

CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

Summary notes of message by Gavin Cox
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Sunday, 9 February 2025

Key text: Colossians 1:1- 23 ESV

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

²To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

³We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf⁸ and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

⁹And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

²¹And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²²he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Introduction

Paul was writing from prison, either in approximately 55AD in Ephesus, or in the early 60sAD in Rome. Colossians and Philemon were written together at the same time.

Gentiles all had their own gods, which influenced how they thought. Caesar ruled the Roman empire. Strong Caesars set themselves up as a gods as well. Judaizers were trying to get the gentiles to take the law of Moses.

Paul is saying that your God is not the gods of gentiles, Caesar or the law of Moses. Your God is King Jesus!

It's about what faith looks like that is lived out from day to day. Can't divorce the faith from the founder of that faith. Our Christianity is not about us, its about **Jesus**. Not about what we do primarily, but **what Jesus has done**. He walks with us. As a response we walk with him.

It is very practical. Paul anchors all the practical stuff in **who Jesus is**.

V15-20

- He is the icon, image, exact representation
- First above and before, in priority and sequence.
- By him all created, visible and invisible ... through and for Him. Mathematics is a discovery of God's engineering.
- Holding all things together - CREATION
- Head of the church. The people were in the heart of God before he created.
- Firstborn from the dead. He could bring everything out of the grave with him.
- IN ALL THINGS **PREEMINENT**.
- Jesus' death and resurrection was a cosmic event reconciling all things.
- Kingship, Lordship of Jesus.

What this lofty picture of Jesus can **look like in a person's life**.

The story of Philemon

In those days slavery was the norm across Roman empire. Built on fear. If disobeyed would be severely punished. Was dehumanising. Slaves were living possessions.

While Paul was preaching in Ephesus he met wealthy man, Philemon and led him to the Lord. Church met in his home.

Philemon had slaves. Young man, Onesimus (means useful) was a slave in his household. It seems he had a deep streak of rebellion, doing damage to Philemon. He owed him through theft or damage. Ran away, was a fugitive. If caught, would have been severely beaten, possibly killed. Philemon owned him. He ran for a big city where he could hide.

Found his way to Paul in prison. Got saved and Paul taught him. We don't know if he ever got honest about his story.

Paul and Onesimus are now two brothers. Harbours runaway slaves is breaking the law. Paul decided to send him back to his owner, Philemon, even though he was useful to him and ministered to him while in prison for the gospel.

The Lordship of Jesus in your life is profoundly personal but it is also public; it affects everyone around you.

Tychicus was given the letter to take to Philemon, with Onesimus. Plus a letter to the Colossian church. The very personal matter is also very public.

See the letter to **Philemon**.

Will see the gospel in the letter to Philemon. He appeals for love's sake. Do it from the heart. Walk with the Lord from your heart, you will be faithful and steady.

Paul speaks of Onesimus as his son, his "very heart." He encourages Philemon to receive him back, not as a slave or bondservant even, but as a brother.

- **Could you find it in your heart to do this?**
- Are you going to treat him as you would Paul?
- Are you going to crucify him or be a brother in the face of disapproval?
- Paul put his entire relationship on the line.

Let's find the Jesus way. It is what the preeminence of Christ means.

In **Colossians 4:7-17** Paul gives the problem to the whole church. He introduces Onesimus as "a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you!" They are to receive him as such.

(Epaphras, a responsible leader, was often on his knees praying.)

+55y later Onesimus was put to death in Rome for serving Jesus.

Let Christ be preeminent.

What does it mean for me personally and for us as a church community?

Application questions:

1. What does what this mean for the Onesimuses (in this nation); those who make up the "underbelly" of society?
2. What does it mean for the Philemons of this world and our churches?
3. What does it mean for us?