

Introduction

In our study of the book of Colossians, we have seen that it is rich in doctrine. It is not an insignificant book, even though it was one of two letters written to home churches. Each and every one of us is significant to God.

Paul has heard from Epaphras, a fellow worker, who had shared the gospel with the Colossians, of the great love that the Colossians had for all the saints. Paul thanked the Lord for their faith, for their love, and for the hope that they have. He also prayed for the Colossians. He prayed for them to know God's will for their lives so that they could walk in a manner worthy of the gospel. He wanted them to please the Lord in all respects, and to live fruitful lives.

Paul also wrote it to deal with some of the attacks on the gospel, which included the Gnostics and the Judaizers. In chapter two he tells them how to avoid being deceived. He will then tell them how to live a new life in Christ.

In chapter three, he will tell them how to have successful family relationships. The church today needs this message more than ever. He also tells them how to have good work relationships. Do relationships matter? Yes! Whether you are a church of 10,000 or a church of 50, every member of the congregation needs to know how to properly relate to people in their lives. At EMV, we want to passionately love God with all our hearts and to fervently love one another. We want to learn these lessons well.

In chapter four, Paul writes about how to have effective outreach. One of the things that the Lord has been speaking to our church about this year is becoming a church that is outreaching. We are beginning to reach out internationally, and more importantly, we are reaching out in the East Mountains, which is our Jerusalem. Paul shares some principles about how to reach out effectively, which is very appropriate and timely for our body.

Last week, Dominic shared a message about the portrait of Jesus. His text was Colossians 1:15-20. This morning I would like to back up a few verses and tie the entire passage together. Two weeks ago we left off with verse twelve, where Paul is giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. In verse thirteen, he says, "For He (Father) rescued us from the domain (exousia, or authority) of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Then, in verses fifteen through twenty, that Dominic covered last week, Paul paints this portrait of who Christ is.

(Col 1:12-14) giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. {13} For He rescued 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.

We should always give thanks to the Father for our salvation, for transferring us to the kingdom of His Son. We should always give thanks for redeeming us. We should always give thanks for the forgiveness of our sins. Psalms 103 tells us to bless the Lord with all that is in us. We are not to forget any of His benefits. He has pardoned all our iniquities. He has healed all our diseases. He has redeemed us from the pit and crowned us with lovingkindness and compassion. It is like Paul has written this section of Colossians from Psalms 103.

(Psa 103:1-4) Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name. {2} Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; {3} Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases; {4} Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;

I. The Credentials of Jesus, the Reconciler

After thanking the Lord for rescuing us from the domain of darkness and transferring us to the Jesus' kingdom, He gives the credentials of the One who is able to rescue us from the domain of darkness and transfer us to the Kingdom of His Son. There is a good reason for Paul pausing and explaining who Christ is. One of the false doctrines that the Colossians had encountered was that Jesus was not God. The false teachers said that there were a series of emanating spirits or angelic beings that had come from God, and these spirits were not sufficient to reconcile man to God. These false teachers taught that Jesus was just one of these spirits, and that He could not reconcile us to God.

Paul is confronting that false teaching with truth – the truth of Christ's deity. He wanted them, and God wants us to fully understand Christ's deity. Jesus Christ is able to reconcile us because He is not an angelic being; He is God. It is Jesus Christ who reconciles us, and His deity and position is important. The thrust of this passage is God's reconciliation of men to Himself through Christ. Let's take a look at verses fifteen through twenty.

(Col 1:15-20) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. {16} For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. {17} He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. {18} He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. {19} For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, {20} and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

There are twelve different statements about Jesus in this passage. I have categorized them into four different attributes. Since Dominic covered some of this last week, I will go quickly through some of these attributes.

A. Jesus, our Reconciler, is the image of God.

First, in verse twenty, Paul says that He is the image of the invisible God. Then, in verse nineteen, Paul says it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him. Jesus not only is the image of God, He is the image of the invisible God. God is Spirit, and cannot be seen. God is invisible, which means He cannot be seen. Yet, Jesus is in the image of the invisible God. **The fullness of God dwells in Him.** Jesus is fully God. Every quality, characteristic, power, and authority of God is in Christ.

(Col 1:15, 19) He is the image of the invisible God... {19} For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

B. Jesus, the Reconciler, is the Creator.

Jesus is not only God, and part of the trinity, but He is the Creator. Paul says that “by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through him and for Him.’

(Col 1:16) For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

The word trinity is not contained in the Scriptures, yet it is clearly described in the Scriptures. Dominic did a great job of showing how all things were created in Him. He took us back to Genesis where Elohim, the plurality of El or Almighty God, created the heavens and earth. It is not that there are more than one God. Elohim is used because God is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It says that the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

(Gen 1:1-2) In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth. {2} The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

Then, we looked at John 1, where we find that all things were created by Jesus. Apart from Him, nothing that was created was created.. Jesus is Elohim. The Spirit of God is Elohim. The Father is Elohim. We have the trinity perfectly described in creation.

(John 1:1-3) 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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

C. Jesus, the Reconciler, is Preeminent.

The word eminent originally meant to stick out or protrude. Eventually, it came to mean one that stood out as head or over all things. The word preeminent means to come before all rulers or authorities. It is the first of first. Even though that particular word is not used in the text, listen to what Paul says. “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.” Notice that Jesus is before all things. He is the head. He is the firstborn, and He will have first place in everything. Jesus is Preeminent.

(Col 1:17-20) He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. {18} He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

When I was a little boy, I was extremely competitive. I liked to finish first in everything. I remember as a six or seven-year old that my mother was beating me in a round of golf, and I got so mad that I walked off the course. I did not like to get beat; I liked to finish first. And most of the time I finished first. I won all the children’s tournaments. They let me play in the men’s division, and I won many of the men’s tournaments. All through high school, I won nearly every match I played.

I worked hard and played hard to finish first. It did not matter if it was golf, tennis, ping pong, or anything else, I finished first. Jesus' attitude was very different. He did not regard finishing first as something to strive for. In fact, even though He existed in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant. My ambition and drive was selfishly driven. Jesus' ambition and drive was to reconcile man to God. My ambition was motivated and carried out by pride. Jesus' ambition was motivated by love and carried out with humility.

(Phil 2:6-7) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, {7} but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Because Jesus humbled Himself, the Father exalted Him above all things. God the Father put Him over all things. God bestowed on Him the name above all names. In fact, at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, ov those who are in the heaven and on earth and under the earth. God the Father gave Him first place in everything. The Father made Jesus preeminent.

(Phil 2:9-11) For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, {10} so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, {11} and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

II. The Work of Jesus, the Reconciler.

A. Jesus reconciles all things.

Another false teaching that was prevalent in Colossae was dualism. The heretics said that the spirit is good and matter is evil. Paul confronts this false teaching by saying that Jesus is going to reconcile all things to Himself. He is going to reconcile man. He is going to reconcile things on earth and things in heaven. All of creation is going to be reconciled. The earth needs reconciling. The heavens need reconciling. There is going to be a new heaven and a new earth. God is going to reconcile all things through Christ, our Reconciler.

(Col 1:20) and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

B. Jesus completely reconciles all things through His blood.

How did Jesus reconcile all things? He made peace through the blood of his cross. Paul began in verse thirteen by telling us that Jesus rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Then, He gave the credentials of our Reconciler. Now, Paul returns to his previous thought of how we have been reconciled to God. Jesus has reconciled all things to Himself by making peace with His own blood.

(Col 1:13-14) For He rescued 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.

What does reconcile mean? The normal Greek word that is used is *katallasso*, and this is not the word that is used here. *Katallasso* is made up of two words: *kata* and *allasso*. *Kata* means to go down or against. An example of that is the word *katalaleo*, which means to speak down or slander.

(1 Pet 2:1) Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander (*katalalia*)

The second part of the word is *allassô*, which means to change, or exchange. The root word of *allasso* is *allos*, which means other or another. The word is used a number of times in the New Testament. A good example is in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul tells us that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The perishable cannot inherit the imperishable. He continues by saying that we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed or *allasso*. We will be changed from a perishable body to an imperishable body so that we can inherit the kingdom of God. We are going from one form to another form, or we are being changed. Paul continues by describing how in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, the dead will be raised imperishable and we will be changed or *allasso*.

(1 Cor 15:50-52) Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. {51} Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, {52} in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

The word *katallasso* is used six times and is always translated as reconciled (5) or reconciling (1). An example of this is in 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul gives instructions to the married.

(1 Cor 7:10-11) But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband {11} (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

Paul says that the wife should not leave her husband. If she leaves, she should remain unmarried. Another option for her is to be reconciled to her husband. **Reconcile (*katallasso*) means to change or exchange.**

The actual word that is used in this passage is *apokatallassô*. It has the preposition, *apo*, in front of it. *Apo* means from or away from. We get the word *apostle* from it, which means to send away. An *apostle* is a sent one. However, Greek scholars tell us that when a preposition is used to make a compound word, it denotes intensity, force and emphasis. **Apokatallasso means to reconcile completely.** We are totally reconciled. There is no question about our reconciliation. There is nothing that we can do or should do. There are no works involved. We are completely reconciled by the blood of Christ. That is why *apokatallasso* is used.

We see that the word reconciliation means to change or exchange. What has been changed or exchanged? Let's continue reading our passage for today.

(Col 1:21-22) "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, {22} yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach."

Formerly we were alienated. The root word is alien, which means belonging to another country. To alienate means to estrange or make hostile. It is to say that you do not belong here. You are not with us; you are against us or hostile. Formerly, we were in the kingdom of darkness. **In reconciliation, Christ has made us citizens of His kingdom, not aliens.** We, who were not a people, have been made His people. Look how Paul describes this exchange in Ephesians 2. We were Gentiles, or the Uncircumcision. We were separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel. We were strangers to the covenant of promise, and had no hope. We were without God and were far off. Now, we have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

(Eph 2:11-13) Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands— {12} remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. {13} But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Paul concludes that we are no longer strangers and aliens, but are fellow citizens with the saints. We are now part of God's household. There has been a great exchange of citizenship. There has been an exchange of our identity, of who we are.

(Eph 2:19) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,

There has not only been an exchange of who we are, but there has been an exchange of our nature. Formerly, we were engaged in evil deeds. Why? Our hearts were evil. Our hearts were motivated and driven by sin. However, we have been reconciled through Christ's death and now we are holy and blameless and beyond reproach. **In reconciliation, there has been an exchange of our nature.** We were sinners and now we are saints. We were engaged in evil and now we are holy, blameless, and beyond reproach.

(Col 1:21-22) "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, {22} yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach."

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul says that He who knew no sin became sin in our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ. That is the great exchange, that Christ our Savior, who was fully God, did for us. He took our sin and gave us His righteousness.

(2 Cor 5:21) He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

In that same passage, Paul had been speaking about reconciliation. He said that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things passed away and new things have come. There has been an exchange of our nature.

(2 Cor 5:17) Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Paul continues by saying that this exchange came from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. You and I have not only been reconciled, but we have been given the ministry of reconciliation. You and I are now Christ's ambassadors. We are His representatives. We have been given authority to represent God here on earth. We are God's representatives at work. We are God's representatives in our neighborhoods. We are God's representatives at the grocery store. Our citizenship is in heaven and we are ambassadors of God here on earth. **After being reconciled, we have been given the ministry of reconciliation.**

(2 Cor 5:18-20) Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, {19} namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. {20} Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Paul makes a plea for the Corinthians to be reconciled to God. He says, "we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." The attitude of much of the reformed church is that God has chosen those who He will send to hell and those who He will save. We are not to try to persuade, convince, or beg people to come to Christ. It is God's responsibility. Paul is begging people in this passage to be reconciled to God. He is pleading with them to come to Christ.

(Acts 26:27-29) "King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do." {28} Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." {29} And Paul said, "I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains."

Notice what Paul says to King Agrippa in Acts 26. He asks if he believes in the prophets? Agrippa replies, "in a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." Paul replies that he wishes all who are hearing him to be persuaded and to become Christians. **As ambassadors of Christ, we must try to persuade people to come to Christ.**

III. Conclusion – Our Response

Our response is given in verse twenty three. Paul says, "if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard." When you and I have been reconciled, **we are to continue in the faith.**

(Col 1:23) "if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister."

In 1 John 2:19, we find that some went out from among the believers because they were not of them. They did not continue in the faith, because they were not true believers. One of the signs of a true believer, of a person who has been reconciled to God, is continuing in the faith.

(1 John 2:19) They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

In the parable of the sower and the soils, Jesus also shares this thought. Those who were of the rocky soil received the word with joy, but they had no firm root. In the time of temptation, they fell away. They did not continue on in the faith. If you and I have been reconciled to God, we are to continue in the faith. We are to keep pressing on. We are to stand firm in our faith. We have to develop firm roots. We have to be rooted and grounded in our faith.

(Luke 8:13) "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.

This is exactly what Paul said. We have to continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast. How do we get firmly established? **We get firmly established by spending time in God's word every day.** We get firmly established by studying and memorizing God's word. **We get firmly established by being taught and equipped by pastors.** It is important for us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves. We need to be taught and equipped. Coming to church every week requires effort. If we are going to continue in the faith and be firmly established, it is going to take some effort on our part.

(Col 1:23) "if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard,"

We also need the encouragement of others. In Hebrews we are told to encourage one another. Why? We are to encourage one another so that none of us are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and fall away. We are to encourage one another to continue in the faith. **We get firmly established through the encouragement of others.**

(Heb 3:13) But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Later on in Hebrews, we are told to consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. That is, we are to think about how to encourage one another to continue in the faith. Then, it says we are not to forsake the assembling together, as is the habit of some, but we are to encourage one another. For us to continue in the faith and be firmly established, we cannot be casual church attenders. We need to make a commitment to a local church, get involved in the ministry of the local church, and faithfully attend church. That is one of the marks of a reconciled person.

(Heb 10:24-25) and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, {25} not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Paul concludes by saying that he has been made a minister of this gospel. All of us have been given this ministry of reconciliation. All of us have been made ministers of the gospel. If you have been reconciled, you have been made an ambassador and a minister. **One of the signs of a reconciled person is that he is involved in reconciling others to Christ.**

Let's pray.

Introduction (Col 1:12-14, Ps 103:1-4)**I. The Credentials of Jesus, the Reconciler** (Col 1:15-20)

- A. Jesus, our Reconciler, is the image of _____.
- The _____ of God dwells in Him. (Col 1:19)
- B. Jesus, the Reconciler, is the _____. (Col 1:16, Gen 1:1-2, John 1:1-3)
- C. Jesus, the Reconciler, is _____. (Col 1:17-20, Phil 2:6-7, 9-11)

II. The Work of Jesus, the Reconciler.

- A. Jesus reconciles _____ things. (Col 1:20)
- B. Jesus _____ reconciles all things through His blood. (Col 1:13-14, 1 Pet 2:1)
- Reconcile (katallasso) means to _____ or _____. (1 Cor 15:50-52, 7:10-11)
 - Apokatalasso means to reconcile _____. (Col 1:21-22)
 - In reconciliation, Christ has made us _____ of His kingdom, not aliens. (Eph 2:11-13, 19)
 - In reconciliation, there has been an exchange of our _____. (Col 1:21-22, 2 Cor 5:17, 21)
 - After being reconciled, we have been given the _____ of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5:18-20)
 - As ambassadors of Christ, we must try to _____ people to come to Christ. (Acts 26:27-29)

III. Conclusion – Our Response

- We are to _____ in the faith. (Col 1:23, 1 John 2:19, Luke 8:13)
- We get firmly established by spending time in _____ every day.
- We get firmly established by being _____ and _____ by pastors.
- We get firmly established through the _____ of others. (Heb 3:13, 10:24-25)
- One of the signs of a reconciled person is that he is involved in _____ others to Christ.

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