# Colossians

**Sermon • Rev'd Andrew Hoggan • 1st November**

Romans 10:1-4, 11-14. Colossians 1:15-23




**Colossians in a nutshell**: Jesus plus nothing = salvation.
Intro: Paul prepared for proclamation.
Colossian Church: Faithful, loving, hopeful.
But beware false teaching.
Trust in the supremacy of Christ

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| Image of the invisible God | v15 |
| Creator of all | v16 |
| Authority over all | v17-18 |
| Fully God | v19-20 |
| Our new status | v21-22 |
| Stable – Steadfast – Immovable in hope | v23 |

A two sentence summary why i picked Roman 10 as an accompanying passage. Paul is making the point firstly, that Salvation is based solely on Jesus fulfilling the Law on our behalf. Secondly, for people to hear the Gospel, and come to a saving faith in Christ, there is need of those tho will preach the gospel.

Lord Jesus, as we hear your word, and then look into it, encourage our hearts and expand our minds that we might see you for who you are and live in the light of that, amen.

A couple of weeks ago I was working in my garage and a neighbour from up the street pulled up in my driveway to see what I was up too. I showed him the commercial size charcoal Tandoor that had just  been delivered.

It weighs 300k.  I was thinking aloud how to get it from the garage to the back yard, and thinking perhaps I should have got a smaller one.  I guess as a way of saying “you have to spend it on something" he said, “well you're a long time dead”.

In the hope of starting a conversation, maybe even sowing a few seeds I said “So some say, but maybe not?”  He then said something to the tune of “well we really don’t know what happens.” “Maybe someone who has died can come back and tell me.”  I could have been smarter and said, “guess what, someone has died and come back. His  name is Jesus”.

There are for sure many ideas floating around in regards what comes next.

- From the dreamy and idealistic hope that it will all work out ok in the end.
- To the cynical and materialist stance that this is all there is so be had best make the best of it.

But here’s the fact that we have to live with. Reality  is not determined by what we think, or believe.  To push the point. I might believe I could fly if I flapped my arms hard enough.  That belief tested against gravity would prove instructive, if not fatal.  Reality is not determined by what we think or believe.

There is no area where this is more important than when applied to the Gospel.  Given that eternity and salvation is at stake, it is crucial that the Gospel is rightly communicated, and rightly understood.  The Apostle Paul was laser focused on people hearing, understanding and of course accepting the gospel. Or truer to say,  the one the gospel reveals,  the Lord Jesus Christ. But for  Paul to  proclaim the Gospel he had to understand it.  For Saul the Christian killer to become Paul the evangelist would take time.

Following his conversion on the road to Damascus, where he met the Lord Jesus,  Saul was in training for some 17 years before he wrote his first letter. 3 years in the outback of Arabia. Then another 14 years we are not sure where.

We get a clue about what might have been happening in those 14 years from Galatians.  “I know a man who 14 years ago was ushered up into the third heaven. He saw and heard things beyond his ability to communicate.”

It would seem to me that, for some 17 years before Paul put pen to paper:

- His mind was being recalibrated and reorientated in line with gospel truth.
- He was being prepared to proclaim the gospel and refute false teaching.

“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind,” Paul tells us in Romans 12. “Have the mind of Christ,” Paul tells us in Philippians. Much of Paul’s teaching is about helping us think rightly in order that we might live rightly. It's an egg and chicken situation. As we understand we live. As we live we understand.

Let’s set the context of our reading. As Paul began his letter to the Colossians he began by commending them for their faith, love and hope. He went on to commend them for showing the fruit of the spirit, good evidence that they had received, and were living out the gospel. Paul was also dealing with a problem in the church.

It was the problem of false teaching. False teaching that took the form of saying if you want true security, if you want to be sure you are really saved, you better take on board some of the the practices of Judaism, particularly circumcision. Only one thing to say about that. Ouch! Paul was very clear. You cannot add to the work of Christ. There is nothing to add when it comes to the power and the effect of the cross.

In Romans Paul goes to great effort that we might understand salvation is by faith. Keeping the law and doing good works, as good as good works are, will not save us. Our faith, our hope is based on nothing less, and nothing more, than the purposes of God, and the actions of Jesus, as he took our sin and gave us his righteousness.

The Jehovah’s Witness fail completely at this point. Their salvation is tied to them being a witness. Their salvation , is dependent on them spending a good part of their time knocking on doors, among other things. Further, there is a direct link between their witnessing as a means of gaining salvation, and an inadequate understanding of who Jesus, is and what Jesus did.

JWs are a sad example of those who, though sincere, fail to recognise the person, and work of Jesus. With the effect that securing salvation is dependent on what they do as compared what Jesus did.

There is no security there. There is only fear, and guilt, and a constant awareness that we simply aren’t up to the job. What about Catholic monks

before the reformation,  flagellating themselves, wearing scratchy robes, trying to attain holiness and perfection via suffering and self denial.

Martin Luther was originally in that camp. Till that is,  he realised we are justified by faith alone, in Christ alone. And so was born the Protestant reformation, and here we sit today.

to understand the Gospel is to understand that there is no security as we look to ourselves and our efforts.  Best look to Jesus if we want to be secure in our faith. Best look to Jesus if we want to live in the freedom that Jesus bought for us through his death and resurrection.  That we would understand, and take to heart who Jesus is, and what Jesus did for us,  is the motivation that lies behind vs 15-23.

Vs 15 He, that is Jesus, “He is the image of the invisible God.”  God is Spirit, invisible. In Jesus though, we see the invisible God. In Jesus we see the character, the love and the power of God.

To help us understand just how powerful Jesus is, creatively powerful,  v16 points to Jesus as the  agent of creation.  A point the Apostle John also makes as he begins his gospel.  Paul, as he shows Jesus to to be the agent of creation in Colossians,  has previously argued in Corinthians, that we are “made new creations in Christ.”

Surely then,  the one that bought the very cosmos into being can make new creations of us as we trust in him.  “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling” so  we sing in that great  hymn “Rock of ages”.

Further, if Jesus is the agent of creation, creation itself  is subject to Jesus. vs 16, For 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.

Firstly, then, Jesus is the agent of creation, and secondly, included in creation, are thrones, dominions, rulers or authorities, both visible and invisible.

There are many in our world who think they are in control. Thankfully and mercifully, no human authority is above the authority and power of God.  That is  true also of the spiritual powers and authorities, that pointed to in vs 16 under the description “invisible.  That said best we not fight in our own strength. Paul makes that point as he talks about our needing to wear the whole armour of God in Ephesians.

“We fight not against flesh and blood but against the rulers the principalities the forces of evil and the heavenly places”, Paul tells us. And lest we be frightened or intimidated by such talk. It is not an equal battle. Jesus disarmed the principalities and powers through the cross, triumphing over them through it. The battle continues though. So just as we can’t win salvation by our efforts, neither can we win against the spiritual superpowers in our own strength.

vs 17-18, from Jesus, the one who is before all all things both chronologically, and in terms of his authority, rule and reign over creation, including that part of creation that is invisible to our eyes, to his rule and reign over the church.

Vs 18, “And 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. Or to say it another way, that he might have first place. That he might call the shots.

Paul builds truth on truth through the passage. Jesus is not only the image of God verse 15. He is the very substance and nature of God in vs 19, For in him, that is in Jesus, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

Why, for what purpose? Vs 20, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

In Romans chapter 8, Paul talks about creation groaning, as if in the pains of childbirth. Creation itself, waiting for the sons of God to be revealed. It’s a pointing forward to the new reality that happens when God brings to pass the new heaven and the new earth. That day when we, and all creation will be set free from our bondage to corruption and decay.

Vs 21-22 It gets personal and it gets practical. “And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach, before him”.

Paul has already, in vs 12-14, told us that God has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has told us we have been delivered from the domain of darkness and been transferred to the kingdom of Jesus. The One who has worked our redemption, and brought us forgiveness of sins.”

Building on vs 12-14, Paul makes it personal and practical. We live according to what God has done for us, and is doing in us.

Vs 23, “if 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.”

Now if we were to focus on the “if” we might fall into the error that Paul is trying to counter here. The ideas that “what we do” somehow adds to our security and salvation. It’s helpful, and important, then that we understand that the “if” of v23 is seen in light of what came before in vs 22 which tells us that we stand reconciled “now”. We are “now” able to be presented before God as holy and blameless.

So confident is Paul in the work of the cross, that he conflates past and future as a way of saying “it’s a done deal”. Rest secure. Live in the light of who you are in Christ Jesus. Paul builds truth on truth.

V23 is built on v22. V22 is built on v12-14. V 12-14 is built on v11 where Paul talked of the endurance, patience, joy that are a result of God's power and glorious might.

Putting it all together in closing.

- Because of God, and holding to the gospel we have received, we continue in the faith.
- Because of God, and holding to the gospel we have received, we are stable and steadfast.
- Because of God, and the gospel we have received, we do not shift from hope.
- Because of God, and the gospel we have received, we are able to experience love and show love.
- Because of God and holding to the gospel we have a hope that transcends anything this world can offer and is our future is certain and secure.

Who is Jesus? He is our saviour.
How does he save us? Because he is God.
Why should we stand secure, and have hope?

Because Jesus is fully up to the job.

- And surely we can entrust ourselves into the very hands that brought creation into being.
- And according to the purposes of God has already made a new creation out of us who believe.

In that freedom, in that confidence, in that assurance, in that hope, we live and serve. Can I get a wee Anglican hallelujah. Let’s pray…