

**Secure in Christ** - Kevin Miller, 30 minutes, **Colossians 1:15-2:5** (#510)

**Introduction:** Among the many things that have been revealed over the past year, one of them that stands out is our desire to know about the things we think are important. Becoming a news-junkie has gone from being a joke to being the standard operating procedure for many people over these past months. Perhaps this is just a lack of restraint – each of us is prone to certain imbalances in our lives after all; for some of us, becoming obsessed over the news is what we struggle with. For others, perhaps the challenge is a bit more nuanced. There have been times when we've definitely needed to know something from the news – are businesses open to customers this week or not? Are masks required or recommended? And yet, subtly – even slowly – we've begun to think of the news as *the source* for telling us about everything that is important in the world.

This morning, I'm going to challenge that assumption. Frankly, the news can be helpful at times, but it is a poor master overall. Many of the things that matter most will never make the news – things that you care about with regard to your family or friends. Other things, your hopes and dreams, will also likely never come up during the 6 'o clock broadcast. And what's even more important: the priorities that Jesus calls us to are nowhere to be found when we tune in.

As we go deeper into **Colossians chapter 1** this morning, I'd like you to approach the Scriptures with a different attitude than you might have before. Think back to how urgently you watched the news at certain points over this past year. You did that because you thought it was important, even vital, to your daily life. This morning, approach God's Word with that same sense of urgency – more, in fact! You and I desperately need to know what our Savior has done for us, how that applies to God's people, and why Paul is giving his best efforts – even his freedoms – to share that news with people who are hopeless without it. This is news you need! Let's see it together, starting in **verse 15**...

**1:15-20** Fittingly, the first thing you and I need to see from our passage is Jesus. To understand more about Him, more of what He has accomplished and will

someday complete, is more important than any other “news” story that you or I could come across. Here, in these verses, we learn four things about Jesus: four truths that change everything...

In **verse 15**, Paul writes that Christ is the very image of the invisible God. As in, Jesus makes God visible. Most obviously, that is true because Jesus took on human flesh – He was, and is, the God-man. But this truth is more than just stating the obvious about skin and bones. In the person of Christ, we have God Himself. We know God because we know Jesus. Remember back in **John 14**, where Jesus taught that to see Him was to see the Father? His point wasn't that He is the Father, but that Jesus is God just as the Father is God. To see Christ is to see God Himself.

*Second*, Christ is the firstborn of all creation, which is parallel with **verse 18**, where we learn that He is the firstborn from the dead. Jesus was there at the beginning, and this same Jesus was there at the resurrection. Christ was present. We don't have an absent God, far away and uncaring. No, in Christ, we have the God who created (**John 1**) – which is our *third* point – and we have the God who not only died for His people, but also rose to new life as well (**John 20**).

*Fourth*, this Jesus is the head of the church. He is our Master, our Ruler, our King. The church exists to bring Him glory and to make His glory known. Our mission is all about Jesus, much more so than influencing politicians or righting social wrongs. Even more so that strengthening marriages and raising up children. Each of those might well have a place for Christians, but only to the extent that they are done to bring Jesus glory, to keep the spotlight on Him, and to help folks see and respond to and worship Him. That is our mission. That is what King Jesus deserves.

What do these four aspects add up to? What does it mean to have God made visible? To know that He has created everything? What does it matter that Jesus is the firstborn from the dead and the head of the church?

What it means, why it matters, is that Christ has a purpose and mission of His own. We read of it in **verse 20**: He intends to reconcile to Himself all things, here on earth and in heaven above. Why? What is the point of this unity? It's not so that we can enjoy great lives here on earth or achieve our full potential. No, it's so that He would get the glory. Because, when it all boils down, this unity is only obtained through Christ's work – not our own. It is His blood on the cross that has secured our peace, and not only with one another, but most importantly with God Himself. This is what Jesus has done. This is who our Savior is! Which leads me to ask a question: is this your Jesus? Or have you settled for a domesticated Jesus, one who is a really nice guy who comforts you in your sorrows or encourages you to be your best? Don't misunderstand, Jesus really does care about your daily life. But if that's all Christ is to you – a friend to lean on, a shoulder to cry on, a counselor to ask questions of – then you've missed so much of Christ's person and work. He is the King! And, what's best of all, He is our King!

So how does Paul call the Colossians to respond? In seeing that, I think we'll get a better idea of how you and I should respond...

**1:21-23** We respond by believing, embracing, and living in light of what Jesus has done for us. How His kingship is applied to each of us who believe. So, **verse 21**: you and I were alienated. Our passports didn't list heaven, instead they listed the domain of the devil. We were separated by our own sin, our very actions. What's more, apart from Jesus, we were enemies – hostile both in mind and deed, taking up arms against King Jesus. That is what sin is, by the way. It's not a little "oopsie," no, sin is waging war against the King of the Universe. And you and I were born into, and embraced our enlistment in, that wicked army.

But oh, what good news comes in **verse 22**: "he has now reconciled..."! If **verse 21** describes what we were – God's enemies – then **verse 22** describes what the Colossian believers, and every Christian today, now is: reconciled. Our relationship has been made right – and it's been done so in the most costly yet permanent manner: through the death of our God. But also through His resurrection! This miraculous work of Jesus has made us holy. In the eyes of the

Lord and His justice, it has made us blameless and above accusation. Not because we haven't and don't still sin, but because Christ's perfect and holy keeping of all that God commanded – His clean record – is applied to us.

What are the Colossians supposed to do with this – other than enjoy God's grace, that is? And what are we supposed to do?

Paul gives a qualification or warning in **verse 23**: all of this reconciliation is indeed yours, it applies to you, if you continue to follow Jesus. Contrary to how salvation is sometimes portrayed, simply walking an aisle or being baptized at one point in time does not save – nowhere will you find that in the scriptures. Instead, what did Christ call for His disciples to do? It wasn't "hang out with me for today..." nor was it "just listen to what I have to say and nod along." No, it was "follow Me." That is the heart of what Paul is aiming at here. If you continue in the faith – not giving up, not turning your back on Christ, not rejecting Him to believe something else – then you shall be saved.

I realize that might cause some questions, some frustration for those of you who have traditionally seen the faith as "once saved, always saved." In one sense, I agree with you completely: when Jesus saves a person, He genuinely does redeem them. Nobody who has been actually changed by Christ, who has received the Holy Spirit, shall end up in Hell. But that's the very question isn't it – both here and with the similar warnings in **Hebrews**. So what's going on? The point is that those who are saved will read these words and take them seriously by responding to them. If you are in Christ, then the proper response is "Lord, keep me near to Jesus! Father, forgive my sins and help me to follow Jesus faithfully today." But those who don't really believe – those who think that being a Christian is a good "American" thing to do, or just a part of their conservative values; people who see Jesus as a good insurance policy but not actually a Lord who demands that they live differently – those folks will not take this warning seriously. And to ignore this warning isn't to somehow lose genuine salvation, but instead it would prove that a person was never truly saved, never actually "in Christ" in the first place.

Brothers and sisters: examine yourself! You can have assurance of salvation, all you have to do is call upon Jesus to keep you in the faith. He saves you, His strength redeems you. The point isn't whether you sin, whether you fall – of course you still do. No, the point is whether you trust Jesus for forgiveness. Whether you want to increasingly hate your sin and love your Lord. If that is true of you, if that fruit in you is increasing, then you can be reassured that Christ is at work in you. But if not, if you care little for the things of God, if religion is an add-on to your life, a nice accessory, then the urgent call for you today is to repent! It is to actually and genuinely trust Jesus for the first time! And it is to desperately call upon Him to change your heart so that you would want what He wants and hate what He hates. Faithfulness isn't a one-time event, but a lifelong pursuit.

We've seen who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. Now, Paul will give us a snapshot of why he has given his life to spreading this message. Seeing that will teach us something about why Paul is writing to the Colossians in the first place...

**1:24-29** Colossians is often called one of the "prison epistles," because we have convincing evidence that Paul wrote it while he was in prison. Which prison, we aren't entirely sure, though I think there are good arguments for Rome. That said, the location isn't so important – the fact that Paul is willing to go to prison to spread this news about Jesus is what matters most – and it's the topic here. Look at what he writes: Paul rejoices not because life is going well, but because he is suffering. In fact, he sees his sufferings as being a part of what unites him to Jesus, as if Christ's afflictions have room for more, have space for His followers to endure similar kinds of opposition as they carry on the mission of the Gospel.

All of this is part and parcel of Paul's mission, his calling: to make the word of God fully known. To whom? Ultimately, to the Gentiles. That is what the "mystery" spoken of in **verse 26** is. Don't think "mystery" as in something still hidden, but instead "mystery" as in something that we humans would never have figured out on our own, something that seemed so unlikely, yet has been revealed to be true. Jesus Christ saves people. He saves Jews who come to genuine faith. And He saves Gentiles who come to genuine faith.

It is that wonderful news which Paul has been commissioned, called, tasked, to spread. So, Paul proclaims Jesus. But he does it not only as a messenger, not just in the sense of getting the word out there or posting it on a bulletin board. No, Paul cares that people would respond – he wants everyone who God calls to know how to grow in Christ. This is why Paul warns those who listen to respond to Jesus. It is why he teaches the wisdom of God to all who will listen. All so that the fruit of Paul's calling, the fruit of the ministry he gives his very life to, would be seen in mature Christians. And this not on account of Paul's power, winsomeness, or ministry strategies, but instead by Christ working in and through him.

Do you see how God has given purpose to Paul? Do you believe that He gives purpose to your life as well? Brother, sister, friend: God didn't create you just to go about the years of this life getting as much money and pleasure as you can. No, He created you for eternal riches, for never-ending pleasures – not with the things of this world which will be dust and rust; but instead with the unending joys of being with God Himself. The reward isn't something that won't last, but it is to be with the One who creates and sustains all things. The reward is God! Is your life animated by that kind of a goal? That sort of a mission? That fiery of a passion? If not, pray – and keeping praying – until the Lord gives it to you. Seek Him in His Word. Fill your mind with the things of Christ. You can have meaning, you can be fulfilled in ways that are far greater and better than what this world has to offer.

Paul's God-given mission. Let's close with what he hopes for the Colossians...

**2:1-5** Paul isn't recounting this to bring glory to himself. This isn't a sob story. No, Paul wants the Colossians to see that what matters most is this mission of encouragement and unity in Christ. Of introducing people to the riches found only in the Savior. Of teaching them how to taste and enjoy the wisdom and the knowledge of God. Everything else is lesser, nothing else compares. Remaining in Christ is the goal, that is the fruit that is necessary and brings joy. Pray and ask that the Lord would make you hunger for Jesus. Talk about Him with your friends. Seek Him in the Word. Introduce others to the One who gives life and joy. This is what Paul's purpose is, and it can be your purpose too. Let's give God glory now...