

An Open Letter to Pastors / Continued IV ~

Colossians 1:18 – 24

~ There are few places in Scripture where we find ourselves much closer to the Lord Jesus Christ than in this little epistle Paul the apostle wrote to the church at Colosse from a Roman Mamertine prison cell. Naturally, it is the Spirit of God Who reveals all of the things of Christ to us; but the emphasis is not on the Holy Spirit now – the emphasis is directly on Jesus Himself — The Man in the Glory! Beginning at verse fifteen, we began considering nine uniquely identifying characteristic traits of Christ; attributes that render Jesus separate and superior to anyone and anything else. I did *not* point those out in our last report; but, in this report, we will outline the nine traits because, although we aren't after a theological study, this is, necessarily, a theological consideration required to fully comprehend the spiritual perspectives of the epistle to the Colossians. They understood what Paul was writing and conveying to them.

This section of Scripture is the rebuttal to all religious heresy concerning the Person of Christ. If you have not read our previous report, I highly suggest you go back and do so now. One of the first heresies was Arianism. Arius of Alexandria espoused the Lord Jesus Christ to be merely another creature. The Council of Nicaea, in about A.D. 325, answered his heresy by retorting, **“The Son is very man of very man, and very God of very God.”** Later, Socinus propagated that Jesus was not God. This is the basis of Unitarianism; and almost all cults, including Scientology, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons; and, in my estimation, Seventh Day Adventists – although I would not make a dogmatic argument against the latter. Alright, either way, the nine marks of identification of Christ that make Him different and superior are as follows:

(1) “Image” - eikon; see Hebrews chapter one verse three, and John chapter one verse eighteen. Christ Jesus could not be the image of God unless He is, indeed, God.

(2) “The first-born of all creation” - prototokos; see John chapter one verse fourteen and eighteen, and John chapter three verse sixteen. God is the

everlasting Father; the Son is the everlasting Son. His position in the Trinity is that of Son. *"First-born"* indicates His priority before all creation. However, His headship of all creation does not necessarily require He be born first; see Hebrews chapter one verse six, Revelation chapter one verse five, and Romans chapter eight verse twenty-nine. In His incarnation, He is the Son of God in a new sense. The angel's announcement to Mary was, *"...that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"* – Luke chapter one verse thirty-five. Christ is the same in substance, equal in power and glory with God the Father.

(3) "By him were all things created" clears up any question about Christ being the Creator or a creature in verse sixteen. As we have already learned, there are two kinds of creation — *"visible and invisible."* There are different gradations of rank in spiritual intelligences, too: *"thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers."*

(4) Christ not only created all things, they were created *for* Him.

(5) "He is before all things" — in the preincarnate Christ, all fullness dwells. In the incarnate Christ, all fullness of the Godhead bodily dwells. That is very important to consider prayerfully and understand.

(6) He holds all things together. He maintains creation. He directs the universe. *"Consist"* – sunesteken; means to *"hold together."*

(7) "He is the head of the body, the church" - see Ephesians chapter one verse twenty-two. He is the firstborn from the dead. He is the only One who has *EVER* been raised in a glorified body - see Psalm chapter two verse seven, Acts chapter thirteen verse thirty-three, Hebrews chapter one verse five, Hebrews chapter five verse five, and Revelation chapter one verse five.

(8) "That in all things He might have the pre-eminence" — the will of Christ must and will prevail throughout all of God's creation.

(9) The fullness – Pleroma; Christ's fullness was at home in His incarnation because He is the full-fullness – of everything. Jesus was absolutely one hundred percent God — not 99.9999%. Christ was also one hundred

percent in every other aspect of His relationship to God the Father, too — see verse fifteen; in His relationship to creation, verses sixteen and seventeen; in His relationship to the church, verses eighteen and nineteen; and in His relationship to the cross, verse twenty.

Alright, that was an unusually long theological table. This is a very rare instance of text on our expedition; but there's no other way to outline those truths about the Person of Christ properly. I hope you have read them correctly and completely....

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 might have the preeminence.

~ Jesus, as the head of the church body of believers, is the key to this entire epistle. In Ephesians, the emphasis was on the *body* of believers in the present world – the church. Here in Colossians, the emphasis is on the *head* of the body – the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ – returned from the dead, and seated in the Heavenlies at the right hand of God the Father, in a glorified body. I know this seems like fundamental tenets of Scripture – because it is; but you would be amazed at who actually understands and retains knowledge of these things and who doesn't. If these basic truths are not implemented in a meaningful way in our lives then, friends, you're just not saved. If we do not fully comprehend and believe these Biblical principles, then we will not be raised bodily from the dead unto eternal righteousness and incorruptibility one day. We must know what we believe before we can believe it. Bible study isn't easy. If you think I learned everything I know – which isn't much – overnight, then you are sadly mistaken. What you read in these safari reports are reasonings from truth to experience; drawn from *many years* of suffering for the cause of Christ. We're not perfect and sinless down here – forget that blasphemy. *"It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He appears THEN we shall be like Him"* - the apostle John.

Does Christ have preeminence in *all things* in your life? Or does He take a walk-on part for certain scenes in your self-scripted play? Do you only permit the Lord to rule your life when you deem Him worthy or needed? Those questions should sting every one of us like a scorpion, my beloved.

The will of Christ must prevail throughout all of God's creation *AND* throughout the unseen spiritual world. That is His intention for our life. That's the *ONLY* way we will ever glorify Christ. In spite of man's modern-day rebellion against Him, God says, *"yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion."* See, God is moving forward in a program with a plan and a purpose; and He isn't deviating, He is not compromising, and He doesn't hesitate to judge sin. The one and only objective God has is to ultimately establish the Lord Jesus Christ on His Throne in this earthly world throughout eternity! As we know, that happens *AFTER* the church is removed from the world and becomes His bride....

19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

~ Christ *"made peace through the blood of his cross"* - Romans chapter five verse one. God is not a rogue cop waiting around the corner to ambush sinners and imprison them for no reason. God has His arms outstretched to this lost and dying world, inviting the sinner, saying, *"come, and I will give you redemption rest."* God only offers that because He loves us. Why does God love me? I have no idea. Reconciliation is toward man – never towards God. Redemption is towards God. God is reconciled by the cross of Christ. That's finished; it won't be happening again. God is asking man to be reconciled to Him – see second Corinthians chapter five verses eighteen through twenty. *"All things"* is limited to all of those things which have been appointed for reconciliation; in the same way as *"the loss of all things"* is limited to those things Paul had to lose according to Philippians chapter three verse eight. Everyone will *NOT* ultimately go to Heaven, friends; you can just write that down.

"Things in Heaven" indicate that not only must we be made ready for Heaven, but Heaven must be made ready to receive us. The Lord Jesus said, *"I go to prepare a place for you."* By the incarnation of Christ, God came down to man; by the blood of Jesus, man is brought up to God. Notice that Paul does not add, *"....things under the earth"* as we learned about in

Philippians chapter two verse ten; because those things under the earth will be required to bow to Christ Jesus - but they will never be reconciled to Him. *This* is the place and *this* life is the one whereby we can be reconciled to God – or choose not to be. I know the sentimental siren that blares out everything will be reconciled to God. It may be a popular selling point for the cult when making merchandise of the Lord Jesus Christ – but it isn't Biblical – not even close....

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

~ That's harsh language to behold, my beloved. "*....enemies in your mind*" reminds us that there is both a *mental* alienation from God as well as *moral* alienation. Both commence on day one of our earthly existence. This perfectly and fully explains the fierce antagonism toward God on the part of most so-called intellectuals. Their hatred against God is so strong that most of them won't admit it, and most attempt to play passivity by aggressively proclaiming to Christians, "*....I don't hate God; I feel sorry for YOU because you cannot think for yourself.*" Well, God said it is *YOUR* unbelieving mind and *your* wicked works that reveal hatred towards Him. I'll play it safe, and stick with what God says. Further, those who say we are not born totally depraved are asserting, "*.... God hasn't, or can't, make adequate provision.*"

Some think we're only lost because we went out and committed so-and-so sin. They don't view themselves as sinners, so, they don't believe they are lost. No, a person is lost because their mind is alienated from God in this present moment by a choice. Yes, that's right, the lost are lost because they *WANT* to be lost in rebellion against the Lord Jesus Christ and His statutes and precepts. I *K-N-O-W* that isn't nice or popular – but that's what's real, my friends. Frankly, if you do not proclaim the Gospel to myriad groups and cultures, you would never have any idea these factions even exist. Well, once in a while you dear readers get to actually hear something you've never heard before on this so-called safari. Either way, I have literally never seen so much hatred abound as a result of simply teaching the Bible – but I digress....

22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:

~ “*Body of his flesh*” is an explicit declaration of Christ’s suffering; but Docetic Gnosticism states that Christ suffered in appearance, but not in a real body. It doesn’t get any more stupid than that, my friends. Such statements have no credibility whatsoever. “*Unblameable*” means Christ took our place; because Andrew C. Hunt *is* blamable. Maybe you aren’t – I am. I am not capable of presenting perfection to God; and God isn’t accepting anything short of perfection! That leaves me with a real problem. The righteousness of Christ means I may be presented without blemish. This was the requirement for a sacrificial animal in the temple according to the Mosaic System of Levitical Law. “*Unreprovable*” means unaccusable; unchargeable. “*It is God that justifies.*” You really need to think and pray about all of this, my dear readers. This is no joke — and you will rarely — if ever — encounter this teaching. This is the kind of chapter that I *NEVER* see cited in religious verse grabs — most people cannot even talk about these things intelligently — if they even know about them at all — which most do not — it — Christ Jesus — simply isn’t in their minds. God is not part of their thinking....

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

~ This is not a conditional clause beginning with “*if*.” This “*if*” isn’t based on the future. It is *not* something that shall be *if* something else is. Rather, this is the “*if*” of argument, often used by Paul. It could be translated, “*Since ye continue in the faith....*” Most people grab this verse and say, “*AHA! We CAN lose our salvation.*” No, the insecurity of believers can never be sustained throughout Scripture. My question is: can animals and insects be saved according to verse twenty-three? Every living creature has a soul. See, there are a whole bunch of people dreaming up what the Bible means to them in visions and mysterious ways — always done in the dark; but they are literally clueless. Unfortunately, there may be a few of these teaching and even preaching in a pulpit at your local church. As a Christian, you

might want to figure this all out in prayer and Bible study. If you are a child of God, then you will continue in the faith unmoved. The hope of the Gospel never fails those who are truly in Christ. It simply cannot be otherwise. The greatest honor a man can ever have bestowed upon him in this life is a direct commission of God's will to handle the Word of God. There is nothing quite like it....

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

~ So, our Spiritual Safari ends this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God witnessing the subjective work of Christ for His saints. That continues through the remainder of this chapter. Let's try a translation of verse twenty-four this way: *"....now I, Paul, rejoice in the midst of my sufferings for you, and I am filling up, in my flesh, that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake, which is the church."* It was necessary to fill up that which was lacking of the suffering of Christ. See, there are sufferings of Christ we cannot share: His human suffering, suffering as the Son of God, suffering as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. We'll likely never know anything about those things. Then, there are sufferings of Christ that we CAN share: such as suffering for righteousness' sake, and suffering in the measure that we identify ourselves with Christ for the proclamation of the Gospel. Those last two points are truths to strongly consider in prayer ~

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