

Putting on Jesus Colossians

In the 1600's the Scottish pastor Henry Scougal wrote a letter to a despondent friend. The most famous line from that letter/book is:

The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love.
Henry Scougal in *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*

(George Whitefield said he never understood Christianity until he read that book)

Scougal told his friend that spiritual health and wellbeing are not centered in theological correctness, moralist reductionism, or affectional emotionalism. For Scougal, true Christianity is *"the very image of God drawn upon the soul."*

2 Corinthians 3:18 – *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.*

In other words, Scougal told his friend to get his eyes off his trouble and to place his mind and heart on Jesus.

- We do tend to focus on our troubles, don't we? This discourages us.
- We do tend to seek remedies other than love for Jesus, don't we? This exhausts us.

Let's return to that phrase once more –

The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love.

Let's ask ourselves, "Who is the most worthy and excellent soul in existence?"

The answer is, "God."

What is the "object of God's love?"

The answer is "Jesus."

There is something about Jesus that is unlike anything else or anyone else in the universe. And the worth and excellency of our souls is determined by his place in our lives.

This is the subject of Paul's message to the Colossians.

First: The Context of the Letter

Before Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Colossae, he had never been to their city (2:1). This explains the personalized greetings at the end of the letter, (see Romans 16 for another

example). Paul wanted to minister through personal relationships rather than asserting apostolic authority, setting a tone for future church leaders.

Paul wrote this letter during his first imprisonment in Rome (61-62 AD), after he heard they were struggling with a christological heresy. The church at Colossae was under attack from false teachers who were denigrating the deity of Jesus; they were teaching that He was not actually God. Though Paul had never been to the church itself, he addressed these issues head-on. The nature of Jesus Christ as Creator and Redeemer was nonnegotiable, so Paul wrote to them that he might bring his wisdom to bear on this difficult and trying situation. It was critical to him that this church know God in His greatness and glory, rather than in the deficient view given them by the false teachers (Colossians 1:25; 2:1–2).

This report came from Epaphras, likely the leader of the church at Colossae and a convert of Paul's from his more than two-year ministry in Ephesus. Epaphras had come to Rome in part to serve Paul during his imprisonment (Philemon 1:23) but also to confide in him regarding the dangerous teachings the Colossians were hearing. In response, Paul sent this letter, along with the letters to Philemon and to the Ephesians, with Tychicus, accompanied by Onesimus (Colossians 4:7; Philemon 1:10–12). Tychicus was a coworker of Paul who would have been able to help the Colossian believers understand and apply the apostle's teachings in the letter.

In his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul described Jesus with some of the loftiest language in all the New Testament, focusing on Christ's preeminence and sufficiency in all things. Paul presented Christ as

- the center of the universe, not only as the active Creator but also as the recipient of creation—in His taking on of human flesh.
- Christ was and is the visible image of the invisible God, containing within Himself the fullness of Deity (Colossians 2:9).
- Because of His divine nature, Jesus is sovereign, above all things with an authority given Him by the Father.
- As such, Jesus is also Head over the church.
- He has reconciled all things to Himself through His death on the cross, making believers alive to God and setting them on the path to godly living.

This proper view of Christ served as the antidote for the Colossian heresy as well as a building block for Christian life and doctrine both then and now. Your view of Jesus Christ will impact every area of your life.

- Believers have died with Christ; therefore, we need to die to our sins.

- We have also been raised with Christ; therefore, we must live well in Him and put on qualities that are motivated by Christian love.
- And because He is Lord over everything, the life of the Christian is a life of submission to Jesus in everything.
- For instance, our faith in Jesus Christ should transform the relationships we have in every area of our lives—in our homes, our churches, and our world (3:12-25).

Second: Seeing Christ. 1:15-2:15

a) Know who he is. 1:15-20

- Image of God. 15a
- Firstborn of all creation. 15b
- Creator. 16
- Eternal. 17a
- Center. 17b
- Head of the church. 18a
- The Beginning. 18b
- Firstborn from the dead. 18c
- Preeminent in everything. 18d
- The fullness of God bodily. 19
- Reconciler of all things. 20a
- Peacemaker. 20b

b) Understand what this means.

- He has qualified you for heaven. 1:12
- He has delivered you from darkness to light. 1:13
- He has redeemed you. 14a
- He has forgiven your sins. 14b
- He has reconciled you to God in his death. 1:21-22a
- To present you holy, blameless and above reproach. 22
- Continue in the faith, stable, steadfast. 23a
- Don't shift from the hope of the Gospel. 23b
- Rest in Christ's circumcision. 2:11
- You were raised from the dead. 2:12
- You are alive with Christ. 2:13
- You are forgiven by the resurrection. 2:14-15

Third: Applying Jesus. 1:24-4:6

This changes....

- The way we suffer. 1:24
- The way we struggle. 1:29
- The way we interpret other truths. 2:4 & 8f
- The way we interact with the world. 2:16-23
- Our priorities. 3:1-2
- The way we live. 3:5, 9-10
- The way we treat one another. 3:12-15
- Our source of joy. 3:16
- Our goal in life. 3:17
- The way spouses relate. 3:18-19
- The way children relate to parents. 3:20
- The way fathers relate to children. 3:21
- The way employees treat employers. 3:22-25
- The way employers treat employees. 4:1
- The bottom line of our lives. 4:2
- Our relationship to unbelievers. 4:5a
- How we schedule our lives. 4:5b
- Our talk. 4:6

Fourth: The Key to it All. 1:9-12

- Pray for yourself. 9a (Your own soul is your first pastorate)
- Be filled with the knowledge of his will. 9b
- Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, pleasing him. 10a
- Fruitful in every good work. 10b
- Increasing in the knowledge of God. 10c
- Being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might. 11a
- For endurance. 11b
- For patience. 11c
- For joy. 11d
- To give thanks to the Father. 12

Conclusion: We have every reason to think that Paul's high Christology made a difference in Colossae. It is only 9 miles from what could be called its sister church, Laodicea, one of the 7 churches John addresses with concern in Revelation. But John does not address Colossae. Paul's Christology saved them. It will us too.

What we think of Jesus is everything. Who he is to you, and what place he has in your life, determines everything else about your life, now and forever.

Community Groups:

1 – If someone asked you, "Who is Jesus?" what is your answer?

2 – Read 1:15-20 and list all the ways Paul defines Jesus.

3 – Which of those has been most meaningful to you?

4 – Which do you least understand?

5 – Which do you least apply?

6 – Read 1:12-14 & 1:21-2:15.

7 – List the various things Jesus has done for us.

8 – Which of these means the most to you?

9 – With which of these do you struggle the most?

10 – Read 1:24-4:6

11 – Of the points in the sermon, how has Jesus most changed you?

12 – How are you changing the most?

13 – Where are you struggling to change?

14 – How does what we think of Jesus change us and our world?

15 – What can we do to think better, more, and more highly, of Jesus?