



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V21 N48 December 8, 2019

## ALL IS WELL

“No Longer Enemies”

Colossians 1:15-23

### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

#### Peace

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, others, and myself.

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

**Philippians 4:6-7**



Who is the source of peace and reconciliation?

Most of what we know about alienation and reconciliation, enmity and peace we learn from experience. Who hasn't got a story to tell about a father or mother and a son or daughter, or brothers and sisters, or other miscellaneous relatives who haven't spoken for years because of a past incident – sometimes long forgotten – that set them at odds with one another?

I have a brother who is now with the Lord. Growing up we didn't play much together because he was ten years older than me and because he left home before graduating from high school. He and our father argued regularly; sometimes the arguments became so heated I would run out of the room, fearing they would come to blows. During one particularly heated yelling match when my brother was eighteen, in the middle of berating him for something he had done, Dad told him he really wasn't his son. He told him he was adopted – in the coarsest way possible. Use your imagination. Actually, he was given up not because his single mom didn't want him, but because the man she was seeing at the time didn't want to father someone else's son. It was the fifties. My brother left home that day; he came back later when Dad wasn't there to get his things. I only saw him from time to time from then on, usually after I got home from school. He would come by in the afternoon to see Mom before Dad got home from work. My brother and my father didn't speak to one another for more than ten years. It was only after I graduated from college that they did. Apparently, during my senior year, my brother, then a contractor, did some home improvements – I imagine for Mom's sake –

and in the midst of the work he and Dad started speaking to each other again. It wasn't a return-of-the-prodigal kind of reconciliation, but it was a reconciliation that made Mom very happy.

My personal experience doesn't illustrate perfectly our alienation and subsequent reconciliation to God; perhaps yours does. Nevertheless, it does shed light on the pain of a relationship broken that turns a father and a son into enemies and destroys the peace they and the family once enjoyed.

Unfortunately, we were all in one way or another like my brother, alienated and estranged from God, our Heavenly Father. Paul puts it this way: “Once you were *alienated* from God and were *enemies* in your minds because of your evil behavior” (Col 1:21).

Fortunately, God is like the prodigal son's father (Lk 15:21-24) and very unlike my father. Unlike my father, God took the initiative in our reconciliation to him. Again in the words of Paul: “But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation” (Col 1:22). Paul expresses both sides of the reconciliation equation in Romans 5:10: “For if, while we were God's *enemies*, we were *reconciled* to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” (Ro 5:10). Thanks to God through Christ, we no longer wave our angry fists in the face of God nor do we give him the cold shoulder. We are now friends at peace with one another



## 1 EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

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### Colossians 1:15-23

15 *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

21 *Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation – 23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "image" and "firstborn" in v. 15.
- Bracket "thrones or powers or rulers or authorities" in v. 16.
- Circle "before" in v. 17.
- Circle "beginning" and "firstborn" in v. 18.
- Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 18.
- Circle "fullness" in v. 19.
- Circle "reconcile" in v. 20.
- Circle "peace" in v. 20.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 22.
- Box "if" indicating *condition* in v. 23.
- In the margin next to v. 23 write, "Cf. vv. 5, 6."

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

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Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Describe your response to reading Colossians 1:15-23. How does it affect you?
  2. "He is the *image* of the invisible God." Does this mean "the Son" (v. 15), "Christ Jesus" (v. 4), looks like God? Explain.
  3. If he is the "firstborn over all creation," doesn't that make him a created being? Explain.
  4. To what or to whom do "thrones," "powers," "rulers," and "authorities" (v. 16) refer?
  5. Describe the three-fold relationship of "the Son" to all creation (v. 16).
  6. What would happen to "all things" (v. 17) without him?
  7. Explain the significance of "head" and "firstborn," two metaphors used to describe his relationship to the church.
  8. Explain the *purpose* (or *result*) of him being the founding head of the church, the first to rise from among the dead.
  9. What do you infer about "the Son" from verse 19?
  10. Explain the *contrast* in verse 22.
  11. **Discussion:** Talk about what happens to someone who doesn't continue in their faith.
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### Commentary On The Text

Before summarizing the message of Colossians 1:15-23, first this disclaimer. There is no way to do justice to this passage, the most famous in the letter and one of the Christological high points of the New Testament, in such a brief treatment. That said, let's begin our summary by noting that it's about the supremacy of Jesus Christ, "the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (v. 14). The first paragraph (vv. 15-20), which many scholars believe contains a hymn to Christ—either one tailored by Paul for inclusion in his letter or one composed by him—explains that "the Son" is supreme because "God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things" (v. 19). The second (vv. 21-23) explains that he is supreme because God "has reconciled" the Colossians in particular, who were once alienated from him and his enemies, in order to present them "holy in his sight without blemish and free from accusation" (v. 22).

The first paragraph makes it clear that "in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (2:9). "The Son" is the "image of the invisible God" (v. 15). In other words, he is the exact *likeness* and perfect *manifestation* of God. So much so that Jesus could say, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9; cf. 1:18). What's more, "the Son" is "the firstborn over all creation" (v. 15). In other words, like the firstborn son is preeminent in a Jewish family, he is preeminent over the creation, and that for three reasons. All things visible on earth and invisible in heaven were created "in him," "by him," and "for him" (v. 16). He envisioned the universe in all its complexity, and he served as the agent through whom it was created. Moreover, it exists for his pleasure and for his purposes. All of which implies, "He is before all things," i.e., he existed before all things were created, and "in him all things hold together," i.e., without him all things would cease to exist. Not only is "the Son" the eternal creator, he is

"the head of the body, the church" (v. 18). "In the ancient world, the head was conceived to be the governing member of the body, that which both controlled it and provided for its life and sustenance" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC, 128). As its "head," he is its chief, its leader, the one who guides and governs it. As "the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead," "the Son" is the founder of a new order of resurrection. And this to what end? That his supremacy might become universal. And why? Because God was pleased to dwell in him and through him to reconcile all things to himself. The cosmos "was subjected to frustration" (Ro 8:20) and alienated from God; "all things" no longer bore the relationship to their creator that they were intended to have. Through him God reconciled all things to himself. "God has brought his entire rebellious creation back under the rule of his sovereign power" (137).

The second paragraph makes it clear that the Colossians, like others who put their faith in Jesus Christ, were once alienated from God but are now reconciled to him through "the Son's" physical death. God reconciled them to present them holy in his sight without blemish and free from accusation—presumably at the appearing of "the Son." The *condition* expressed in the following verse does not imply that the Colossians would remain reconciled only as long as they continued in their faith; they were not in danger of being alienated from God again. Their *salvation* wasn't in jeopardy; their *sanctification* was. If they failed to continue in their faith, if they departed from the view of Christ Paul had just outlined, they would not be holy and blameless at Christ's appearing. And that was likely the danger they faced. They were on the verge of being deceived by fine-sounding arguments (2:4). False teachers with false teaching that marginalized Christ threatened to take them captive (2:8). They needed to stick with the gospel they had heard, the gospel that was being preached worldwide.

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## Word Studies/Notes

v. 15 *image*                      “*Eikōn*, the Greek word for ‘image,’ expresses two ideas. One is *likeness*, a thought brought out in some versions (e.g., Moff., Am. Trans., Wms., and Knox). Christ is the image of God in the sense that he is the exact likeness of God, like the image on a coin or the reflection in a mirror (cf. Heb 1:3). The other idea in the word is *manifestation*. That is, Christ is the image of God in the sense that the nature and being of God are perfectly revealed in him (cf. John 1:18) (Curtis Vaughan, “Colossians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 11:181, 82).

v. 15 *firstborn*                      The Greek word (*prototokos*) may denote first in *time* or first in *priority*—as it does here. Its metaphorical sense based on the Jewish practice of affording the firstborn son a special place in the family supplanted its literal sense over time. “Following this line of interpretation, we may understand the passage to teach that Christ is his Father’s representative and heir and has management of the divine household (all creation) committed to him. He is thus Lord over all God’s creation” (Vaughan, 182; see also Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, NAC, 216).

v. 16 *by him*                      Lit., “in him” (cf. NASB, NRSV, TNIV). “It should be understood as *in his mind* or *in his sphere of influence and responsibility*. Practically, it means that Jesus conceived of creation and its complexities. Creation was his idea . . . The phrase points to Jesus as the ‘detailer’ of creation” (Melick, 217).

v. 16 *thrones . . .*                      Scholars generally agree that the four terms “thrones,” “powers,” “rulers,” and “authorities” refer to spiritual beings, angels both good and evil, and possibly to “various structures, persons, and institutions through whom evil ‘powers’ might be working today” (Moo, 123; cf. N. T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, TNTC, 72, 73).

v. 16 *by him*                      Lit., “through [*dia*] him” (cf. NASB, NRSV, TNIV). The Son is the “effective agent of creation” (Melick, 218).

v. 16 *for him*                      Lit., “unto [*eis*] him.” “Not only is the universe His sole and unhelped work, but it is a work done by Himself, and especially for Himself,—for every end contemplated in His infinite wisdom and love” (John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, CCL, 56).

v. 17 *before*                      The preposition [*pro*] denotes priority in *time* when Paul uses it. “So this text is best taken as referring to Christ’s preexistence” (Moo, 125).

v. 17 *hold together*                      “He is the sustainer of the universe and the unifying principle of its life. Apart from his continuous sustaining activity all would disintegrate” (Peter T. O’Brien, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 44, *Colossians, Philemon*, 47).

v. 18 *beginning and*                      Lit., “He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead” (NASB, NRSV, NKJV; cf. the NET Bible). “Christ was the *first* to rise in an immortal body (1 Cor. 15:20), and as such He *heads* a whole new order as its Sovereign (cf. ‘Firstborn’ in Col. 1:15)” (Norman L. Geisler, “Colossians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 673).

v. 19 *fullness*                      “Here Paul stated that the Godhead determined that the human Jesus would be God, sharing all the properties, characteristics, and prerogatives of God himself . . . The statement actually means that God was pleased to take human form in Jesus. He was no less than God, and he continues to be fully divine (‘dwell’ is present tense stressing an ongoing reality” (Melick, 224; cf., 2:9).

v. 20 *reconcile*                      “Through the work of Christ on the cross, God has brought his entire rebellious creation back under the rule of his sovereign power” (Moo, 136, 37).

v. 23 *if*                      “He [Paul] seeks to bring men to that matured experience of holiness which will enable them to be presented acceptably to God [see 1:28] . . . But this can only be achieved, he cautions his readers, if they hold firmly to their faith in the Gospel and do not allow new ideas and doctrines to move them away from fundamental truths” (Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel under Siege*, 84).

## Other Texts to Consider

### Romans 5:1, 6, 10

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly . . . For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”

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## APPLY THE TEXT

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### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Remain confident in the supremacy of Christ – in whom all the fullness of God dwells bodily and through whom all things, even you who were once God’s enemies, were reconciled – if you want to become mature and holy in his sight

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



### 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## FAMILY TALK

Several years ago while teaching in the Mix on Psalm 139 and God’s omniscience, a third grade boy stopped me in the middle of the lesson and asked if God really knew everything. Honestly, I love when kids stop me during a lesson with a question. That tells me the wheels are turning, the lightbulb of understanding is about to turn on, and they are building spiritual muscle and a foundation of faith. I responded by telling this young boy that God not only knows the number of hairs on our heads but knows our thoughts, our comings and goings, and our words before they are ever spoken. The image of this child’s face, slack jawed and eyes wide, filled with awe and amazement is forever burned into my memory. He was floored that the Creator of the universe and everything in it would know him so intimately and would love him so deeply. Are you filled with wonder at God’s creation? Are you amazed that He knows you intimately? Does Christ’s supremacy leave you in awe? Does the story of Christ’s birth cause you to leap for joy? Does knowing Christ died for your sin fill you with overwhelming gratefulness? Do your kids see this overflowing in you? Do they see you humbled and overwhelmed at the mercy and grace Jesus offers day-by-day, moment-by-moment? We are praying your holiday season is filled with awe, wonder, and reverence at a Holy God who sent His Son for you.

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read Col 1:15-23

1. Who is this passage talking about?
2. List the things Jesus is over or in control of (hint: look for the word “all”).
3. How did Jesus make peace for us? (v. 20)

### What Do You Think?

What would happen if Jesus didn’t hold all thing together?

### What Do You Do?

Read Luke 1:39-56. Elizabeth’s baby leaped in her womb when Mary arrived. Even the unborn child recognized the supremacy of Jesus. This week take a moment to look around at all the things created by God and leap for joy.

### CORE COMPETENCY: Peace

I live without worry because things are good between God, myself and others.

### MEMORY VERSE: Luke 2:14

*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests.*

## KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- \_\_\_\_\_ I completed my Bible Study
- \_\_\_\_\_ I memorized this week’s verse
- \_\_\_\_\_ I brought my Bible to church
- \_\_\_\_\_ I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)

*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)

*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)

*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)

*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)

*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)

*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)

*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)

*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)

*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)

*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)

*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

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