus.

I hate saying this, but suffering is just part of our calling. I don't understand it, but that's how it is.

v.25-26 Paul then says he's become a **diakonos**/servant to the Church. It is poor translation to use the word "minister" here. This word diakonos isn't just used for someone fulfilling the office of deacon. A pastor is a servant to the Church, but he is **PART OF A MINISTERING TEAM**. Larry and I have a role in fulfilling spiritual leadership, but the word tells

us that some are called to teach and do other parts in the ministry to EQUIP THE SAINTS (that's **ALL Y'ALL** in Texan) (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Paul then calls this whole salvation story the **μυστήριον** *mysterion* "mystery," which is a previously unrevealed truth that later was revealed in its appropriate time. As we know, the mystery of the Church was not revealed in the Old Testament. The Church isn't in there. There were many pointers to Christ, but the Church itself is not present in the Hebrew scriptures. We only find it hidden in passages such as God's covenant to Abraham in which He promises Abraham, "*In your seed **all the nations of the earth shall be blessed**, because you have obeyed My voice.*" (Genesis 22:18, NKJV).

"Appointed times" (**moedim**) are essential to God. His timetable is not our timetable. Sometimes when I don't understand how hard times are going to work out, I remind myself, "**He has made everything beautiful in its time.**" (Ecclesiastes 3:11a, NKJV).

v.27 Paul tells us that Christ is the hope of glory in us. Him living in us is our glory. Our prize is not in working harder, praying harder, or being more devoted. Instead, our hope of glory is Christ in us. He is the gift that is given to each believer. His power is living in us, maturing us, teaching us, and doing the work in us.

v.28 We proclaim HIM admonishing (warning, counseling) every man. We teach every man wisdom. That means explaining how to apply our knowledge in the Lord. This is part of our ministry. We must warn, and we must give knowledge and understanding. I try every week to provide you with knowledge but to follow it up with the wisdom that goes with it. That's the part that tells us how to apply what we have learned.

v.29 The goal is maturity. ¹⁶*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,* ¹⁷*that the man of God may be complete, **thoroughly equipped for every good work.*** (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NKJV).

What is maturity? Is it being able to share Christ with someone who is lost? Is it being able to quote a bunch of Bible verses? Is it being able to pray for hours on end? True Christian maturity can be summed up as "**learning to trust Him.**" If we trust Him, we can learn to rest in Him. It will make an absolute difference in your life. A trusting life is a life of obedience. When you trust Him, you know His ways are best, and you accept what comes. "Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus."

Let us pray.

<p>Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.</p>
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