

A Practical Study of COLOSSIANS

How Christians Grow

“Christ is All and in All”

Key verse 3:11b — *“Christ is all and in all.”*

Study Number Three – Christ in First Place – Colossians 1:15-20

Father, we thank You for Your Word. Thank You for the joy of teaching it, the thrill of just being able to communicate what was written so many years ago to understand Your plan and purpose for our lives. Pray that will happen as we look at this beautiful passage that’s before us. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

This is Lesson #3 of Stages Toward Christian Growth.

We looked at:

Stage #1: Christ Has Changed Our Lives

Stage #2: The Will, the Walk and the Work of the believer.

This passage is a hymn of praise. Paul interrupts his prayer list that he has for the Colossian saints. It’s a beautiful tribute to the Lord Jesus.

Our KEY VERSE is going to be verse 18. We always star one verse that's going to stand out and give us the thought for the message.

It's in the purpose clause right at the end of verse 18.

“in order that He Himself might come to have first place in all things.”

A young girl, Morgan Northcutt, was 12 when she wrote this. She went to the Fort Worth Stock Show and they had a cowboy poetry competition. And at 12 years of age, this is the piece she wrote and she won first place and a scholarship for our college work. It's called:

The Last Cowboy

The cowboy knelt in silence,
Wiped a tear away.
His sweat stained hat in hand,
The cowboy began to pray.

The rustic cross that stood before him,
Cast a shadow across his face.
His horse stood loyally behind him,
Not moving from its place.

Would this day be his very last,
Of barbed wire fences and herdin' cattle?

Would not the days begin and end,
Sittin' proudly up in the saddle?

Baptized in a trough of water,
His whole life had been the cowboy way.
Collections put in boots of leather,
These memories wouldn't die today.

No, it's not him who's dying,
Or those he holds so dear.
But the REAL cowboy is fading
For that is what he fears.

Slowly, as he began to stand,
And lift his head from prayer,
The cowboy whispered once again,
Not today: For I still care.

(Morgan Northcutt Oct. 2008)

Ruth Bell Graham once shared this in *Decision* magazine:

Are you taking away someone's appetite for Christ? The best definition of a saint that I ever heard is, "A saint is one who makes it easy to believe in Jesus." Are you making it easy for those about you to believe in Him?

(source unknown)

(The Barbarian Way: Soul Cravings by Erwin Raphael McManus)

Instead of concluding it is best to be wherever God wants us to be, we have decided that wherever it is best for us to be is where God wants us. Actually, God's will for us is less about our comfort than it is about our contribution. God would never choose for us safety at the cost of significance. God created you so that your life would count, not so that you could count the days of your life.

pp. 44-45

Remember in our last study the first thing he prays for those believers, people that he's never met in the Lycus Valley, that the will of God might be known to them.

We've agonized over that a little bit. Ask yourself the questions:

What are the assurances that I am in the center of the will of God?

Am I walking a worthy walk and cooperating with the Spirit's work to make me more Christlike?

Am I at work using the gifts that God has given for the glory of God in edifying and building up the church, His body?

Let's get started.

Stage #1: Christ Has Changed My Life

Three KEY WORDS:

FAITH,

LOVE, and

HOPE.

FAITH in Christ.

LOVE for the brothers and sisters that flows from my life through the power of the Spirit.

The HOPE that the eternal destiny, we'll be with the Lord.

In our last study as he gives a prayer for them—he tells them that he's praying for them—there's THREE basic ESSENTIALS for new believers:

The WILL,

the WALK and

the WORK—in Stage #2.

Now this brings us to Stage #3: Christ in First Place.

We're going to ask ourselves the question:

Is He there?

Listen to Joseph Stowell:

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

...“The three most important things to know about buying and selling property are location, location, location!”

The same is true of living for Jesus. Knowing our location spiritually is critical if we are to succeed in navigating through the greatly devalued territory of our world. Paul reminds us that we have a new location in Christ, having been delivered [or transferred, remember, that was one of the key words] “from the power of darkness and [transferred] . . . into the kingdom of the Son [of His love]” (Col. 1:13). Knowing that we have been relocated by His amazing grace into the kingdom of Jesus makes a difference. Jesus now reigns as King in our hearts and minds, and we are His grateful subjects. His will is our will and His ways become patterns for all of life and behavior. And when we are forced to make a choice, our allegiance is to Him.

By: **Joe Stowell**

(<https://odb.org/2011/10/05/location-location-location/>)

Doesn't that summarize everything we talked about in our last study?

What we're going to see in this particular study is why all these things are true.

Why did the Father qualify us?

Why did the Father rescue us?

Why did the Father transfer us into the kingdom of the Son of His love?

Why did God the Son provide redemption?

The price of the Lamb of God and the forgiveness that comes with that.

Paul just stops and this is a hymn of praise. He's singing praise to the Lord and he interrupts his prayers for them and he celebrates the supremacy of the Lord Jesus.

v. 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, first-born of all creation.

“Who”—refers to the Son of His love where we ended the last passage.

“Who is the image of the invisible God, first-born of all creation.”

This Jesus that he's celebrating and praising, there are TWO THINGS that are said about Him:

1. He is “the image of the invisible God” and

2. He is the “first-born of all creation.”

Now you know when you study a passage of Scripture like this, if you find a word that occurs over and over again you know you have the theme.

The Lord Jesus occurs 15 TIMES in these 6 verses so you know that He’s at the heart of all of it.

Of course the Gnostics believe that He was just another human being. They believe He was not God’s Son.

So this is a declaration by the apostle of who Jesus really is. It thrills your heart the more you get to know Him and to realize these things are true.

The first thing He says: “is the image of the invisible God.”

Notice the word “IS.” It’s not “was,” it’s not “shall be” at a certain time, but He “IS.”

He “is the image of the invisible God.”

Hebrews 13:8

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever.

He is the VISIBLE IMAGE of the UNSEEN GOD.

In other words, we get to see God in human flesh.

In the Upper Room when they were having dinner and Christ had to be thinking, knowing that in just hours He would be hanging on the Cross, that two of the disciples would ask questions that really gripped His heart.

First of all, THOMAS just says, “Hey look, we don’t have a global positioning device to tell us. We don’t know the way. We don’t know where you’re going.”

And then He gave that great statement “I’m the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me.” (ref. John 14:6)

But the other one comes from that skeptic by the name of PHILIP who’s in charge of food service. He comes up with this question in verse 9: “Lord, show us the Father.”

Can you imagine 3 years of spending uninterrupted time together, the basic essential of who He is still has not sunk in deep enough to the point that he understands that Jesus is God come in human flesh?

You say “Well that’s not so bad. I’ve had trouble with that.”

Well, we all do don’t we? When we’re trying to cope with eternal things and understand all of it.

How does Jesus answer? You can almost feel the hurt in His voice.

John 14:9

...He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'?

You can sense the tension and the emotion in the room. All of this fits together when you recognize that Jesus is the one who's under attack in the Lycus Valley. A lot of what Paul says to the Colossian saints has to do with that.

A. T. Robertson says:

Jesus is the very stamp of God the Father, as he was before the Incarnation.
(source unknown)

Jesus Christ is "the invisible God."

Philippians 2:6-7 fits here:

Philippians 2:6-7

Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men.

We use this at Christmastime:

John 1:14

And the word was made flesh and tabernacled (or dwelt) among us.

He is the “first-born of all creation.”

The first phrase is “the image of the invisible God”—that’s the relationship to the FATHER.

Then the “first-born of all creation”—is relationship to CREATION.

This statement, “first-born of all creation,” is confusing.

That “first-born” spoke of POSITION.

It spoke of SOVEREIGNTY and of PRIORITY.

He is the “first-born” in the sense that He is the Creator of it all and we’ll see that in the verses that come before us.

With “first-born of all creation” we have this thought:

The baby in Bethlehem in Matthew 2 is the God who created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1.

That puts this together. He created it for Himself. It is His house. He drew up the plans and brought it into being. Anybody who builds their own house will tell you that they go to extra pains because they’re going to live in it.

What does “first-born of all creation” mean then? It means that He is FIRST PLACE.

Revelation 22:13

I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

He’s HEIR and RULER of all.

Psalm 89:27 helped me on that:

Psalm 89:27

Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

PRIORITY and SOVEREIGNTY probably is the best picture.

C. S. Lewis made this statement:

(Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis)

A man who was merely man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with a man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. 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 patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

p. 56

Isn't this a great picture? He's the "first-born of all creation"—speaking of His relationship to creation itself.

This statement relates to what we just got through looking at:

(The Attentive Life by Leighton Ford)

At the end of that first session, [he was counseling with another brother] David suggested a follow-up reflection: to consider what has been my image of God and how that image was formed. Indeed our image of God affects our understanding not only of God but of what we are created to be: men and women made in God's image and called to be transformed into a new image—to reflect the new "icon" of God [or image of God] displayed in Christ our Lord.

p. 66

Can you say it any briefer and with more conciseness than that?

Here's another great excerpt:

(Majestic Destiny: Kingdom Hope is Rising by Curtis H. Tucker)

How do you view God?

Do you think of God as an unhappy police officer on the hunt to “cuff and stuff” people who do wrong? Or an angry boss who constantly inspects work reviews to determine whom he can fire? Or an inspector at a border crossing who scrutinizes all your affairs to determine whether you come in or stay out?

Do you ever wonder if you are good enough for Him to love? Do you ever fear that your sins might cause Him to stop loving you? Or that He may change His mind about whether you can spend eternity with Him? Do you ever doubt God’s love? Do you ever wonder if He is truly a committed, loving, caring, long-suffering God?

Do you ever think that you need to do good things so God will love you . . . *forever*?

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He’s addressing the basic premises that you face every day when we’re trying to witness for Christ with some of those who don’t have it together yet.

The image of God that we’ve seen here in verse 15 is the basis for a lot of other things.

v. 16 Because in Him were created all things in the heaven and upon the earth. Things visible and

things invisible, whether thrones or bearers of the ruling power or rulers or authorities—all things through Him and for Him were created.

“Because in Him”

Circle every time we see a preposition.

In—before—for—all of these words.

When we get to the end it’s going to be a powerful demonstration of what Christ has come to do for us.

“Because”—REASON that He “is the first-born of all creation.

“Because in Him”—CHRIST—“were created all things”

Circle every time you see the word “ALL” or “ALL THINGS.”
We’re going to find 8 of them in these 6 verses.

“all things in the heaven and upon the earth. Things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or bearers of the ruling power or rulers or authorities—all things through Him and for Him were created.”

In Deuteronomy, right at the beginning before Moses gives his farewell address, we read this wonderful verse:

Deuteronomy 3:24

“O Sovereign Lord, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works that you do?”

That sets the stage for what we’re looking at in these verses.

He wants to proclaim the mighty God—“the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.”

“Because in Him were created all.”

Let’s stop and meditate on that. It says “visible” and “invisible”—He created all things.

Why does he go that far? Why not just stop with the “visible” things? Why the “invisible”?

The Gnostics believed in all kinds of angelic beings and that Christ fits somewhere down in that great chain of things. So he’s dealing with the angelic world and they are dealing with it, and the spirit world.

He wants it made quite clear that God’s sovereign creative act through Jesus Christ His Son involved not only what you can see but what you can’t see. All the angelic beings were created by Him and for a special purpose.

You look at Jesus Christ “visible” and “invisible”—“created all things”—and yet He became a tiny little baby, born of a

woman.

His mighty arm threw the worlds into space. He put the stars, the moon, and the sun all in their places and yet He died on the Cross of shame.

When He came to this earth, which was created by Him and for Him, there was no room for Him. He who created the waters of the seas and the rivers had to die with the words “I thirst” upon His lips.

Jesus who created life in the beginning gave His so that we might have eternal life. He created the wood, the hill, the nails, and the cross upon which He hung.

Meditate on those things and you are so blessed. It isn't going to be long before we're going to see Him face-to-face.

Now that little word “all”—“all” and “all things.”

Nothing is exempt.

“Because in Him were created all things in the heaven and upon the earth. All things visible and all things invisible, whether thrones or bearers of the ruling power or rulers or authorities”—angelic and spiritual beings. All of them were created “through Him and for Him.”

It's all for Him.

John MacArthur, trying to summarize that last phrase it's "created for Him," expands it and says it's:

...for His pleasure and for His glory that all of these things...
(source unknown)

He is the center and the circumference of all created beings.

What do you think He's been doing for the last 2,000 years in getting His place ready for us?

That's 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 2:9

...eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, the things which the Lord hath prepared for those who love Him.

Does this strike a little note with you from our last study? We talked about the will of God and the worthy walk and the work we're going to do, we felt so weak. And then Colossians 1:11 said we are strengthened by all the power that's necessary to get the job done.

Do you understand a little better the definition of that power, the extent of it and the adequacy?

Do you think He can handle it?

We get so anxious and so worried about everything and we live by the premise that God helps those who help themselves. We have to get in there and help get it all done. Then we come to something like this that it's all been provided—totally adequate for whatever.

It's experienced by those who wait upon the Lord. "They shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." (ref. Isaiah 40:31)

Anne Graham Lotz has this little statement in her book:

(The Joy of My Heart by Anne Graham Lotz)

We can only imagine the concentrated thoughts that occupied the divine Mind and the gentle, skillful touch of the divine Hand that first shaped man from the dust. Where did the Creator begin? Did He start with a skeletal frame? Did He then cover it with an outside layer of skin, which at no place is thicker than three-sixteenths of an inch, is packed with nerve endings to enable man to feel the outside world, and is virtually waterproof? Into the skin stretched over the frame did He next place the heart that pumps seventy-two times a minute, forty million times a year? When did He hang the lungs in their sealed compartments so that the rivers of blood necessary for life can deposit the carbon dioxide and pick up oxygen to be carried to every single one of the more than twenty-six trillion cells in the body?

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... created by an awe-inspiring, loving Creator!
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A. W. Tozer had this to say:

(The Best of A. W. Tozer: Book 2 compiled by Warren W. Wiersbe)

God's sovereignty is the attribute by which He rules His entire creation, and to be sovereign, God must be all-knowing, all-powerful and absolutely free.
p. 29

This story by Max Lucado is really cute:

(Outlive Your Life: You Were Made to Make a difference by Max Lucado)

When my nephew Lawson was three years old, he asked me to play some basketball. A towheaded spark plug of a boy, he delights in anything round and bouncy. When he spotted the basketball and goal in my driveway, he couldn't resist.

The ball, however, was as big as his midsection. The basket was three times his height. His best heaves fell way short. So I set out to help him. I lowered the goal from ten feet to eight feet. I led him closer to the target. I showed him how to "granny toss" the ball. Nothing helped. The ball never threatened the net. So I gave him a lift. With one hand on his back and my other beneath his little bottom, I lifted him

higher and higher until he was eye level with the rim.

“Make a basket, Lawson!” I urged. And he did. He rolled the ball over the iron hoop, and down it dropped. *Swoosh!* And how did little Lawson respond? Still cradled in my hands, he punched both fists into the air and declared, “All by myself! All by myself!”

A bit of an overstatement, don't you think, little fellow? After all, who held you? Who steadied you? Who showed you the way? Aren't you forgetting somebody?

p. 111

Are we forgetting somebody that is so special and longing to be intimately involved in every day of our lives?

v. 17 And He Himself is before all things, and all things in Him hold together.

“And He Himself is before all things, and all things in Him hold together.”

Now let's put four of those prepositions together:

1. “in Him,”
2. “through Him,”
3. “for Him,” and
4. “before all things.”

“He...is before all things”—that’s His eternal existence as the Son of God. He was here before creation was here.

John 17, where He’s praying in the garden, is great. He says:

John 17:5

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

So “all things in Him hold together.”

J. B. Lightfoot, a Greek commentator, said:

(Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon by J. B. Lightfoot)

He is the principle of cohesion in the universe.

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In other words, the law of gravity, the tides, the seasons, the patterns—all of these things—the tracks of the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets, all of that is under His jurisdiction and His control.

Roy Laurin, a devotional commentator, said:

(Colossians: Where Life is Established by Dr. Roy L. Laurin)

...“the helm of the universe is held by the hands which were

pierced for us.”
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That kind of puts it altogether.

Doesn't it seem foolish to us to consider for a moment that we are unable to trust Jesus Christ to order our lives in a meaningful way when He is orchestrating the whole universe and creation itself?

A. W. Tozer said:

(The Best of A. W. Tozer: Book 2 compiled by Warren W. Wiersbe)

Why doesn't the sky fall down? Why is it that stars and planets do not go tearing apart and ripping off into chaos?

Because there is a Presence that makes all things consist—and it is the Presence of that One who upholdeth all things by the word of His power. This is basically a spiritual explanation...

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Then Erwin Lutzer comes back with a statement from his book *10 Lies About God*. He says:

(10 Lies About God: And The Truths That Shatter Deception by Erwin W. Lutzer)

Can we trust a God who controls nature? Yes, for unless

He does, we would be subject to the whims of impersonal fate. I find no consolation in accepting the premise that God is not the ultimate cause of natural disasters. If the devil creates tornadoes and hurricanes without God's approval, I could die in a disaster before my appointed time. Perhaps God still has work for me to do, but a stray bolt of lightning over which God has chosen to have no control might strike me as I walk along the sidewalk. But if the weather is His to route, then I rest with the confidence that my life is ordered according to His will and plan. *If nature is out of God's hands, then my life is also out of His hands.*

pp. 116-17

He cuts to the chase and says it well.

Romans 8:35-39 is a passage of Scripture where you can worship. Everything we've talked about is summarized in that great doxology by the apostle Paul:

Romans 8:35-39 (NLT)

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today

nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord

Now here comes our KEY VERSE—verse 18.

v. 18 And He Himself is the head of His body, the church. He is the beginning (creator, originator), the first-born out from the dead, in order that He Himself might come to have first place in all things.

“And He Himself is the head of His body, the church. He is the beginning (the creator, originator), the first-born out from the dead,”

Now here is the PURPOSE CLAUSE and the THEME to the study.

“in order that He Himself might come to have first place in all things.”

Not just pick and choose, but “first place in all things.”

Now do you see how the argument’s been built?

If He’s first in all creation and He’s designed to be first as the head of the church, that is a powerful argument that He should also be first in the life of every believer.

We've got to ask ourselves that question. If He's first then we can't live a day without getting consultation with Him in discovering what His plan and purpose is for that given day.

We're always looking to Him to guide, to direct, and orchestrate our lives.

Stage #3, have you reached that point where Christ is in first place? And are you're comforted in that? And you know that He is?

You could probably tell a story of something that God has done in demonstrating that He's in control and in first place.

So creation, the church, by right of the fact that He is "the first-born from the dead," He holds His creation together. And in "His body, the church" He is the head.

CREATOR and ORIGINATOR—and here is the church, the new creation of Christ.

Jesus Christ's resurrection is a guarantee of our own resurrection. He "is the head," the originating source, the guarantee of our eternal life.

When you come to simple questions like this, it's easy to make some assumptions that are not valid. You have to give the Spirit of God some time to convict us where we're not doing what we think we're doing. In other words, we're living an

ILLUSION rather than REALITY.

Another great writer to read along this line is Gary Thomas. His little book *Thirsting for God* takes a lot of the early writers, the Puritan writers for the most part, and he declares the reality of our contemporary life in Christ of how we grow and mature in Him. And how He comes to have that first place in our lives.

Charles Wesley wrote that hymn “Jesus, Lover of My Soul”:

*Thou O Christ art all I want,
more than all in thee I find.*
(source unknown)

The apostle Paul says in:

Philippians 3:8

Everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have put aside all else, counting it worth less than nothing, in order that I can have Christ,

“first place”

Jim Elliott, martyred missionary, has this statement in his notes

O Jesus, Master and Center and End of All, how long before

that glory is Thine which has so long waited Thee?
(source unknown)

And just around the corner, the glory for him was to be with his Savior.

Who has “first place”?

Does He have “first place in all things”?

There’s nothing that is exempt from His lordship, from His leadership in our lives.

WHAT or WHO takes priority in our lives is the question.

Lucado says:

(Next Door Savior by Max Lucado)

Take a look at the vacated tomb. Did you know the opponents of Christ never challenged its vacancy? No Pharisee or Roman soldier ever led a contingent back to the burial site and declared, “The angel was wrong. The body is here. It was all a rumor.”

They would have if they could have. Within weeks disciples occupied every Jerusalem street corner, announcing a risen Christ. What quicker way for the enemies of the church to shut them up than to produce a cold and lifeless body? Display the cadaver, and Christianity is stillborn. But they had no cadaver to display.

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John Ortberg says:

(Faith & Doubt by John Ortberg)

The list of evidence against that tomb being the place where Jesus' bones are has gotten so long that the latest rumor is that skeptics are claiming this is the "true tomb of Jesus" because they found a bracelet in it that said, "What would I do?"

p. 95

It wouldn't be a complete study if we didn't here from Oswald Chambers. Listen to what he says:

(My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers)

Do it quickly— bring yourself to judgment now. In moral and spiritual matters, you must act immediately. If you don't, the inevitable, relentless process will begin to work. God is determined to have His child as pure, clean, and white as driven snow, and as long as there is disobedience in any point of His teaching, He will allow His Spirit to use whatever process it may take to bring us to obedience. The fact that we insist on proving that we are right is almost always a clear indication that we have some point of disobedience. No wonder the Spirit of God so strongly urges us to stay steadfastly in the light!

(June 30)

v. 19 Because in Him all the fullness willed (was pleased) to dwell.

“Because”—REASON—“in Him all the fullness (was pleased) willed to dwell.”

We’re going to have this in Colossians 2:

Colossians 2:9

Because to Him there is dwelling all the fullness of the divine nature bodily.

And all that means, according to Gromacki is:

(Stand Perfect in Wisdom: An Exposition of Colossians & Philemon by Dr. Robert Gromacki)

...the total essence of deity.

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“the fullness”—it’s complete. He is the image of the invisible God. He is complete deity.

And this is another convicting word for the Gnostics to realize that this is true.

Ephesians 3:19

and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

That's the picture that's described.

Listen to what Joni Eareckson Tada has to say:

(A Place of Healing: Wrestling with the Mysteries of Suffering, Pain, and God's Sovereignty by Joni Eareckson Tada)

At different times in my life I've enjoyed the old pictures of Jesus cradling cute lambs or walking around with blow-dried hair, clad in a white robe looking like it just arrived from the dry cleaners. But these days, these warfare days, those old images just don't cut it for me. I need a battlefield Jesus at my side down here in the dangerous, often messy trenches of daily life. I need Jesus the rescuer, ready to wade through pain, death, and hell itself to find me, grasp my hand, and bring me safely through.

There will be a time very soon, I hope, when I will once again enjoy the casual stroll through the garden with Him, admiring the dew drops on the roses. But for right now, if I am to "endure hardship...like a good soldier" as 2 Timothy 2:3 mandates, I need a comrade in arms, a strong commander to take charge of my private war.

And that is exactly who He is, and what He has done.

p. 32

With cancer plus the quadriplegia, here's a woman who would have chosen a wheelchair because that was God's plan and

purpose for her life. What a powerful, powerful witness for Him.

v. 20 And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens.

“And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself,”

“THROUGH Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens.”

You’ll notice we’ve focused on the word “through” because it occurs several times there and is the word that puts it all together.

Have you ever noticed in the Bible God never needs to be reconciled to anybody?

The Prodigal Son needed to be reconciled to the father, but God needs to be reconciled to no one because He loves us unconditionally.

The reconciliation needs to come from us. The move needs to be on our part and that’s what he’s saying here in this last great statement in verse 20.

Oh the joy of knowing who He is and what He is capable of

doing.

The empty CUP, the empty CROSS and the empty TOMB.

A loving Father has done all that is necessary for reconciliation.

With the Prodigal Son, what is the picture we get of God? The picture is of an old man running to get his arms around his son.

There's nothing in the Father's heart that would cause you to want to delay other than pride to resist what He has and being scared of what He's going to ask us to do. He is the RECONCILER. He's not the One who needs to be reconciled.

How do you know it? His peace.

“[And] having made peace through the blood of His cross;”

Here's another favorite verse:

Isaiah 32:17

The work of righteousness will be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance in your heart.

“Through” THREE TIMES:

1. “through Him to reconcile all things to Himself,”

2. “having made peace through the blood of His cross;” and
3. “through Him whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens.”

Curtis Tucker in *Majestic Destiny* quotes Stuart Townend who says:

(Majestic Destiny: Kingdom Hope is Rising by Curtis H. Tucker)

***How deep the Father’s love for us,
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure.***

Stuart Townend

p. 23

Eugene Peterson in his daily devotional prays this prayer:

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)

Too much of my life, Lord, is lived under the fearful aspect of what others think and do; stand with me and dissolve my fears, freeing me to live in your peace. Amen.

p. 383

There are 15 lessons that come out of this study.

LESSON #1: Is Christ in first place in my life?

LESSON #2: Do you have enough confidence in the Lord to turn it all over to Him?

LESSON #3: John 1:14: “And the word [Jesus Christ] was made flesh and tabernacled (or dwelt) among us.”

LESSON #4: The babe in Bethlehem’s manger is the God who created the heavens and the earth.

LESSON #5: Jesus Christ created the world for Himself. It is His house. He drew up the plans and brought it into being.

LESSON #6: Christ is responsible for all of creation. His name appears on all of it. Just like the artist’s name on a painting or the author’s name upon a book.

LESSON #7: In Him, as the originating source, all things were created. And through Him all things were created. And for Him all things were created.

LESSON #8: The God of Genesis 1 is the babe of Matthew 1.

LESSON #9: The helm of the universe is held by the hands which were pierced for us.

LESSON #10: The Lord is not only the head of His creation, He is the head of His body (the church) and He wants to be the

head in our lives as well.

LESSON #11: It is Jesus Christ who has made peace in His creation, in His church, and in the believer through the blood of His cross.

LESSON #12: The Lord has done everything necessary to bring about reconciliation. The empty cup, the empty cross, and the empty tomb bear witness to this.

LESSON #13: Does Jesus Christ occupy first place in your life? If not, why not? If not, what does?

LESSON #14: Do you have that peace of reconciliation?

LESSON #15: Does He have first place in your mind, your marriage, your business, your conduct, your attitudes, your rights, your responses, and your habits?

Take some time and celebrate His lordship. You know Him, you love Him.

You can make a list of the things that the Spirit of God brings to your attention. Maybe it's a relationship. Maybe it's a job. Maybe it's a change in the will of God for your life. All of those are possible. Your marriage, your business. Your lack of peace is only an indication God's getting ready to move you or going to do something else. Just rest in that and have the proper response.

If you've got habits that need to be taken care of, do it right now with Him. Make it right.

Father we love You. What a joy and privilege it is to serve You. What a great passage. You have fed us well. We thank You for it and we pray Your Holy Spirit will take this message and use it in ways that are beyond our own comprehension. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A Practical Study of EPHESIANS

HEAVEN'S PLAN for Life on Earth

“What It’s Like Living According to God’s Plan”

Key verse 3:11b — *“Christ is all and in all.”*

STUDY NUMBER THREE – CHRIST IN FIRST PLACE – COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

KEY VERSE 1:18

v. 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, first-born of all creation.

v. 16 Because in Him were created all things in the heaven and upon the earth. Things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or bearers of the ruling power or rulers or authorities—all things through Him and for Him were created.

v. 17 And He Himself is before all things, and all things in Him hold together.

v. 18 And He Himself is the head of His body, the church. He is the beginning (creator, originator), the first-born out from the dead, in order that He Himself might come to have first place in all things.

v. 19 Because in Him all the fullness willed (was pleased) to dwell.

v. 20 And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens.

NOTES

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Colossians 1:15-20 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What do you think Paul means in verse 15 when he says Christ is “the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation”?

3. According to verse 16, who is the Creator of all things?

4. What does verse 17 tell us about Jesus Christ?

5. What three things do we learn about God's program for Jesus Christ in verse 18?

6. Does Jesus Christ have first place in your life? If not, what does?

7. What does the phrase "all the fullness" mean in verse 19?

8. How was peace accomplished, according to verse 20?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

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