

Lesson 3

**Rooted in Christ;
He is our Reconciler...
so live in him,
making Christ preeminent
in our lives**

GETTING STARTED

1. Our Study: Colossians 1:15-23

Overview

So far in the study of this letter to the Colossians we have considered Paul's emphasis on Christ as our *Life* and our *Redeemer*. What Christ has done for us should be the motivating factor for the way we respond to him. Because he is the Source of life, we should seek to be rooted and grounded in him. Because he has redeemed us from our sins, has paid the price to set us free, we should seek to grow in the knowledge of his will and live accordingly.

In the Colossians passage we are to study for this lesson, we shall find Paul emphasizing Christ as our Reconciler, who is preeminent in all things.

First, reread the letter and observe carefully all of the things Paul has to say about Christ, especially regarding his relationship to God, to the created world, to the church, and to the believers.

Pray that through this study you may gain a deeper insight into Christ, the preeminent One, Reconciler of all things to God.

Concerns About the Life in Christ

Your front doorbell rings. When you open the door, you find two neatly dressed young adults ready to hand you some literature. You chat outside the front door and hear about the new and wonderful life with God being offered by the "religion" of these young adults. As a Christian, you feel comfortable hearing about life with God, until the conversation takes a turn, and you are told that what you have been taught about Jesus Christ is NOT true. You are encouraged, instead, to dig deeper into the new "religion" being offered you at the door. The young witnesses use Bible passages (they seem to know the Bible better than you do!) and the presentation is oddly convincing!

When they leave, what have they done to your faith? Do you begin to doubt what you have been taught? Do you feel defeated because you seemed to be at a loss when trying to defend your faith in Christ?

Problems Facing the Colossians

Paul had been informed about the "doorbell ringers" who were seeking to upset the faith of the Colossians. His purpose for writing this letter was to counteract the false teachings and to establish the Colossians in their faith in Jesus Christ. While Paul does not definitively describe the false teachings in his letter, it seems that the Colossians were being told...

- A. That the simplicity of the Christian faith, as taught by the apostles, was not enough for salvation.
- B. That matter was evil and that spirit was good. Since the true God is Spirit, he could not have created the world of matter. Rather, he sent forth intermediary powers which created the world.
- C. That Jesus Christ was not unique, but just one of the angel intermediaries between God and humankind. The world was controlled by these angelic powers, who were graded according to thrones, powers, and authorities. The attributes of God were divided among these angelic powers.

DIGGING IN... for the facts

2. Who Is Jesus Christ?

A. Study Colossians 1:15-20. To offset the teachings which the Colossians were hearing, Paul makes a glorious defense on behalf of Christ. Note what is stated about Christ in relation to...

1. GOD (1:15a) _____

2. CREATION (1:15b-17) _____

3. THE CHURCH – *The New Creation* (1:18) _____

4. RECONCILIATION (1:19,20) _____

B. Look again – One way to increase your powers of observation is to make special note of the prepositions. Reread this passage and underline or highlight the phrases, IN HIM, THROUGH HIM, and FOR HIM. What new insights about Christ did you gain concerning these phrases?

1. IN HIM (three things) _____

2. THROUGH HIM (two things) _____

3. FOR HIM _____

Did you note the emphasis on *all* and *things*? Underline these. Why this emphasis? Also note the tenses of the verbs. Any significance in the fact that most of the verbs are in the present tense?

3. What Has Christ Done – Colossians 1:21-23

In the previous passage Paul describes how God created the universe through Christ and how he redeemed the universe through him, restored it to its true harmony with himself through Christ's death on the cross. In this passage Paul personalizes the work of Christ and reminds the Colossians how Christ has helped them be reconciled with God, that is, to be on peaceful terms, to re-establish friendly relations with God.

- A. Their need for reconciliation? _____
- B. The cost of reconciliation? _____
- C. The purpose? _____
- D. The condition for continued reconciliation? _____

DIGGING DEEPER... for understanding

4. What Does Paul Mean?

No doubt you have already begun to ask yourself questions about some of Paul's statements. Consider some of the following study suggestions and questions.

- A. Look for the author's purpose. Review the false teachings listed under *Problems* in Part 1. The reread Colossians 1:15-20. Which of these false teachings was Paul trying to counteract? _____

- B. Seek to know the meaning of words and phrases. What did Paul mean by such terms as: *image, invisible God, firstborn, head, supremacy, fullness of God, reconcile*? Note John 14:9; Hebrews 1:2,3; Ephesians 1:22. _____

- C. Build mental pictures of what you are reading. What pictures come to your mind when you read the words, *holy, without blemish, free from accusation* before God. Note Romans 8:1,22; 2 Corinthians 5:21. _____

- D. Consider the author's emphasis. Why did Paul stress the concept of reconciliation? What if all that you knew about Christ was that which is described in Colossians 1:15-19? What difference would it make in your faith? For further insight into reconciliation, note 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

Choose one or more of the suggestions for special study. Note how the words or phrases are used in the passage. Compare translations. Look up words in the dictionary or in a Bible dictionary. Study cross-references. List on new insight which you have received from your study. _____

GROWING... in Christ

5. What is Paul Saying to Us?

- A. Teaching methodologies understand that a person tends to retain that which has been made meaningful... when a lesson is *internalized*. This means to apply inwardly, to make something your very own. Try internalizing the message of Colossians 1:21-23. Rewrite this passage in your own words, making it personal, writing in the first person (*And I who...*)

- B. What does this picture of Christ has to say to us in this age of exploration, technology, and instant communication? What is happening to the faith of human-beings in God as humankind grows in mastery of the universe? What are we making preeminent in our lives today?

- C. We all come face to face with people at our doorstep, people at our job, or people within our social network that challenge us in what we trust is true according to Scripture. Even among some who speak about Jesus, there is a sentiment that Jesus isn't enough... that we need "Jesus +"! How do we meet those challenges?

When confronted with teachings that are not quite square with what the Scriptures proclaim, why is it important that you know "doctrines"?... that you know what the Scriptures teach?... that you have a firm trust in Jesus as your merciful Savior?

6. Personal Response

Consider... if there is someone with whom you should become reconciled. There are persons who may never know the reconciling love of God until they first experience it with a person. May that person is you!

Memorize... Colossians 1:22 as a starter, but why not also memorize the wonderful picture Paul paints of Christ in Colossians 1:15-20? In the Greek this section appears to be written like a hymn. It can also be thought of as a creed. Read the passage beginning each verse with the words, "I believe".

Express... your feelings about Christ in a hymn such as "O Savior, Precious Savior," or write your own hymn or prayer or creed (https://hymnary.org/text/o_savior_precious_savior_whom_yet_unseen): _____
