

The Core: Living with Jesus at the Center

Revealing the Grand Plan of Reconciliation
Colossians 1:19-20

Mark Vroegop

19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross (Col 1:19-20).

We draw to a close today our intensive study of Colossians 1:15-20 which was some kind of first-century hymn or creed. This passage has been gold. It has captured the core of the core. It is one of the most Christ-centered passages in all the New Testament.

Hopefully you'll remember what we've learned:

- 1:15-16 – Everyone glorifies Christ; it is simply a matter of how you glorify him – either by confessing him as Savior or by receiving the due penalty for your rebellion.
- 1:17-18 – He holds everything together and we need to confess our dependency (“I’m dependent on you”), inadequacy (“I need your power”), and our allegiance (“I need you more than anything”) to him.

I’ve tried to help you see that you don’t make Jesus the core; he is the core. And I’ve tried to help you embrace the fact that you are dependent and powerless. Those are good first steps, but that is not all. We need to learn to trust Jesus.

Trusting Jesus begins with knowing that you need help. It begins by acknowledging that your biggest problem is you, but it doesn’t stop there. You see, knowing that you cannot make it on your own without any direction will lead to hopelessness. And that is not the way that God wants us to live.

Many of us try to live the Nike way – JUST DO IT. But that doesn’t work. The real problem with most of us is that we try to JUST DO IT when we should be saying, “I CAN’T DO IT.” The heart of Christianity is realizing this and learning how to trust in Jesus.

The problem in the church at Colossae was that they were starting to trust in other things rather than Jesus. They were subtly drifting from Christ by becoming more focus on other things: knowledge (2:23), spiritual disciplines (2:23), man-made rules (2:16), and mysticism

(2:18). They started to trust in the add-ons, and they were beginning to miss Adonai! They were infatuated with the means of ministry, and they were neglecting the Master.

Paul closes this hymn or creed with a clear reminder that most pressing problem man ever faced was real separation from God. And Jesus was able to accomplish the grand plan of reconciliation. We could not do that but Jesus could.

So let me show you Paul's view of Christ, and why Jesus is worthy of your trust.

1. He is fully God (v 19)

Jesus is fully God; therefore he is infinitely powerful. Jesus is worthy of your trust because of the simple fact that HE IS GOD! There is no one who is more powerful than Christ, and he is worthy of your trust.

Verse 19 begins with "in him" identifying that Paul is going to describe what Jesus is really like, what his substance is, and who he is. "In him" is not a reference this time to realm of Christ like we saw in 1:4 or 1:6 (although ESV renders 1:6 "by him"). This time Paul is explaining what Jesus is all about. What is the core of Christ?

He is fully God. The core of Christ is his divinity or the reality that he was completely God. The text says, "all the fullness of God." This phrase is loaded with so much great material.

The word "full" or "fullness"¹ is used all over the New Testament:

- Of a patch to fill up the gap in a rip of a garment (Matt 9:16)
- Of leftover fragments that filled up the baskets in one of Jesus' miracles (Mark 6:43)
- Of the way that Gentiles are fully included in the family of God (Rom 11:12)
- Of the manner in which love fulfills the law of God (Rom 13:10)
- Of the right time ("when the fullness of time had come") for Christ to be born (Gal 4:4)
- Of the Christ's inexhaustible resource of grace that we receive ("from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace" - John 1:16)
- Of the spiritual maturity that for which believers are to strive ("until we all attain...the stature of the fullness of Christ" - Eph 4:13)
- Of the manner in which believers can be "filled with all the fullness of God" through the knowledge of Christ (Eph 3:19)²

So this word "full" is much more powerful and loaded than what we feel when we use it. It is much more than a statement of fact. It is celebration of saturation. It is the difference between saying, "I'm so full!" after you have a meal at Logans. And walking out of a Sunday

¹ Greek word pleroma

² F.F. Bruce. The Epistle to the Colossians. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmanns Publishing, 1984. p. 73 n.162.

morning service where God has showed up, you've sensed God's presence, you were so satisfied with him, and said, "I am so full!" That's the idea. This is more than a fact. This is a celebration, the stunning realization that God is here. For the disciples it was the stillness of the moment after Jesus calmed the storm. It was shock on their faces as Jesus embraced a man who moments ago was filled with demons. They were in the presence of God!

That is why the text also says "was pleased to dwell." The beauty is two-fold: 1) that Christ was God, and 2) that Christ was here, in person, and among us. It is the cry of John's heart in John 1:14 – "we saw God!"

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

We have seen his glory! When we saw him, talked with him, listened to him, and were with him—we were with God! Wow! But that is not all.

His deity (being God) means that Jesus is able to help people like no one else can, and it is directly tied to his power. "And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" (John 1:16). So get this! His power results in you receiving help. And realizing who Jesus is should give us confidence to come to him, to trust him, and ask for help.

14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession... Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:14&16)

Do you see the connection? We've got to know what Jesus is like so that we'll come to him with greater confidence, not in ourselves, but in Him. People who don't know Jesus, don't trust Jesus. We need to have greater confidence in Jesus! And to do that, we've got to know him. He is full of power.

My kids love duct tape. A number of years ago they discovered that there are a lot of things that duct tape can fix. I remember once that I called a plumber in our church about a leak that I had in a big black metal sewer pipe in my basement. I told him that it had a small crack in it and it was leaking. He told me that he would be there in a few days, but in the meantime to duct tape it. I thought he was joking. Then he said, "Look Pastor, duct tape fixes just about everything!" And you know what – he was right.

So my kids have learned that duct tape can fix almost anything—almost. You see there have been times when I've been holding a broken air-soft gun or a scooter in one hand and a very sad boy in the next when one of them has said, "Dad, can you duct tape it?" It breaks their hearts when I tell them, "No, son. Duct tape won't work this time." Despite what they often want to believe, duct tape cannot fix everything.

I'm so glad that I will NEVER have to say, "I'm sorry son, Jesus won't work this time." I can have great confidence that Jesus can (not that he always will) fix anything! Why? Because he is fully God. No one is more powerful than him .

Therefore, Paul calls us to stop trusting in other things and start trusting Christ.

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily (Col 2:8-9)

In other words, don't drift from trusting Christ—he's fully God.

2. He brings peace (v 20a)

Jesus is the one who fulfilled God's grand plan of reconciliation between God and man. He brought peace, something no one else could do. Jesus did the impossible: reconciling the creator and the creation.

Verse 20 begins with "through him." So the description here is no longer a focus on who Jesus is, but rather a focus on what he has done. Verse 19 reminded us as to who Jesus is. Verse 20 reminds us what he did.

Jesus brought reconciliation. The word reconciliation basically means to change, and in this case it means to change from enmity to friendship, from fracture to healed, from separated to united. Jesus' reconciliation brought about the possibility of God and man being together again.

Now I don't want to assume that everyone here knows why reconciliation was necessary. The Bible tells us that God is holy and that all of us have sinned. The result is a spiritual separation from God that, if unresolved, would lead to eternal damnation in Hell as the just punishment for our sinfulness. But here is the other thing: you cannot make self-atonement and pay for your own sins because every sin requires death and we have all sinned many, many times. So the only way for reconciliation between God and man is for a sinless person to die so that his death could be applied for you. And that is what Jesus did. His death creates a path for reconciliation.

He did what you and I could not do. He did the impossible.

And the extent of his peace-making is amazing. Verse 20 says that he brought it to everything—whether in heaven or on earth. In other words, the problem is not just human beings; the entire creation has been affected by the curse of sin. The earth groans under the weight of sin, and Jesus' reconciliation power knows no limits or boundaries. He is taking every created thing and bringing it under his banner, Lordship, and power.

His work of reconciliation was initiated in his death, burial, and resurrection. The final battle has been fought and won, but the signing of full surrender on the part of the enemy had not yet happened. But make no mistake about it—it is just a matter of time.

Jesus did the impossible, and thank God he did! The book of Revelation captures a great moment when the impossibility and the hopelessness our sin is broken by the worth of Christ as he embraces what seemed impossible.

"Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, 4 and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. 5 And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

6 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. 8 And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying,

"Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, 10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

11 Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" 13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" 14 And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Do you see it? Can you feel it? The impossibility of any solution, the hopeless of no answers, the reality of coming judgment, and the panic of God's power is suddenly solved by a lamb that had been slain. He brought peace!

That is the great thing about Jesus. He makes the impossible possible. He can bring hope to the hopeless and joy to those who thought they'd never laugh again. He can heal the broken-hearted. He can restore the weary. He can bring security in despair. He can bring peace in the midst of the storm. He can bring forgiveness where there was bitterness and reconciliation where there was years of separation. He can do what no one else can.

3. His sacrifice is sufficient (v 20b)

The final reason why Jesus is worthy of your trust is that his sacrifice is sufficient. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross was the sufficient means of accomplishing reconciliation. In other words, it works!

Notice that two words stand out in verse 20b: blood and cross. Both are stunning terms when you consider Christ. Blood is stunning because it indicates the human trauma of his death. In the Bible, blood is precious because it is viewed as life-giving (see Gen 9:4, John 6:53-54). The sight of blood is scary even to little children because they know that it is important and it is not normal to have blood on the outside of your body. Even Savannah knows this. When she gets a cut and it bleeds she always says, "Uh oh, Daddy!" So the fact that blood is mentioned here is another connection to Jesus' human suffering.

The other word is cross. The cross is a cherished emblem to us, but it was a symbol of humiliation and dishonor in the New Testament times. Death on the cross is to suffer severe shame. No one cherished the old rugged cross in Jesus' day. The cross represents exposure, shame, humiliation, and death.

Put the two together: Jesus suffered, and he was humiliated. Yet, those two things brought about peace. The bloody cross, positioned between God and man, did something. It made peace. But it did something else too.

The bloody cross of Christ demonstrates that there is value in humiliating suffering when the glory of God is the target. It is also sufficient as a model for how we are to live. Which is why Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt 16:24). Jesus' suffering becomes a sufficient means of bringing peace, and it is sufficient as a way to live.

Do you see how worthy Jesus is? He is fully God. He brings peace. His sacrifice is sufficient. All of those things make him worthy of your trust.

Since the 1990's the moniker for Nike has been JUST DO IT. While the phrase works really well to sell shoes, it is a terrible way to live. JUST DO IT doesn't work from a spiritual perspective, and the book of Colossians was written to people who were trying to find new ways, apart from Christ, to JUST DO IT.

Admitting our inability to do things on our own—"I can't do this—is the first step. But we need more than that. We need to realize that Jesus is worthy of our trust. We need to agree with the hymn-writer:

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,
And to take Him at His Word;
Just to rest upon His promise,
And to know, "Thus says the Lord!"

Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just from sin and self to cease;
Just from Jesus simply taking
Life and rest, and joy and peace.

We need a new theme! Rather than being JUST DO IT people, we need to be JESUS CAN people. The result will not be some "let go and let God" mentality, but a firm belief that trusting in Jesus is a choice that I make to ask for his help. So there's a lot that I need to do, but I'm not doing it alone!

So I want you to be "JESUS CAN" people. No matter what your challenge is today.

- "I am an awful sinner, and I could never pay for my sins." JESUS CAN!
- "I've made such a mess of my life. I can't fix what I've done." JESUS CAN!
- "I've been so hurt. I don't have the power to even think of loving them, let alone forgive them. I can't create love for them." JESUS CAN.
- "I have a friend with really deep problems. I don't know what to say. I don't think I can help them." JESUS CAN.
- "Our son won't listen to us. His heart is hard. We can't get through to him." JESUS CAN.
- "Life is too hard and the pain too real. I cannot do this again!" JESUS CAN.
- "I'm so confused. My problems are so complicated and challenging. I can't figure out what to do!" JESUS CAN.

You see, there is no one like him. No one is more worthy of your trust. There is no one more powerful than Christ. You need to believe that and ask him to help you trust him.

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!
O for grace to trust Him more!

© College Park Church

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce this material in any format provided that you do not alter the content in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Mark Vroegop. © College Park Church - Indianapolis, Indiana. www.yourchurch.com